

Cloud Backup – Guiding SMBs Through Seeding

With the amount of data on the rise as well as data protection and backup concerns, MSPs have a great opportunity to become trusted advisors for their clients.

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Many managed service providers (MSPs) and VARs have been inundated with questions from SMB clients regarding methods to back up critical company data, particularly now, given increasing data storage demands resulting from an influx of new content types such as digital media. With availability of new turnkey storage solutions from technology partners, MSPs can deploy cost-effective, multi-tiered backup for clients by utilizing on-site, off-site, and cloud backup methods.

Among these backup methods, cloud backup, commonly referred to as online backup, is becoming increasingly attractive to SMBs. In fact, a Spiceworks Voice of IT market research report published in November 2010 stated that nearly 60% of SMBs interviewed believe cloud computing will be important to their organization's storage infrastructure plans. Online backup provides a foray into the cloud, yielding cost savings while optimizing data protection.

However, in order for MSPs to leverage online backup through cloud storage, they must execute a better process than traditional electronic data transfer to initially "seed" the cloud.

A Faster Alternative for Cloud Seeding

While technical processes like deduplication decrease the amount of data that needs to be backed up, the initial seed, which is the first full backup of all of a company's data, is still sluggish and often cost- and time-prohibitive to many SMBs. To complete this process electronically, SMBs or their MSPs will use a substantial amount of bandwidth and the process will take a significant amount of time. It is estimated that using a DSL/T1 Internet connection, it could take SMBs weeks to seed 1TB of data.

Not only does this seem like a large amount of time for an initial backup, these data transfer rates also apply to data recovery. If a catastrophic event happened at a company's site — for example, a Web or

e-mail server crashed and all data was lost — weeks to restore that data would be completely unacceptable for any small to mid-sized business. MSPs simply cannot offer clients a backup strategy that would result in dramatically latent recovery.

This challenge is met head-on by the availability of removable disk devices, which can be used for the first initial backup to the cloud. Copying terabytes of data to on-site removal disk drives and securely shipping them to the online backup or cloud storage provider dramatically reduces the amount of time and bandwidth required to implement a cloud-based data protection solution. Taking full advantage of the data transfer speeds available for local copying can reduce the initial backup time, including shipping, to only one or two days.

In the event of an on-site failure, an SMB's ability to get back up is only as good as the backup strategies they've implemented. Much like initial seeding, downloading data back over the wire can prove to be slow and cumbersome. Again, in a major recovery scenario, removable disk technology can mean the difference between success and failure for a business in that critical, vulnerable position and for the MSP that is supporting

that company. Most online backup solution providers can restore the required data from the cloud architecture to removable disk drives and can return those drives to an end user for quick reinstallation.

An Opportunity for MSPs

With the amount of data on the rise as well as SMB IT departments' concerns related to data protection and backup, MSPs have an opportunity to serve as trusted advisors for their clients. Implementing a well-organized backup and data protection strategy for SMBs will decrease costs of storage, lead to improved data organization, and reduce corporate risks associated to IT failure, corporate data loss, or a catastrophic on-site event. As online backup based on cloud storage becomes an increasing piece of a backup strategy, MSPs that can offer practical advice for utilization are well positioned to strengthen engagements with small to mid-sized clients. ●



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