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The Three W's of Backing Up

We are all guilty of not backing up some piece of important data at one time or another. When disaster strikes we look pretty foolish for not backing up the data. We then make a quick and usually bad choice and select the wrong backup solution. If you are not an IT guru but the normal small business manager, you have to make very important backup decisions without the background or experience required. That leads me to the three W's: Why, When, and Where of backing up to help inform you.

Why: Simply because data loss can happen to anyone.

There are many reasons why consumers and businesses experience data loss:

Hard drive failure. According to a recent study by Google, an average of 1.7% of drives fail within a year and more than 8.6% of drives fail after three years.

Hardware failure. Failure of other hardware, such as hard drive controllers or memory, can cause data corruption.

Improper system shut-downs. Data can become corrupted when systems are improperly shut down, due to a power failure, or because a user simply presses the power-off switch before properly shutting down the operating system.

Computer viruses and malware. Some studies report that up to 7% of data loss is attributable to computer viruses and malware.

Disasters and on-site losses. Site-related data loss can occur due to power surges, fire, flooding, earthquake and theft.

Disgruntled employees. Sadly, much loss comes at the hands of companies' own employees. Disgruntled employees may intentionally delete files, format their hard disks or attack server-based data that they routinely access to do their jobs.

Human error. Even happy employees can be responsible for data loss if they accidentally delete files or

spill a cup of coffee that results in a computer failure.

Theft and loss. A recent Ponemon Institute study, sponsored by Dell, revealed that up to 12,000 notebooks are lost in airports. Fifty-three percent of the business travelers polled in the survey said their notebooks carry sensitive corporate data, but a surprising 42% of the respondents admitted that they do not backup their data. Amazingly, the survey found that 65% to 70% of the lost notebooks are never reclaimed.

When: It all depends on your business needs.

Frequency of data change and the risk of data loss are the primary factors that should impact the decision of when to backup. The type of computer being backed up can also be a factor in the when question. A desktop, for example, is not usually left on after

hours so these need to be backed up during business hours.

Where: Data can be backed up to tape drives, CDs or DVDs, USB flash drives, direct-attached USB flash drives, or the Internet.

As with backup strategies, each media selection offers advantages and disadvantages.

Tape Drives. Because of the relatively attractive ratio of cost per Gigabyte, tape drives have been a traditional choice of many IT departments for backing up huge amounts of data. Tape is a sequential media and, although write speeds to tape can exceed those of writes to disks in some cases, locating and restoring files from tapes can be more time-consuming than restoring files from disk-based backups. Automated robotic tape-changing mechanisms

can reduce the work of tape rotation and managing large numbers of tapes.

CD or DVDs. These optical media types offer relatively limited capacities (700MB and 4.3GB respectively) but have the advantage of being inexpensive. New Blue Ray high-density DVDs offer double the capacity of traditional DVDs. The most common CD-R and DVR-R formats can be written to only once and their volumes closed to prevent future changes. Write-once media is required by federal regulations for archival storage for some industries. There has been some discussion about whether or not CD-R and DVD-R media types are appropriate for long term archival purposes because of their relatively short life span. Inexpensive aluminum-based CDs can have a life span that is relatively short. However, some media manufacturers offer premium, gold-based media that is certified for

The Three W's of Backing Up*(continued)*

USB Flash Drives. With capacities ranging up to 128GB, flash drives offer a convenient, if not inexpensive, way to backup data. Many consumer-oriented flash drives lack encryption. Since it is fairly easy to misplace or lose a flash drive, these are generally inappropriate for business use. However, some companies offer drives with automatic 256-bit encryption as well as models that are FIPS 140 level 2 compliant for federal government use.

Direct-attached USB Drives. Recent advances in technology have expanded the capacity of single disks to 2TB (terabytes) and have pushed the prices of USB/Firewire direct attached external devices down to about \$200. Devices that are 1 TB are available for less than \$100. These devices offer a large amount of storage at a reasonable cost. They

are easy to connect and they provide rapid recovery times, but they may become damaged if they are moved to be stored off-site.

Internet Cloud-based Storage. The increasingly fast broadband speeds available to both consumers and enterprises have produced an entire industry of companies offering online backup services. Many of these online backup service providers offer geographically redundant storage in data centers that are staffed 24/7 by IT professionals. Corporate data is encrypted prior to transmission to the storage providers, so while these providers may store a company's data, they do not have access to it. Online storage can be a viable backup option for small to medium businesses that do not have a dedicated IT staff to help manage the backup process. Importantly, online storage ensures that mission-critical data is stored off-site so that data is

not lost in the event of a disaster, such as a fire or flood.

Help Promote 9G Backup!

As customers using 9G Backup, you have a unique opportunity to tell us about your good experiences with our new product.

Please submit your stories to marketing@cogitateinc.com and include: your name (if you'd like it to be known), your official title, your company name, and your experience. You may even have an opportunity to appear in an interview if we select your testimonial! Your participation is greatly appreciated.

HMS/MMS Tip of Month

Anytime you load an existing journal just to look at it, you should click UNLOAD when exiting. This will insure that the journals get closed properly, and you won't get the message "User currently locked in a previous post session" or "User has a pending journal." As long as you don't make any changes just click UNLOAD. Of course, if you make changes, you need to re-commit.

UtilAbility Tip of the Month

Whether you are posting meter readings, calculating bills or posting cash receipts, all the entries you save in any one session are automatically assigned a journal number and they belong to that journal. Names are assigned to the journals based on the type of function from which they originated, along with important dates related to that function. By examining the journal for any record, you can easily determine its origin.

There are several things you can do with journals that you could not do as easily if the entries were saved without them. The journal numbers act as group identifiers for all the entries saved in any one session for any of the functions listed above. You can perform operations on an entire group of entries simply by specifying their journal number. For example, using our Change Various Journal Values utility, you can change important date information for all the entries in an entire journal. For more information on this utility, please see the July, 2010 Newsletter located in our Newsletter Archive on our web site: www.cogitateinc.com/news.html.

You can also sort and search by journal number from within the UtilAbility Central form to locate records and groups of records by the journals they belong to.

You can limit and sort the information printed on reports and even print totals and summary information for journals such as when running Billing and Receipt Journal reports or Meter Readings lists.

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UtilAbility Tip of the Month*(continued)*

To quickly view a list of the journals in your database, click the Journals menu Item located under the Maintenance menu on the main form. Here, you can select any journal in the top list by its Journal Number, Journal Type and Journal Description. The bottom list will display all the entries belonging to the selected journal. You can edit certain information related to the selected journal and you can even easily delete the entire selected journal and all its entries. This makes your data appear as if you had never performed the function to create the selected journal at all. This can be useful if you find a mistake in a journal and simply want to remove it and start over.

As you're working in UtilAbility, watch for the journal numbers and see if you can find other ways they can help you perform tasks, locate and identify

information, and summarize data. Remember, journals are simply numbers assigned to groups of records to help you manage your data more efficiently.

Inventory Control Procedures

Inventory management is an important function at a road commission, as inventory is usually the second largest expense after payroll. Therefore, road commissions need to create processes for managing their inventory.

The two types of inventory systems are periodic and perpetual. A periodic inventory uses physical counts at specific intervals to maintain accurate counts of on-hand inventory. Most road commissions do this once a year; however, closer controls could be maintained if counts were done more frequently.

Perpetual inventory systems update inventory counts on a daily basis. Cogitate's inventory system does this through Inventory Post received and charged. You still need to do physical counts at some point.

Road commissions should limit the number of people who review, order and charge out inventory. This ensures proper amounts of inventory are on hand to meet the needs of the road commission, while establishing some controls.

Inventory replenishment procedures should include an authorized purchase order sent to a vendor or supplier requesting additional inventory products. A designated employee receives and verifies these items and updates the inventory files.

It is very important for road commissions to create strong internal inventory controls, as failing to do so can be very expensive. It is also very

important to establish controls against pilfering or theft. All inventory items should be stored in a secure area. This would include fences, locked buildings, or locked rooms within buildings.

Stuck in an Open Journal Errors

It has happened to all of us at some point: "Unable to open journal. Operator is currently locked in another post session." This error message will appear for the following reasons:

1. You were posting and the power went out.
2. You were posting and the server was rebooted.
3. You were posting and clicked the "DONE" button without committing your journal.

Any situation where the journal was improperly closed will cause this error to occur. There are several utilities that will help you reopen the journal and save your entries.

The first thing you should do is run the Repair Tables application. It's located

under the "Utilities" menu on the main screen. The first screen you will see warns you that all other users should exit the software. A list of current users will be displayed on your screen. If this list only includes yourself and Supervisor, then it's safe to continue; click the "Proceed Anyway" button. If you see users other than yourself and Supervisor in the list, you must ask them to exit the software before continuing. After they have exited the software, click the "Refresh" button at the top of the screen to see who's left in your User Names list. When there's no one but yourself and Supervisor in the list, click the "Proceed Anyway" button.

On the Repair Utilities screen will be a list of various functions you can perform. The first one, "Repair Control Tables," should be used for locked Payroll, Accounts Payable, Accounts Receivable, and Inventory errors. Click the button next to it and click "OK" to rebuild the control tables now. Afterward, click the "Close" button and the "OK" button to terminate the software.

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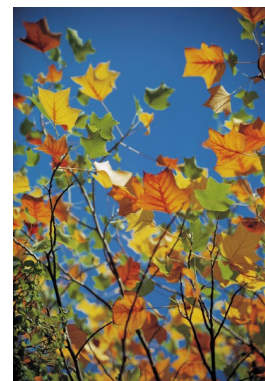
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Stuck in an Open Journal Errors (continued)

Log back into the software and run the post program that said you were locked in another post session. Don't enter any information on the Open Journal screen; simply click "OK" to start a journal. A message should appear saying, "Operator has uncommitted journal. Open existing journal?" Click the "OK" button to open the journal. And there it is: the journal you were working on with all your entries.

If the error occurred when you were working in a GL Post journal, run the Repair Tables application. Again, make sure all users are out of the software before you continue. This time, run the "Repair GL Post Control Tables" function; after it has finished, run the "Repair Control Tables" function. When it has finished, click the "Close" button and the "OK" button to terminate the software.

inventory whether using the Inventory Post program, the AP Post program, or the Cogitate Inventory Barcode Scanner.*

Next, you want to open Inventory Maintenance and start updating inventory items with purchase order-related information. This includes information such as the Min and Max Quantities located on the Dates/Quantity page. These quantities are for your own reference and for use by our automatic Purchase Order generator when calculating your purchase orders.

The Purchase Order Calculation program will generate purchase orders to reorder inventory items that have fallen below their Min Quantity level, to raise their On Hand Quantity to their Max Quantity level. You can even enter seasonal information to use for certain times of the year, if the Min and Max Quantities are not your optimum quantities to keep in stock all year.

Finally, you will want to select vendors for your inventory items from your list

You will need to post your entries again, but you will be able to start a new journal without getting an error.

Cogitate Purchase Order System

Have you ever contemplated using the Cogitate Purchase Order system or wondered what it was like, but thought it might be too much trouble to implement into your system? Why not give it a try? It's actually very easy to get started and you can experiment with it until you feel comfortable enough to begin using it with real data. You can easily remove any data you experiment with when you are ready to start.

Our Purchase Order system helps you better manage your inventory quantities and it was designed in such a way that you will have total control over the level of automation you wish to use. You can post and print all your purchase orders manu-

ally, or you can automatically generate all your purchase orders based on criteria that you have setup to maintain specific inventory quantities. You can even use any combination of the above to create them. When using our automated Purchase Order generator, if a purchase order is created that you do not wish to use, you can simply delete it and it will no longer exist.

The first thing you will need to do to get started is simply check the "Use Purchase Orders" check box, which is located on the Post Options tab in Preferences. You can access Preferences by clicking the Preferences menu item located under the File menu on the main screen. Checking this box activates various purchase order features and enables specific purchase order information to be displayed as you need it. This will be evident when you are posting your received

of vendors and enter their information as it relates to your inventory items. This information is entered on the Vendors page and it will be used when automatically calculating purchase orders. You can enter up to four vendors for each inventory item and you can enter the order of precedence in which the vendors will be used when your purchase orders are generated. The Purchase Order Calculation program considers the order of precedence for each vendor and the vendor with the lowest price each when determining which vendor to use for each inventory item that needs to be ordered. You can also enter information related to quantities as they are sold by your vendors, to ensure that your purchase orders are generated in such a way that you will be ordering a multiple of the quantity as they sell the item.

The Purchase Order Calculation program considers your open purchase orders when determining whether or not it is necessary to order any more items to maintain your inventory quantities. The quantity and

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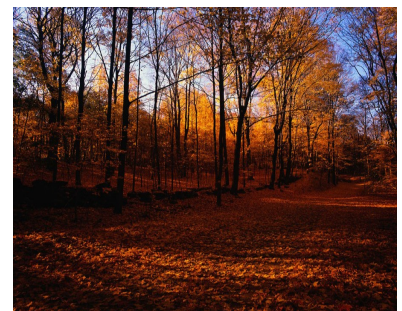
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President@CogitateInc.com



Cogitate Purchase Order System
(continued)

amount on order will be displayed next to the quantity and value on hand for each inventory item on the Inventory Maintenance screen. This information is easily accessible so you will not have to wonder whether or not any more need to be ordered.

As you receive your inventory, you can post their purchase order numbers. The Qty Received on their Purchase Order line items are updated automatically so HMS and relevant reports know that they have been received. You control the overall status of each purchase order by flagging them as closed whenever you want.

There are a variety of reports that you can run showing important purchase order information that will help you along the way. You can limit and sort

their output based on a wide range of criteria such as their status, their effective date, vendors and inventory codes.

You can print an Inventory Status report to show you the Quantity On Hand, Average Price Each and Value On Hand for your Inventory items. You can print an Inventory Reorder report to show you inventory items that require consideration for reordering to replenish your stock. You can choose from several reports to print different types of lists of your purchase orders. Finally, you can print your actual purchase orders.

We encourage you to check out our Purchase Order system and we hope you will find it a valuable tool in your inventory management arsenal.

As always, if you have any questions or comments along the way, please feel free to contact our support staff.

*Using our Purchase Order system enables you to receive inventory using the Cogitate Inventory Barcode Scanner. For more information on our Inventory Barcode Scanner, please see the Cogitate Inventory Barcode Scanner article in our October, 2011 newsletter or you can review the Cogitate Inventory Scanner Documentation located in your Highway Management application folder.

Payroll W2s

Our printable W2 forms have been approved by the SSA. Future updates will include the report to print the 2011 W2s. Be sure to "Check for Updates" to download this report.

Knowledge

-- by Jim Harlan

I have always had a problem with knowledge – I couldn't (or didn't want to) remember anything. Filling up my brain with facts seemed like a waste of my brain's storage. If you could look something up, why bother memorizing it?

This got me into lots of trouble in school where simply reciting what I had been taught was the basis of academic success. I had a reputation as someone who was slow. Nowadays, they would say I was intellectually challenged.

But the real problem was that I was not really intellectually challenged at all. I needed something to put my intellect to the test. Fortunately, as I got older, life provided an abundance of those types of challenges. I found that though lacking in simple facts, I was very good at understanding complex problems. And in the computer business I found an environment where understanding a problem would

lead to its eventual solution. I felt remembering the essence of an idea was the best use of my brain and that led me to being even further uninterested in simple facts.

So I value only the knowledge of concepts and ideas, and I let the facts take care of themselves. There are probably a lot of good reasons that this is a shallow and shortsighted use of anyone's intellect, but I just don't remember them. And that makes me feel good.

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