

Computer Bits by Mark Eggert of Raad One Network Solutions, Inc.

Welcome to Computer Bits, a series of articles on computers and network information. This month's question deals with remote or online backups. The question was: "Are these online backup services worth it?"

I must admit that I had to do some research on this as I use and have been recommending local backups of data. There are a number of companies offering this service and the types and qualities of service as well as the prices vary greatly. If you have a broadband internet connection or better, online backups may be right for you. All of the services have a monthly storage fee based on the amount of data backed up. It seems that the more data you backup the lower the per unit cost is. Some services charge a base fee plus the storage fee. The storage fee start between \$6.00 and \$20.00 per Gigabyte (GB) of data and base fees are around \$20.00. Depending on the amount of data you need to backup, local backup devices run from \$100.00 to \$1,000.00 or more plus the cost of media. So are they worth it depends on the amount of data you need to backup and on which service you use. One thing to note is that after a number of months of storage fees, online backup will become more expensive than local backups. This may be a few years or more and will need to be accounted for in determining if it's worth it.

I would like to point out some of the advantages and disadvantages of using an online backup service. Some of the advantages: You don't have to manually change or keep track of your backup device and its media. Your data is stored off-site and I hope at a secure area where it is backed up by local devices. If you need to restore data it's as easy as being connected to the internet and using their interface to retrieve your data. As for some disadvantages: You're sending your data over the internet! Yes, the data is encrypted when sent but it's still being sent over the internet. Most of the inexpensive services only keep the most current copy of the data you upload, so you can't go back to an older version of a file. This feature is available but it is more expensive. If something were to happen to your business and your local data, you could only retrieve your data if you have an internet connection. And this type of backup is really on feasible if you have a broadband or faster internet connection.

I would be really interested in hearing from anyone who has looked into this and made the calculation of it's worth or is using online backup. Hopefully, you'd be willing to share your experiences.

If you have a computer or network question you'd like answered and you think others would like to know the answer too, please forward them to me. My email address is meggert@wi.rr.com, my phone number is 262-679-7704 and my fax number is 262-679-7664.