



Where Is Your Backup Data? continued

town and were also damaged by the heavy rains.

Off-site means off-site. But when storms the size of the continent of Europe are threatening, one needs to think a bit differently about what exactly "remote storage" means. A-couple-of-states-away may seem remote in good weather, but when the 100-plus miles per hour winds and 6 inches per hour rain bands extend across several state lines and time zones, the idea of remote is easily confused with local.

Where is your backup data? How many redundant copies do you have? Where are they located?

When you started your business and your records were smaller, a backup disk or tape located at home or across town might have been adequate. As your business has grown, are the precautions that you have taken to protect and preserve business-critical information kept up? Is a solution that was acceptable for a pre-9/11

world or a pre-Hurricane Katrina and Wilma world still adequate today?

When disasters hit such large areas, a non-local solution could be the only way to ensure both the security and availability of your data. National services might be more attractive, specifically because they are so remote geographically.

Perhaps the idea of backup (as in backup disks or backup tapes) needs to be reconsidered. When infrastructure such as highways and airports are shut down, what good is your physical tape or disk sitting intact in a vault hundreds or thousands of miles away? Maybe it is time for you and your IT team to look once again at crisis planning and the suitability of having an online continuous backup service.

Fees range from \$100 to a few hundred dollars per month and allow continuous backup and easy restoration/re-creation of lost or damaged files. Maybe you will be lucky

enough to never suffer through a hurricane, flood or tornado, but perhaps you are only a couple of weeks away from a server or a hard-disk crash.

There are many ways that today's complex information technologies can fail. Some of the services for remote, online backup that I have seen include Evault, LiveVault, Intronis Technologies and Remote-Backup.com. Before you sign up for these services, your IT people should verify the security offered.

The precision machined products industry is fortunate. The havoc wreaked by the hurricanes of 2005, for the most part, has missed our homes and shops. However, the real world of disk failures, sabotage, accidents and other disasters could become our turn in the months or years ahead. Where is your backup data?

Critical Skills For Effectiveness In Today's New World — Part 4 Of 4

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There are four trends that define the differences between yesterday's way of maximizing effectiveness and today's: 1) Solo to team performance; 2) Stand-alone company to link in supply chain; 3) From problem detection to process failure prevention; and 4) From managing data to empowering decision making. This month's article looks at the fourth of these trends.

From Managing Data To Empowering Decision Making

Many of us pride ourselves on our use of data to drive our decision

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Critical Skills continued

making. Yet, when I ask people about how they decided to do this or purchase that, they seldom show me data. They tell me about their “gut feeling” or how it “just seemed right” at the time.

While intuition, experience and time on task can be helpful to decision making, I’ve watched many committees, companies and others make absurd decisions and wild claims because they were operating on the basis of what they knew rather than what the data told them.

Does the data exist? Before you can make decisions using data, it is critical that the data exists. I have been called in to assist with potential product recall situations and my first question is about containment, specifically, “How many parts are affected and where are they now?”

Without this critical information, there is no containment, and risk and potential costs can grow unchecked with every part not accounted for. This is a worst-case scenario, but the fact remains that very few companies have the right data available for their decision making, despite the piles of reports and Terabytes of server storage on their networks.

Is the data valid? Someone hands you a report that supposedly has the data. How do we know this data is valid, complete and not biased or missing a key piece of needed information? “Garbage In/Garbage Out” has not been made colloquial by all of the improvements in computer technology. Does your process ensure that you get the facts, nothing but the facts and, by the way, all of the facts?

Access to data. This is one of the most critical aspects that a company can address in terms of intelligently managing facts and data. Who has the data, who can get the data, and who is qualified to understand and make inferences and judgments from the data?

The data is worthless sitting on a server or in an executive office somewhere. It has value only when it is available and in use by people who are qualified to understand it, know how it was collected and able to tell if it is OK to use.

It has value only when it is available to the process owner in real-time. That allows the owner to take the actions needed to keep the process operating in control or to decide to shut down the process to prevent the manufacture of a discrepant product.

Empowerment. Despite its having 11 letters, “empowerment” is really a four-letter word. It challenges the time-honored, top-down chain of command management structure that was typical of most organizations until the late 20th Century.

Yet, as we can see whenever they have a World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting somewhere, the vertical command and control structures of the authorities are seldom sufficient to cope with cell phone and text messaging lateral communications. Such communications allow on-the-ground anarchists to change their tactics and targets instantaneously. Decision-making authority should be at the level where it needs to be employed, not sought as a blessing from above.

Empowerment versus risk. Decision making is difficult for a culture that

is used to following orders. Obedience is not only easier, it’s also safer than thinking for oneself. But the mindless production of parts, because the risks of shutting off the machine are greater than the risks of making nonconforming parts, is not acceptable. It endangers not only the employees involved, but also the enterprise itself and the entire value chain—all the way to the consumer.

It is a new world we live in. To be successful, today’s managers must understand that it is the quality of the decisions made by their employees that makes the difference. Given the right data, employees can intelligently manage risk. Given a process to manage processes, your shop has a viable road map to zero parts per million.

Add to that the contribution that management makes by ensuring that our businesses return the cost of capital, and we can see that a proper management focus for success includes establishing connections up and down the supply chain and facilitating the work of your people. It may have been a lot easier being a manager in the old days, but it couldn’t have been as challenging and as rewarding as it is today.