

Server Ghosting

How will you cope with disaster?

If your business relies on your server for file-sharing and email services, you probably don't want to think about what would happen if something bad happened to it. Rebuilding a server from the ground up is a time-consuming, costly process and it's never really the same afterwards – like getting your car back from the crash repairer's. Fortunately, there is an easy way to preserve your server's time-honoured settings and programs.

Cloning your server

The simplest solution is to clone, or "ghost" your server's hard disk. This simple procedure involves connecting an external hard disk and the cloning software on your server and having one of our friendly technical consultants perform the clone. It is a non-destructive procedure that gives you an extra defence in the event of a calamity. But isn't that illegal?

It's not illegal. The image file as it exists cannot be used to start another machine; therefore there is no chance of violating Microsoft's licence agreements by running two copies of Windows at once. You can guilt-free enjoy the peace of mind that comes with the knowledge of having a backup of your entire primary hard disk. So, that means I can get rid of this tape drive ... right?

Wrong! Cloning your hard disk is an extra measure to help save time in the event of your server failing. There are a number of good cases for remaining vigilant when dealing with your tape backup:

Most servers have more than one hard disk: one containing things give your server its functionality (referred to as the primary disk), and at least one for data and other important applications. This process only clones the primary disk.

Your data changes every day, and we recommend cloning the drive every three months. This means that when the server is restored from a clone, it will be exactly as it was at the time of the last clone. After the restore is complete, we would need the most recent tape backup to restore your data. The process creates one image file. The tape backup routine has built-in fallbacks in case a backup is not valid. This ensures that we can restore the maximum amount of data.

tsh can provide the hardware and software to perform the cloning procedure at a competitive price. We recommend cloning once every three months or immediately after a major system upgrade or change; the more often it happens, the more time you save if things go pear-shaped.

We can store your external hard disk in our office so that if your server has been stolen or suffered a disk crash, we can supply the necessary replacements and (in most cases) quickly re-apply the clone to the new hardware. This minimises the downtime experienced by your business and saves on labour costs associated with rebuilding the server from scratch.

What's involved?

The process takes around two hours (depending on your server configuration), during which time it will be inaccessible to users, so **tsh** recommends performing the clone after hours or at a time of light usage. A **tsh** technical consultant will visit your site and install the external hard disk and Ghost software, then restarts the server to clone. Once the clone has finished, we restart the server and ensure everything is still running as it should be. We then take your external hard disk away and store it in our office for ready access.

Contact **tsh** today to enquire about this and other services we can provide to keep your business running smoothly.