Veritas Backup Exec™ Best Practices Timeless Data Protection Tips

BEST PRACTICES: Backup, Recovery and Disaster Recovery

Protecting critical data and applications against disasters and data loss, shortening backup windows, keeping pace with ever-growing amounts of data, achieving lightning-fast recoveries and making backup processes more efficient are key goals for all data protection administrators. To help you achieve these and more, we've compiled the top timeless backup and recovery tips.

Document your organization's data protection policies and procedures.

Backing up your data is not a one-time event; it is a critical part of conducting business. Have procedures in place so that your data, applications and systems are safely backed up and ready to be recovered. Ensure that business data owners understand and agree with these policies. Determine backup frequency by data type, application and database. Not all data and systems are created equal.

Test. Test. Test.

The only thing worse than not backing up your data is not being able to restore it. Imagine a disaster strikes and all your organization's data is destroyed. Recovery time is too late to find out your backups are corrupted, or the wrong files are backed up, or some other nastiness has occurred. Test your backups regularly to ensure data can be restored. This also develops your muscle memory for restoring critical data and servers. Don't wait until a disaster happens.

Ensure you're running application aware virtual machine backups.

Crash-consistent backups do not quiesce applications and databases which leaves room for data corruption and/or lost data. Protecting your virtual machines in an application-aware manner will ensure that there are no unfinished database transactions or incomplete application files during data copy operations. This results in a fully recoverable virtual machine that will be accessible upon restore.

Follow best practices when protecting virtual machines.

Stop protecting VMs as if they were physical machines. This slows down backups and hogs resources. By deploying a solution designed and built for VMs such as Backup Exec™ or NetBackup™, you benefit from fast backup performance with lower overall storage consumption. Recover what you need, when you need it. Solutions designed for VMs include: VMware VADP integration, VMware changed block tracking support, VSAN support, VMware block optimization support and Microsoft's VSS API integration.

Use deduplication to keep pace with growing data volumes.

Data deduplication dramatically lowers the amount of infrastructure required for backups, reducing your storage, network and server costs. Data deduplication takes place at the source, target or appliance. Source deduplication permits greater scalability by spreading processor load across all clients running backups, enabling your backup server to run more concurrent backups. This also minimizes network load as only unique data blocks (deduplicated data) are sent to the backup server.

Target deduplication takes place after backup data has arrived at the backup server, and just before data is stored to disk. Target deduplication does not impact source systems any more than a typical backup. Appliance deduplication is driven by a hardware device, which processes the data in-line (while it's being sent) or after receipt. With many flexible deduplication options, Veritas Backup Exec and NetBackup enable you to choose the best method for your environment, while tackling growing data volumes and delaying new infrastructure investments.

Stop running two backups for granular recovery.

There are many solutions available today that provide recovery agility through a single pass backup. With Backup Exec and NetBackup, you can recover anything from a single email, a whole mailbox or the entire information store all from a single-pass backup of your Microsoft Exchange Server. Forget multiple-pass backups and save time, resources and storage.

Quickly and easily migrate existing physical systems to virtual machines.

Don't get overburdened with converting physical machines to virtual machines. Use the migration accelerator to speed through physical to virtual conversions (P2V) with the simple click of a button. This will save you time and reduce complexity.

Choose a backup vendor that can support all forms of recovery.

The #1 reason to backup is to recover. Don't get caught offside when it comes to recovery. Ensure you can recover what you need, when you need it without complex, time consuming restore processes. Look for a data protection solution that includes granular recovery, file and folder recovery, entire application, database, virtual machine and server recovery.

Stop scripting snapshots.

Using scripts to orchestrate snapshots for data protection is complex and unreliable. Find a backup solution that orchestrates snapshots for you without scripts. For example, with NetBackup Replication Director, snapshots can be easily integrated with your data protection strategy. Snapshots are cataloged for file and object level restores, and further replication can be performed to make sure you're prepared for a disaster.

Pick the right storage media.

If you are using tape media, ensure you are aware of its average life span. Not all manufactures are the same. Some experts recommend replacing a tape after approximately 100 operations because the magnetic media degrades over time. Removable hard disks normally needs to be replaced when after 5 years, or when you are about halfway to the MTBF (Mean Time Between Failure). Either media type should be replaced when backup write or verify errors are reported. Best practices emphasize importance of selecting the right type of media for particular operations: high speed disk for near term operations, with tape and removable disk suitable for off-site storage and archiving. If you do need to replace media, this is a good time to consider options. Cloud-based storage and archiving, for example, can provide many benefits including reduced storage hardware management and flexible pricing options. Be sure your data protection solution can address the cloud storage tiers and locations that are right for the data.

Encrypt your backups.

Production data and backup data is susceptible to threats. Guard against your critical data getting in the wrong hands should it become lost or stolen. Always encrypt your backups. Keep a copy offsite or offline so that ransomware can't render the backup files useless.

Learn your backup error log messages.

There is always the chance that a problem with your backup occurs. Knowing how to read your data backup error log messages saves you time fixing common backup problems.

Keep one or more backups off-site.

Disasters do happen. That's why it is so important to keep one or more backup copies offsite. Imagine you experience a site-wide disaster and your only copy of the backup data is stored in that building. Don't risk losing your data or your job. Ensure you have at least one copy in a second location just in case. Practice restoring it from the remote site so that you and your colleagues know how to do it.

Keep backups healthy.

One of the easiest ways to keep your backups healthy is to run a verify job. A verify job checks that data can be read or restored from the backup media. You can run a verify job on-demand or scheduled it after the backup job completes. Both Backup Exec and NetBackup include this feature as a default.

Deploy a single solution for all your organization's data.

A single solution for physical and virtual machines with strong cloud connectivity eliminates managing multiple backup solutions, paying for multiple backup programs, supporting multiple infrastructures, running multiple backup jobs, and backing up duplicate data across physical and virtual. Reduce costs and simplify backup tasks with a unified data protection solution that addresses virtual, physical and cloud data.

More Information

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