

"Anything
that can
go wrong,
will go
wrong."

- *Murphy's Law*



Five Tenets of Catastrophe Avoidance



Fire hit Harpar Enterprises hard. Their offices burned, their computers were destroyed. Yet this BC-based trucking company was back in a matter of hours. Danny Harpar, the Operations Manager, quickly secured temporary office space. He got new computers and then, in just a few simple steps, with the help of their online backup provider's 24/7 support, Harpar was able to restore all their business-critical data. A minimal investment in online backup resulted in a major cost savings for the business. Harpar was able to quickly restore all of its software and business data, maintain customer service levels and keep the cash flowing as the company picked up the pieces.

Introduction

The modern trucking business relies heavily on computers for planning loads, tracking trucks, managing invoicing and billing, email, faxing, and maintaining a web presence. We take our smooth-running network for granted until it flatlines. Murphy's Law taught us -- if it can happen, it will happen. Disaster is something that only seems to happen to "other people", but the fact is it will strike every company at some point.

Preparing for disaster and having a recovery plan in place is crucial. Being prepared for potential disasters and planning how to effectively deal with them allows your company to continue to operate with minimal disruption and remain competitive.

Common Catastrophes

- **Fires**
- **Floods**
- **Hurricanes**
- **Earthquakes**
- **Wind Storms**
- **Snowstorms**
- **Landslides**
- **Sabotage by an ex-employee**
- **Theft**
- **Loss of Utilities and Services**
- **Computer Viruses**
- **Hackers/Cyber-crime**
- **Hard drive crashes**



Consequences: The Costs of Catastrophe

The dollar losses your business suffers after a disaster can be catastrophic if you cannot recover quickly. Most trucking companies run the risk of losing customers or drivers if they are offline for more than a few hours. Imagine the consequences of losing all of your customer/vendor contact files, or losing outstanding accounts and receivables information. Losing these types of data could be fatal to your business.

Some common costs incurred by disasters include:

Common Disasters:

- *Loss of customer confidence*
- *Loss of market share*
- *Loss of revenue and profit*
- *Lost opportunity to respond to new orders*
- *Loss of time spent on the backlog of work*
- *Loss of staff time while they work to recover or recreate data*
- *Cost to replace office*
- *Cost to replace equipment and furniture*
- *Cost to replace hardware and software*
- *Cost to recover or recreate lost files*
- *Inability to collect on receivables due to inability to prove work performed*
- *Inability to cross-check incoming bills for accuracy due to missing expected billing data*

Five Tenets of Catastrophe avoidance

Taking potential problems into consideration ahead of time allows you to effectively minimize interruption and restore operations quickly when a disaster strikes. A business must ensure the following are in place:

- 1. All business-critical data is backed up**
- 2. A disaster recovery plan is prepared and understood by key employees**
- 3. Computers are protected by firewalls and regular antivirus updates**
- 4. Server room is physically secured by installing locks or even a gate**
- 5. Fire and security alarms are installed and routinely checked**

By far, backing up your business-critical data is the number one thing you can do to ensure your company is protected when disaster strikes. There are many different ways to backup your data, but the most common are:

Tape Backup

Tape backup has been the traditional method of backup for trucking companies, however it is quickly becoming obsolete. A user has to manually switch tapes each day, which is inconvenient and often forgotten in a busy office. Tape backup has a slow transfer speed, and can be unreliable -- tapes are damaged by magnetic fields, so there is always the potential issue of data loss. Tapes and tape drives are also quite expensive.

External Hard-Drives

External hard-drives offer larger amounts of backup space than tape backup, and are also faster than tape backup. However many business choose not to go with this option because of the costs of purchasing extra drives. External hard drives are delicate and can easily be damaged by being dropped or jarred too hard, and are also susceptible to damage by magnetic fields. Like tapes, a user has to manually switch drives each day, making it inconvenient and prone to human error.

Network Backup

Network backup is also faster than tapes, and is easier to set up and maintain than external drives -- no users need to be involved to switch tapes or drives. However it doesn't protect a company's data from a catastrophe which affects all servers in the office (i.e. fire, earthquake, etc).

Online Backup

Web-based storage is recognized as the best backup method for a number of reasons.

- *It is the safest method. The backup is done over the internet, so there is no risk of physically losing a drive or tape. The business simply schedules backups to be delivered via the internet and the data is stored on disks at a storage service provider's data center.*
- *It is fully automatic, making it the easiest backup method by far -- set it and forget it.*
- *It eliminates personnel costs: There is no need for the business to have an IT proficient person to access or restore the data; There is no possibility of human error; No time is wasted picking up the physical data from an off-premises storage, and no time wasted looking for the right tape or drive.*
- *The cost, a monthly service fee, tends to be much lower than media-based backup methods, even in the long run.*
- *All backups are offsite, so it can withstand any type of catastrophe.*

Now You Are Backed Up: The Rest Of The Plan

Having your data and programs backed up is the first and most critical step. But you also need a recovery plan.

A good plan begins with knowing who to call and what you need. Simply making sure that you have the number of your real estate agent, your insurance agent, your banker, computer supplier and your phone company in your cell phone is a key piece.

Having a thumb drive with your key business contacts – customers, drivers, shippers, brokers, staff – in your pocket is potentially a life saver. Make sure you have the names, addresses and emails (business and personal if possible).

Knowing what sort of computer you are running and in what configuration is important as well. Recovery will start when you have a new machine up and running.

Have a plan for the first 72 hours. Letting key business contacts know about your catastrophe and what your plans are will give them the chance to make alternative arrangements while you are coming back up to speed. You may want to think about a friendly competitor who can handle the traffic you can't. Have that arrangement in place before disaster strikes.

As you repair the damage let your customers know how you are doing. If you have to move send your business contacts your new address and new phone number (if necessary) with an estimate as to when you will be back in full operation.

A real communications plan is essential to ensure your business returns to normal. So is patience, hard work and the commitment you and your staff make to getting back up and running.

Conclusion

A business's perceived reliability is critical for success. John D. Rockefeller said "I always tried to turn every disaster into an opportunity". With some simple planning a trucking company can ensure it is minimally impacted when disaster strikes. When their customer base realizes that their shipments were not effected despite a disaster, it becomes an excellent customer-retention opportunity. Backing up is the insurance that protects a business's most valuable assets from catastrophe - it's data and it's reputation.

FAQ

Want more info? You can read frequently asked questions about Online Backup [here](#).

Would your company survive a catastrophe?

Find out more about online backup at Tailwind Management System's free online training session. During this 20 minute webinar, you'll learn how to easily protect your business.

Topic: How to Protect Your Business From Disaster with Online Backup

Host: Raymond Tishenko, Operations Manager

Date: Wednesday July 29, 2009 at 10:30am PST

To Register: Email sharon@tailwindsys.com with your name and company.

If you're unavailable at that time, you can view the webinar recording on our website starting July 30, 2009.

About Tailwind Transportation Management Systems

Tailwind provides affordable and easy to use dispatch software that skillfully handles all aspects of trucking LTL and Full Load operations, as well as Admin and Freight Brokering. Quickly handle your dispatching, driver pay, customer management, equipment management, invoicing, billing, A/R and A/P. It is fully-integrated with multiple services, including automatic mileage, GPS, fuel tax, electronic document storage, and more. Financing & special pricing plans available. Try a free demo today.

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