Backup Mishaps

The following true tales are from our customers. Unfortunately, you could have a similar experience if your organization does not regularly back up your database, test the copies, and store them in a safe, off-site location. Please learn all you can about creating valid backups by reviewing the Database Administration FAQs on our Support website.

Do you have a story to share? Email webmaster@blackbaud.com.

Invalid Backup Procedure

- An organization's backup software reported a successful backup every night. However, it was backing up an empty folder. Eighteen months earlier, they had moved their database to a new server without making changes in the backup software. They discovered the problem when their live database experienced data corruption.

- An organization found their current backups were unusable. After they finally restored a two-month-old backup, they had to reenter all gifts and other data for that two-month period. It was an unpleasant reminder to test backups and keep more than a week's worth of backup tapes.

- Words of wisdom from a customer with an invalid backup procedure:
  "[Losing our data] has had a huge impact on our agency by taking time from our staff and board. It was a huge drain emotionally and in person-hours. We're a small organization. You'll never recover. Although you may have copies of things in spreadsheets, you've lost years of relationships with givers. Expect to do a lot of data entry."

  Now the organization verifies there were no errors during backups, and, once they complete the manual data reentry process, they will verify they can restore the backups.

Theft or Natural Disaster

- An organization's primary user called Customer Support, almost in tears, asking about copies of the organization's database from earlier cases. Unfortunately, no copies existed. Their office's one computer, on which the software was installed as a standalone and to which the database was backed up daily to a different directory, was stolen.

- An organization's administration building was destroyed in a fire, including the backup tape stored in a fireproof safe. The fireproof safe kept the tape from burning, but not from melting.

- After losing their live data and server during a flood, an organization discovered they had to restore to a 14-month-old backup. The network administrator was dismissed for not making and testing database backups.

- An organization that made nightly backups was the victim of theft. Everything stored at the office -- the server, tape drive, and backup tapes -- was stolen.

Need to Restore

- A user globally wrote off all pledges and attempted to restore to a backup. However, the backup tape was damaged and unusable.

- An organization’s computer, on which the software was installed as a standalone, crashed. An employee from another department replaced the computer and installed the software. However, he removed the old computer and reformatted it before anyone realized the database on the new computer was blank.

- After an organization's backup unit crashed, they verified backup sequences and discovered that several servers were not being backed up at all. Because they depend on automated backup systems, they would have lost everything had they lost a server. Luckily, there weren't any crashes that necessitated recovery.

- Multiple users have dropped instead of withdrawn students from classes, causing lost grading information. The organizations with current, valid backups can simply restore to a backup, losing very little time to data reentry.