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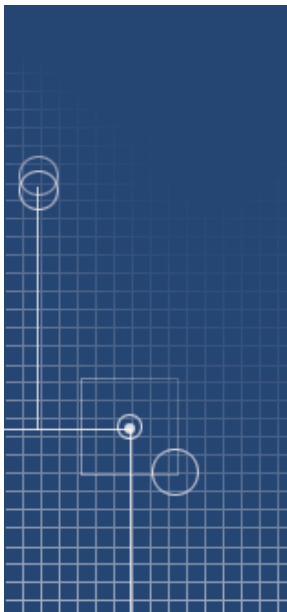
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News & Information

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News

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Page(s) 1 in print issue

# Moving From Tape To Disk

## The Challenges Of Changing Backups

Many SMEs still treat backup as if they are using a VCR that flashes "12:00 AM." While tape-based backups are reliable and cheap, they, like videocassettes, require the user to rewind or fast-forward to recover, say, a lost spreadsheet.

Research firm IDC predicts that the digital universe in 2011 will equal almost 1,800 exabytes (1.8 trillion gigabytes), 10 times the size it was in 2006. If trying to find that spreadsheet within your tape backups is tedious now, imagine trying to locate it a few years from now amid your petabytes of data.

As a result, more and more SMEs are considering disk-based backup as a long-term solution. "Compared with tape-based storage systems, disk-based storage delivers an order of magnitude benefit in terms of restore and recovery times. Restore operations that once took hours or even days now can take minutes," says Philip Fote, storage product marketing manager at EMC ([www.emc.com](http://www.emc.com)).

But migrating to disk-based backup is expensive. It often requires a new infrastructure. And if you intend only to set up an onsite disk-based backup solution, you may find that you lack the physical space to keep all those drives. Given the complexity and urgency of the situation, where do you even begin?

### ■ Know What You Are Backing Up

First off, make sure you understand what you are backing up. "This seems easy, but people rarely do. They get into habits," says David Barley, CTO of digital archiving services provider Casdex ([www.casdex.com](http://www.casdex.com)). "That's the way we've always done it' is the million-dollar mistake."

At a financial firm Barley once consulted, he discovered that IT was duplicating the whole email server every night, even though the most important data was already in the

organization's email archiving system. The firm only needed to back up the email configuration and let the archiving system handle the unstructured data.

Too often, IT and data center managers keep to a "cover all your bases" strategy because they worry about being blamed if anything is missing, says Barley, and IT should not be determining the backup policy in a vacuum. According to him, IT needs to bring in the legal department and senior management to determine what information is put into backup and for how long.

"It's important to get rid of data at the appropriate time. For example, you're supposed to delete HIPAA records 10 years after the patient's death," Barley says. Given the number of terabytes or even petabytes already swirling around your orbit, this is good advice to follow.

### ■ Dealing With The Costs

Gary Gysin, CEO of continuous availability solutions for Windows applications provider Asempra Technologies ([www.asempr.com](http://www.asempr.com)), says although SMEs have similar storage requirements as large enterprises, SMEs usually lack the manpower and the money to deploy expensive solutions.

EMC's Fote acknowledges that SMEs will face upfront capital costs implementing a disk-based backup solution. However, he has seen his midmarket customers gain an immediate and significant return on investment using either virtual tape libraries or "back up to disk" solutions as their primary backup targets.

"Larger-capacity drives consume less energy; compression enables customers to store more data on less disk [space]; and drive 'spin down' reduces energy consumption between backup and recovery operations," says Fote. Meanwhile, data deduplication or single-instance storage further optimizes drive use, which is also a money saver.

### ■ Drop The Tape & Skip The Disk

For Gysin's part, disk-based backup or a mix of tape and disk backup may not offer a sufficient solution, particularly in a disaster recovery scenario. "Recovery times could vary from hours to even a full day to restore a terabyte of data, depending on the architecture and where the needed data resides," Gysin says. "In our 24/7 world, solutions that deliver continuous availability of applications and data allow IT to stay ahead of the curve."

Sam Gutmann, CEO of online backup solutions provider Intronis Technologies ([www.intronis.com](http://www.intronis.com)), says that using an online backup service may be the best overall solution for the SME. "SMEs typically have a limited IT staff, and if this process is handled internally, organizations run the risk of backup being neglected for pressing deadlines or eating up internal resources."

And online backup can save money. "You can often eliminate setup fees, installation costs, and equipment purchases," Gutmann says. "Because an online backup provider will compress files before saving them, more information can be stored at a lower cost."

■

*by Robyn Weisman*

## Reasons To Consider Digital Archiving

Before David Barley became CTO at Casdex ([www.casdex.com](http://www.casdex.com)), he managed storage platforms in the 30-plus petabyte range at large Wall Street financial firms and saw that digital archiving is the safest, cheapest, and most compliant way to handle data that doesn't change.

Barley tells the story about a contractor who didn't understand the cost benefits of using digital archiving—or any digital storage for that matter—until a workman's comp claim required an audit through all his paper files. At \$50 an hour, relying on seemingly cheap paper records was now costing this contractor a small fortune.

According to Barley, here are three reasons to consider digital archiving as part of your backup scheme:

1. Data that does not change, oftentimes emails and other records kept for compliance reasons, gets stamped with two algorithms. This way, these records hold as much validity as paper documents.
2. Once placed in an offsite archive, you no longer have to worry about the costs of replacing tapes or disks, setting aside physical space, or allocating human resources to manage this information. You just pay a monthly fee to a digital archiving outsourcer.
3. This monthly fee is an insurance policy of sorts, much less expensive than the costs associated with investigation and litigation. Unlike paper or tape, you can find the documents you need in e-discovery by using keywords. Unlike onsite disk storage, your data won't be destroyed if an environmental calamity, such as a fire or hurricane, destroys your physical space.

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