

Radio Days – 2009-11-28

Tip of the Week – Check Your Backup

The inevitable happened during the week. A client decided that her computer was not working well so she decided to re-install Windows to clean out all the cobwebs. Obviously, having listened to my rants, she started by making a backup of all the files which she would need after Windows was installed. This was done using a backup program that I had installed for her some time ago. When she was ready to re-install all her data the problem came to light: some of her files were missing. This, in my experience, is normal: when you re-install Windows you lose some data. By this time, however, there was no way to go back and recover the lost data.

The moral of this story is that you need to ensure that all (and I do mean ALL) of your data has been saved on your backup medium. The only way to do this is to check each and every file on your backup and ensure that nothing is missing. If there are missing files then you MUST add them to your backup and repeat the process. Ad infinitum, if necessary.

Your Backup Strategy

When planning your backup you need to have a good reason to do it, otherwise it will not be done for long. For most people the main reason to do a backup is to save photos and music. This is easiest if all your files are stored in the standard folders (My Pictures and My Music), so setting up a backup regime is comparatively easy.

For a business the main reason for doing a backup is to be able to restore the server to its original condition as quickly as possible. A business needs to be able to restore both programs and data very quickly to minimise down time. To achieve this, the business will need to backup both programs (please note that this includes Windows) and data. Because programs do not change very often they only have to be backed-up when they change: this may only be once or twice a year.

Data, however, change all the time, so should be backed-up at least every day. It is important to ensure that all the changeable data is backed-up each day to minimise data loss. There are a number of programs which, when setup correctly, will ensure that all the data is saved each day. The backup medium can then be stored off-site to reduce the chance of both primary data and the backup being lost or destroyed at the same time.

My recommendation for this sort of security is to have three external hard discs (each of which can be powered fully by the USB port) and storing both an image of your programs and all your data on each disc. There are many programs which will create an image of a disc: choose one which both creates an image as quickly as possible and which makes recovery of the image file easy. There are also many data backup programs: again, choose one which both backs-up your data quickly and which makes recovery of your data easy. Ensure that the programs which you choose make it easy to check that all your data is present by doing a dummy restore.

Again, having made a backup, check that ALL your files have been included. If some have been missed then you must add them to your backup and repeat this process until every file is present on your backup.

***The only thing worse than not having a backup
is having a backup which cannot be restored.***

Websites

None this week