

# SMBs: Data without borders, back-up without worries

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The world is becoming more and more digital. Even in smaller companies not directly operating in the technology industry, a great amount of data is created for every single process.

This generates a huge need for a secure and reliable storage system at any level of the supply chain. Paper archives and folders have been replaced by digital archives, which are lighter, handier and more practical to use. Storing data safely and making them accessible to all employees has become a must.

This evolution stems from a number of factors, such as the different relationship between IT and business and the advancements in storage technologies. There looms an even more disruptive factor in the background: the explosion of data, which is reported by all analyst firms. Among the many forecasts, IDC predicts between 2013 and 2020 an expansion of the digital universe from 4.4 to 44 trillion Gigabytes.

Small and Medium Businesses (SMBs) are completing their digital transformation at a quicker pace compared with large enterprises: as a matter of fact, almost two-thirds of SMBs (64%) are planning to complete the digitisation of paper documents within the next three years (source: Coleman Parkes/Ricoh Europe). However, storage space is often limited and expensive. The constantly growing requirement for space, results in a permanent increase in costs. The workspace is limited, too, and many offices can't afford a dedicated server room.

## Back-up is absolutely essential

Back-up is not only critical, it is absolutely essential for every business, regardless of its size. Together with people and brand, data is the most important asset of any business. Data is measureable, and has a value in monetary terms. Saving, protecting and managing it safely, plus making sure that it doesn't get lost must become the primary goal of every IT manager. Not only storing data securely is critical, but one must make sure that this data is replicated - at least once, preferably twice or more - in order to be doubly safe. In other words: back-up is a kind of life insurance for data.

Unfortunately, back-up is too often underestimated, although in recent years its importance to organisations has been on the increase. A real education has to be carried out on consumers, the individuals who create and consume data. Gartner predicts that by 2016 each household will have around 3.3 TB of data.

In my opinion, there are mainly two reasons for the low adoption of back-up processes, both not concretely measurable and related to intangible aspects, such as lack of education and laziness. It's not a matter of budget anymore: nowadays, efficient back-up software paired with good hardware is very affordable. The real issues are time and education: that is why

we keep on investing a significant amount of resources to train the channel at all levels to transfer the idea of back-up as a key concept.

While technology is evolutionary by nature, storage is one of its most dynamic and innovative areas. Developments in this field are changing the way we manage, share and access files, in other words the way we work. Back-up, storage servers, cloud, virtualisation are just some of the possibilities that enable companies to protect and safeguard critical data, promote efficiency and meet the increasing need to manage bigger and bigger volumes of different data. But not all solutions are equivalent.

Storage vendors are called to ensure data security and protection with suitable technology tools. The whole process of data storage, access and management is potentially at risk and must be protected in its entirety. Not forgetting the loss of physical control on personal data carries some psychological uncertainty. However, the market is offering a number of dedicated solutions, which are often both easy and innovative. These are products, mainly Network Attached Storage (NAS) and Storage Servers, which feature all the technologies required by a corporate system, such as Active Directory, high scalability, redundancy, Gigabit Ethernet ports, iSCSI, FTP server and p2p, but at the same time are lightweight, compact in size, and simple to use.

## Personal Cloud

I do believe in Personal Cloud: namely the ability to create your own cloud in which to place personal data, while keeping the possibility to access them from anywhere - this brings the cloud home, or to the desired business environment. Files are stored safely while dedicated apps let you access, edit, save and share data anywhere in the world. Creating and sharing folders, inviting specific users, is a particularly appealing option, but should be considered with caution. Choosing carefully with whom to share explicit information or materials with is just common sense, like picking a suitable password to access critical services.

The evolution of technology and the change in business needs to shape new storage requirements on the network and the emerging trends bring to light concepts such as convergence, standardisation, advance planning and disaster recovery, with the final goal of overcoming existing limits in terms of footprint and cost. New, advanced systems are built on ultra-compact, high-density storage devices, and provide scalability to support a future growth that's both consistent and safe.

## ABOUT ANAMIKA BUDREE

I am brand sales manager at WD South Africa. WD, a Western Digital company, is a long time innovator and storage industry leader. As a storage technology pacesetter, the company produces reliable, high-performance hard disk drives and solid state drives. These drives are deployed by OEMs and integrators in desktop and mobile computers, enterprise computing systems, embedded systems and consumer electronics applications, as well as by the company in providing its own storage products.

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