

# Windows 7 makes it easier to backup files

Since Microsoft Windows 7 came out last year it has become the best version of the operating system released so far.

Those Redmond, Wash. yahoos really needed a solid product roll out after the fiasco of Vista a few years before. It became apparent that even Microsoft saw how pathetic the early version of Windows Vista was when it began shipping XP 'downgrade' CDROMs with new Vista installed PCs.

Vista did improve when Microsoft resolved most of the compatibility problems by the time Service Pack II became available several months later. Even with the hurried fixes pushed out, Vista never really made it to the office desktop with larger company IT personnel maintaining Windows XP much longer than expected.

There has been some sort of backup utility native to Microsoft Windows since Windows NT came in the early 1990s. The problem was they were difficult to setup and manage requiring nerds like me to initially configure the backup settings, monitor the schedule of when files were backed up, and then manage the space of the on the backup media.

Those duties have been my most important tasks for literally decades starting with my playing the role of the "tape ape" slinging nine-track reel tape onto cabinet-sized tape drives attached to mainframes back in the 1980s. Life is much simpler now with pocket sized external 1 GB hard drives for local backups and internet-based backup services like DataDepositBox.com, Carbonite.com, and Mozy.com for remote backups.

Though Vista inhaled immensely, it did however have a more user-friendly version of the native backup utility with the ability to have an internal scheduler rather than the separate Windows Scheduler that was difficult for even IT guys to manage. The downer was the new backup utility created backup save-sets in a ZIP format rather than the original .BKF used for years by Microsoft.

It really bugged me when they did not include the .BKF format reading capability within the new backup utility to be able to restore previous



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backups from XP and before. We still have to find, download and install a "MS BKF Restoration" utility which is a pain in the rear.

Even with those remote backup solutions on the Internet available listed above, it is still necessary to have local backups on external hard drives. This is due to the time it takes to restore from services like Carbonite.com which is limited to only a few gigabytes a day.

You do the math on how long it would take trying to restore a 90 GB hard drive that just died. With Windows 7 backups even easier to configure and manage, let's go through it so no one will have the excuse for not backing up their files.

First go to the Control Panel and click on Backup up your Computer which is located under the System and Security heading. When the Backup and Restore utility starts up you then choose the "Set up backup" option which starts up the configuration wizard.

The next window will give you a list of possible targets to back your computer up to and hopefully you will have previously plugged in that external USB-attached hard drive I've been trying to get you to buy for a couple of years now. If you haven't yet, then stop, drive over to Wal-Mart or Computer Helpers and buy either a small 250 GB pocket drive or a larger 1 TB external hard drive for around \$100.

Once the backup drive is installed and showing up as a drive letter you are ready to choose that destination in the Windows 7 Backup and Restore utility. The option is there to backup across the network to another PC, but that is a bit tricky to set up, slower to backup large amounts of data, and less reliable since it depends on the network and remote computer stability.

With external hard drive backups you can backup 100 GB in just a few hours preferably at night while we're all asleep dreaming of the iPhone 5.

After choosing the external hard drive for backups, you will then pick the "Let me choose" option on the following screen so you can decrease the default amount backed up. On the next

screen you can take the defaults and leave the box checked that makes a system image of the drive to be backed up.

Click on Next saving your settings on the verification window and then adjust the schedule on the following screen. I recommend setting the backups to Daily rather than the default Sunday backup at 7 p.m. since most people can do tons of work on a computer in one week. My favorite setting is at 11:30 p.m. daily since that my latest bedtime.

After all those configuration screens have passed the initial backup will start up and the first backup will be performed which will take a while since the primary image backup will take place so be patient. When that is completed you will want to Click on the Manage Space button and then chose the "Change Settings" to set on option to "Keep only the latest system image and minimize space used by backup."

This will save a great deal of space on your destination external hard drive and allow Windows Backup to manage the space automatically.

It is always a good idea to check on your backups once a month or so just to make sure all is working OK like I do at all my client sites. This can be done by going back into the Backup and Restore utility under the Control Panel if you are viewing it via the "icons" layout. If there is a problem with the backups you may see a red colored alert bar along with an error message explaining the problem.

All too many times I have seen backups fail because they are unplugged after getting bumped or kicked under the desk. So make sure you can see the power and ready light indicators lit on the external hard drive and check the backup dates listed on the Backup and Restore utility so you won't have to pay IT guys like me to bail you out.

Bottom line: Microsoft Windows 7 is clean, fast, and stable enabling you to properly configure the backups to protect your valuable files.

Next week's column: Laptops in patrol cars.

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