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Choosing the Best Online Storage Service for Your Company
by roblimo on 25-06-2012 08:00 AM

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Hardly anyone, including corporate IT people who should know better, bothers with comprehensive data backups until he suffers a ruinous data loss.

All hard drives fail sooner or later. And thousands of evil viruses and worms lurk on the Internet, waiting to destroy the files you need to run your business. Worse, there are hurricanes, fires, tornadoes, floods, thunderstorms, barbarian hordes, and other disasters both natural and man-made, waiting to attack your computers.

Most of us are not dealing with the data backup needs of a billion-dollar company. But almost all of us deal with the data backup needs of one computer and possibly with the needs of a networked office that routinely works with gigabytes, possibly terabytes of data. We need to back up regularly so that we can get back to work as soon as the hurricane, barbarian horde, or other disaster has passed. Or we may need to share data with remote coworkers or clients, which is a different need.

Do You Need a *Backup* **Service or a** *File Sharing* **Service?**
Most online storage services can serve as both backup and file sharing services, but some are oriented more towards one use than the other. You need to pick accordingly.

For example, 4Shared is obviously meant to be a file-sharing service. Dropbox and Box may not have "share" in their names, but they are also intended to share files with friends or coworkers. These shared storage services are useful for "sharing" with yourself in the sense that you can upload a file from your office desktop computer and download it onto your laptop 2,000 miles away from home.

Box and 4Shared can be accessed with or without their downloadable clients or through ftp, which means a business can work with a video freelancer halfway across the country and say, "After the shoot, upload your clips to ftp.box.com, username philotfarnsworth, password television," without having to get a separate account for the freelancer.

Dropbox does not have direct ftp access, but Dropbox has open APIs, and several third party services available can help you move data to and from Dropbox via ftp.

The Backup Options
The easiest-sounding solution is to keep all files on site. Eighty percent of all data disruption occurs in individual computers, notes Fadi Albatal, Marketing VP for FalconStor. So you can protect against 80% of all data disruption with local backups on external hard drives, network-attached hard drives, or an on-site storage server.

But there's still that pesky 20%. All the on-site backup in the world doesn't do any good if the building that holds your computers catches fire when you're not there to grab your storage server and to carry it beyond reach of the flames.

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Another backup consideration is speed of recovery. If you have raw data from many users backed up in no particular order, either locally or in the cloud, getting your data back into the order and format you need it to be in to run your business might be a task that takes days, possibly even weeks. Speed and ease of recovery are what companies like FalconStor and competitor ZL Technologies offer. These companies are not competing with Box or Carbonite. Their typical customers are Fortune 500 companies and multinational enterprises whose data storage needs are measured in Yottabytes and grow every year.

The apparently endless growth in data storage is because the length of time after an event a company might get sued for it seems to get longer every year, says ZL Technologies CEO Kon Leong. This creates a situation where "no one has the guts to delete" a lot of archived business data, even if it's 10 or 20 years old. And when that ancient data is needed, whether in response to a subpoena or to stave one off, you need to be able to find it within a reasonable time. A month-long delay is not acceptable.

At the Desktop PC Level

At the lightweight end of the online backup scale, Google Drive is the new kid on the block. The free version only holds 5GB, which may sound like a lot, but even a small-time video producer can easily accumulate over 10 GB in background music and sound effects, and she may have as much as 100 GB worth of video in active production.

4Shared easily meets the needs of most individuals, small offices, and media producers. Not their free service, though; with a 15 GB maximum, it's more than twice as generous as Microsoft's 7 GB limit on free SkyDrive, and three times as large as the 5GB limit on free Ubuntu One or Google Drive, but still nowhere near the 100 GB capacity that is the practical storage minimum for either media producers or active small businesses.
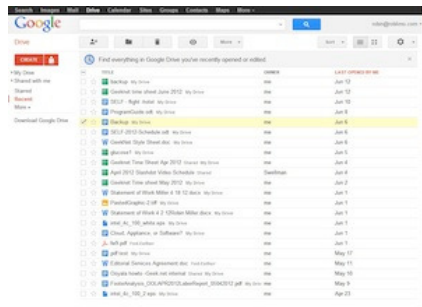
Then there's the matter of operating system support. Microsoft's SkyDrive does not support Linux, just Windows and Mac. Ubuntu One supports Linux and Windows, but not Mac. Google Drive supports Windows and Mac and, as of this writing, Google says "any day now" for Linux. Meanwhile, at $6.50 per month on a one-year contract, 4shared fully supports all three major OSes and – better yet – offers FTP access, which works with any operating system and is generally faster and more reliable than HTTP transfers.

But while 4shared is admirable for backing up and sharing large files, its downloadable synchronization software for Windows is buggy enough that it is nearly useless for some users. And non-technical home computer users will not be comfortable using 4shared, which is a service geared for techies. They're probably best off with heavily-advertised Carbonite or a similar "no brainer" backup service. With Carbonite, you install their software on your Windows or Mac computer, pay the company $59 per year, and forget about it until or unless you have a disaster and need to get hold of your backed up data.

Carbonite has limitations that may make the entry level service inadequate. For one thing, unless you spend $99 per year for its HomePlus plan instead of $59 for just plain "Home," it won't back up data on external (USB or Firewire) hard drives. And before you look at the $99 plan or the even more deluxe HomePremier plan, which costs $149 per year per computer, you should check their $229 per year small business plan, which gives you 250 GB of storage and services on an unlimited number of computers. Or check their 500 GB plan, at $599 per year. That should be more than enough for most small offices, and you don't need an IT person to install either Carbonite business package; they offer "Valet install service" at no extra charge, not to mention support via phone, chat and email, "from U.S.-based reps."

Back to Google Drive

If you already use Google Mail and Google Apps, you might as well use Google Drive for online backup. Google services are integrated so tightly that it's almost silly not to add the Drive to services you're already using. Cost? 100 GB is $4.99 per month, 200 GB is $9.99, 1 TB is $49.99. and 16 TB – enough for a substantial video production studio – costs $799.99 per month.

If you're a paranoid computer user, in addition to using Google Drive, you can pay Backupify $3 per user per month for automatic daily backups of all your Google Apps data, up to a 35 GB maximum per user. Basically, this is using one cloud service to back up another cloud service – which is not a bad idea if you're using Google Apps for critical, time-sensitive work.

What about going beyond belt and suspenders, and using three separate backup services? It sounds like a joke, but comedian Dan Nainan says it's not. Comedy is serious business for him, and he can't afford to lose a joke – or a plane or hotel reservation or other necessary information as he travels from gig to gig.

Nainan says, "I am an avid user of online storage. I'm using Dropbox, Box.Net, and Carbonite. Since I travel so much, online storage is an absolute necessity."

His is a good example of someone making choices among several good options – including choosing not to choose. "I like Dropbox because it's a great place for collaboration, and sometimes when I'm working on corporate events I have to share documents with my clients," Nainan says. "I joined Box because they were having a special wherein you would receive 50 GB if you joined from an iPhone. That is an amazing deal, considering it's free! Finally, I use Carbonite for online backup of my data. It is absolutely amazing, because it's constantly backing up my hard drive whenever I connect to the Internet, and it works in the background so it doesn't interfere with my computing. As an added bonus, I can login from any computer anywhere in the world (or my iPad or my iPhone) and see all of my online data, which is astoundingly useful! It's a paid service, but believe me, it's well worth it. The hard drive on my MacBook air crashed a few months ago, and it didn't matter at all, because I had all of my data backed up!"

Nainan is a little more technically-inclined than the average comedian. Before he started making his living doing standup, he was an engineer at Intel, and he got into performing by traveling with then-Chairman Andy Grove, helping with his technical demonstrations.

But there's nothing funny about the rigor with which he backs up his data, and Nainan has carefully chosen the services he uses. They're all well-known and popular, unlikely to disappear one night and take his data with them.

A Google search for the keywords "online collaboration filesharing" brings up more results than any person (or even an entire research group) can check out in a month. The services mentioned in this article are just a few of the ones available, but they are tried and true, and people we know have found them to be useful, reliable, and reasonably-priced.

So yes, this article has left out most of the world's online data backup services, including one recommended by Christopher Engel, Network Infrastructure Manager for SaaS provider Conxeo, who says his company has "just started utilizing JungleDisk by Rackspace for online backup, and that they "have found it to be a reliable and cost effective service."

He adds, "Since we use Rackspace to host one of our own service offerings, it was a logical fit and they are a brand we're very familiar with and trust."

Note the line, "...they are a brand we're very familiar with and trust." Think carefully about your requirements before shopping for a service that you will trust with your precious personal or corporate information.

This is an major factor in choosing an online backup provider. If you're already using Rackspace, JungleDrive is an easy choice, just as Google Apps users may find Google Drive to be the ideal backup solution for their backup needs, although it is not as easy to use for collaborative file sharing as Dropbox or 4shared.

Each service handles things in its own ways, and there are plenty of choices. In June, 2012, the About.com PC Support section listed 27 backup services; Wikipedia listed 48. Those listings will no doubt be out of date within a month or two as new service come out,

old ones go away or merge, and offerings change – as will your needs. It makes good sense to shop for storage service every six months or so, and at least once a year if you are a thrifty home computer user or a cost-conscious small business IT manager.

This chart should make it easier to compare your options.

	Storage	Cost	OS clients
Google	5 GB	$0/mo	Win/Mac
	25 GB	$2.49/mo	
	100 GB	$4.99/mo	
	1 TB	$49.99/mo	
SkyDrive	7 GB	$0/mo	Win/Mac
	20 GB	$10/yr	
	50 GB	$20/yr	
	100 GB	$50/yr	
4Shared	15 GB	$0/mo	Win/Lin/Mac
	100 GB	$9.95/mo	
Box	5 GB	$0/mo	
	25 GB	$9.99/mo	
	50 GB	$19.99/mo	
Dropbox	2 GB	$0/mo	Win/Lin/Mac
	50 GB	$9.99/mo	
	100 GB	$19.99/mo	
Carbonite			Win/Mac
Home	unlimited	$59/yr & up	
Business	250 GB	$229/yr & up	
UbuntuOne	5 GB	$0/mo	Lin/Win
	20 GB	$2.99/mo	
SugarSync	5 GB	$0/mo	Win/Lin/Mac
	30 GB	$4.99/mo	
	60 GB	$9.99/mo	
	100 GB	$14.99/mo	

See also:

- How to Choose a Cloud Backup Service
- Securing Data-at-Rest with Encrypted Portable Drives
- Blocking Consumer Cloud Storage for Admins
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by Larry Williams(anon) on 18-10-2012 01:18 AM   Options

thanks for the great information on this subject !

I just want to underline tha 4shared is VERY MUCH of sharing....

It is the Facebook under the Cloud and Storage solutions.

It is great 4 all of us who want to share as much as possible to as much as possible people.

Shure you get a lot of free space, and lots of tools.

BUT you have to check seriusly alll the settings if dont want to see the whole world all stuff

you have backed up there.

all the best.

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by Larry Williams(anon) on 18-10-2012 01:52 AM   Options

PS: since the Headline of this article is : " Choosing the best Online Storage Service for your Company"

 I want to share my experience with yousendit. (www.yousendit.com)

which offers truly Pro services for companies.

The free service is 2 gigs of storage.

In the beginning Yousendit was meet for people and companies to send large files to a client.

Via your browser or the desktop client you load up a file to yousendit, the mainlanders of the recipient

included. Yousendit sends then an email with the download link to the your client, who will then with one click download the file. There is NO NEED for your the client TO REGISTER with Yousendit .

Now with the cloud fashion vogue, Yousentit has expanded their service to all the typical cloud features,

based on their solid, year long experience, their are highly reliable.

I had used so far used there free service and changed now for the Pro plane during a promotion

and pay for limitless(!)storage / 100$/p.year

(see all features on their website)

their are Apps for desktop/mobiles/and tablets.

Support is given via email and phone call.

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