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DISASTER RECOVERY

This column is most appropriate for medium to larger computer systems with multiple servers

Let's assume that it's Sunday morning and you open your newspaper to find that there's been a 5-alarm fire in your office building. Even though you have an off-site tape of last week's data, you have no servers, workstations, printers, desks or phones. How long could your practice survive in this state? A month? A week? 3 days?

Every professional organization needs to have a business continuation plan so that the enterprise is prepared for disaster situations. If your central office is no longer operational where are people are to report? What critical services must be immediately available (eg., phones with calls forwarded from your office's lines)? What services can be deferred? For how long? Which staff people are indispensable and which can be temporarily laid off?

Accordingly, LANsultants is partnering with Sunguard, the world's leading disaster recovery service, to provide business continuation services to our clients. Besides off-site servers, disaster recovery services can include immediately available off-site office space with telephone service, furniture, workstations, printers, copiers, internet access, and even conference rooms.

It is impossible to quickly arrange all of these services after a disaster occurs. These services must be arranged for in advance. To design your disaster recovery system you must identify the key services which are critical to your business and for what duration you can tolerate an outage. You must also determine who your key people are and for what duration you can tolerate their inability to work. LANsultants working in conjunction with Sunguard can assist you in making these determinations.

The facts speak for themselves. 70% of all commercial enterprises which experience a disaster and do not have a comprehensive response plan never fully recover and are out of business within 5 years.

OVER SIZED E-MAIL

Virtually all e-mail systems have limits on the size e-mail attachments allowed. This limitation may be implemented by your ISP or any ISP between you and the recipient, your mail server capabilities, or simply the physical limitation of your Internet connection. For example, if you send a an e-mail with a 2 MB attachment to 50 friends and your office has a 384K DSL Circuit it is going to take 36+ minutes to push this through your Internet connection if there is no other Internet activity and you are receiving 100% of your rated bandwidth, neither of which is a likely scenario.

As all e-mails systems bog down under forwarding of pictures various services have evolved for sharing pictures on the Internet. Some of the more popular ones are:

<http://www.yousendit.com>

<http://www.filesdirect.com>

<http://www.sendthisfile.com>

With all these services you copy the file to the service's web server and e-mails are sent to your recipients that the file is available for downloading at their leisure.

Though possibly not as convenient as directly e-mailing pictures as attachments this eliminates abuse of your organizations e-mail system, reduces service calls and maintenance costs and improves availability for sending and receiving mission critical e-mail communications. Requiring use of these type services for any large e-mail attachment should be part of any organizations e-mail and/or computer usage policy manual.

If you need sample e-mail and/or computer usage policy manuals just ask. We have various model documents on file which we can provide as templates for your office.

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