READY NET GO ... NEWS

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Tip of the Month

As of June 30, 2008, Microsoft has stopped selling Windows XP.

You will not be able to purchase a retail copy or in most cases, purchase a new computer with this Operating System pre-installed. You may be able to find a system pre-configured with Win XP or purchase a disk from a retailer's remaining stock but only for a limited time. Mainstream support in the form of **security updates and phone support will continue through 2009** while extended support for businesses that purchase support contracts will continue through 2014. Both situations apply only for those workstations that have Service Pack 2 or Service Pack 3 installed.

Microsoft's new Operating System, Vista, was released in January 2007. If you haven't jumped on the bandwagon yet, you may want to wait for the next OS release set for 2010. The new OS, code named Windows 7, will have a fraction of Vista's install requirements. Instead of thousands of system files that take up 4GB of space, the new OS is purported to have a meager 100 files that consume about 25MB of space. All of this is achieved while keeping or enhancing the features in Vista. Good news for consumers and businesses with older machines.

Note: All Windows XP users should upgrade to Service Pack 3 released on May 6, 2008. If Windows Update hasn't already done it for you *, visit Microsoft's site to download a free copy now:

http://www.microsoft.com/windows/products/windowsxp/sp3/default.mspx

* To check: Right click the **My Computer** icon on your desktop. Choose **Properties**. You will see **Service Pack 3** under the System information if it is installed.

Do You Have a Backup Plan?

Everyone knows that data needs to be backed up for the inevitable computer or server crash, lightning strike or mistaken deletion. But not everyone does it. Some people don't want to be bothered by the inconvenience of remembering to do it (is it less convenient when you lose data?), some people don't think it's going to happen (until it does), and others just don't know how to do it.

Well, now there really is no excuse. With automated backup systems that work constantly in the background to portable drives that can be connected to any system, there is a solution for anyone even if you don't know where your data is stored.

If your current backup system isn't working as well as you would like or if you are finally ready to start backing up your data, this newsletter will help you sort out the options and hopefully get you on a new path to secure your data. We'll also describe NAS, which is a dedicated storage device and RAID, which is beneficial for hardware failure protection.

Data Protection

External Hard Drives – Very convenient, hold large quantities of data (up to 1TB), are portable, don't require external media and labeling, attach via USB, FireWire or eSATA. Some drives are small enough to fit inside the palm of your hand. Backup software installed on the computer can be set to automatically backup your designated files as long as the external drive is attached and the PC remains on.

Disadvantages: Higher upfront cost especially with large storage capacity drives. They need a designated space near the computer (although they are getting smaller).

WWW (Websites Worth Watching)

Home Depot is now recycling used, unbroken compact fluorescent bulbs (along with IKEA and True Value stores).

Compact fluorescents (CFL's) are more energy efficient and cheaper to use over time than incandescent light bulbs but they are considered hazardous waste due to the small amount of mercury they contain.

Do not throw CFL's in the trash – they must be recycled. Before a CFL breaks, read and follow these instructions from the Environmental Protection Agency.
www.epa.gov/mercury/spills/index.htm#fluorescent

Flash drives – Multiple styles are available from simple black or silver to cartoon characters. Flash drives connect to a computer via a USB port. The flash drive shows up as another drive on your system similar to an external hard drive. You then transfer files using Windows Explorer.
Flash drives come in a variety of sizes from 512MB to 8GB. Most are about the size of your thumb but some are as small as a paperclip (good for toting, easy for losing).

Disadvantages: easy to lose, limited storage capacity

DVD-RW (or CD-RW) – DVD drives are inexpensive; can be purchased in internal or external models.

Disadvantages: limited storage capacity (discs can hold up to 9GB of data), labeling requirements, manual rather than automated backup process, not geared for businesses doing regular backups.

Tape Drive – One type commonly used is Digital Audio Tape (DAT). **DAT drives** are a good choice for businesses in a server network environment. Tape drives connect via SCSI, SATA and FireWire ports. Each DAT 72 cartridge can hold up to 36GB of uncompressed data. DAT160/DDS6 was recently released and can hold up to 80GB of uncompressed data. Larger and faster drives are available at an added cost but more convenient if you have large quantities of data to backup.

Disadvantages: drive and tape failures, slower than hard drives.

Online Backup – Backing up your data online to a remote server is a quick and easy way to do non-critical backups or transfer large files. Some services are free up to a certain amount of storage space and then will charge based on additional storage requirements. Others charge a flat fee and a price per GB stored. Some services run constantly in the background and will backup your data while your computer is idle or will run on a pre-determined schedule. Advantage: no tapes, discs or external drives to monitor.

Disadvantages: Pricing, services and security vary widely so give us a call for recommendations of reputable backup centers. Should only be used as a secondary backup method.

NAS (Networked Attached Storage) – a storage device that is connected directly to the network. It can be configured with RAID as additional protection. NAS is used frequently as the target for a server backup to avoid external hard drives and storage media.

Disadvantages: Using NAS is a fast and safe method for local backups but doesn't provide offsite storage. Look at online backup options or external hard drives to complete your protection.

Hardware Failure Protection

Data backups are needed for hardware failures, corrupted files, deleted files, and archiving but for critical applications, servers and certain workstations need more protection in order to keep the systems up and running. This is where RAID fits in. **RAID protects against hardware failure.** It does not protect against data corruption or deletion but can eliminate access problems during a hardware failure.

IMPORTANT: Backing up your data is only half of the equation....

It's equally important to verify the data to make sure it is accessible and complete. Keep a copy of your backup off-site for added protection.

RAID (Redundant Array of Independent Disks) – depending on the type of RAID (1, 5, or 10), a RAID setup can protect your data by either writing data to identical drives or partitioning data across multiple drives. The benefit of RAID is that it all occurs in the background - if a drive fails, the other(s) take over. The failed drive can be replaced and another one inserted with very little downtime.

Disadvantages: RAID systems do not protect against corrupt or deleted files. RAID will only provide protection for the files that are currently on the disk(s) even if they are corrupt or an incorrect version. Archived backups (preferably off-site) are the only way to ensure access to a file.