

PROTECTING YOUR COMPANY AGAINST SAAS DATA LOSS: **WILL YOUR DATA BE THERE WHEN YOU NEED IT?**



Software as a Service (SaaS) applications are becoming the norm throughout the corporate world. As large and small organizations adopt SaaS applications such as Google Apps, Salesforce and Microsoft Office 365, more and more data—including sensitive company, customer and employee data—lives in the cloud. According to Aberdeen Research, however, one-third of companies that use SaaS apps have lost data because of mistakes by users, malicious intent or errors in syncing. It's not a small issue either. In its latest Data Protection Index, EMC reports that enterprises lost \$1.7 trillion in a 12-month period due to data loss and unplanned downtime.

These risks are generally not well understood. While some companies are wary about moving their data to the cloud, many others have the misplaced notion that SaaS vendors are responsible for handling backup, recovery and restore duties. All too often businesses that use SaaS come to grasp these issues reactively, only after they've felt the pain of lost data.

Whether your company has faced that pain yet or not, it's worth asking yourself: Are you sure you're covered for SaaS data backup, recovery and restore functions?

BACKUP

Backing up data is hardly an exciting task, but it is vital to your business operations. According to Enterprise Strategy Group Senior Analyst, Jason Buffington, there is “very little” understanding among most corporations about the risk of data loss from their SaaS applications. Buffington, who has covered the data protection and backup market for years, adds that the SaaS providers themselves do not handle data backup the way most people think. “They’re focused on the availability of the service, not the preservation of the data,” he explains.

When you consider how often non-IT personnel within companies implement SaaS applications, it’s not surprising that data protection falls through the cracks. For example, a sales leader might authorize a move to Salesforce, then delegate a member of the sales operations team to implement it for end users. In that scenario, the IT department might be circumvented altogether, meaning that traditional data safeguards are not implemented. Buffington contrasts that scenario to a traditional IT-led implementation. “If you accidentally overwrite a file in a file server,” he says, “there are 10 ways to get that back. There’s no pain.” In the SaaS world, however, “those safety nets aren’t there.”

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Fortunately, SaaS data-protection technology (also known as cloud-to-cloud backup) has now evolved to address this problem. Companies implementing SaaS applications expect a level of usability, simplicity and self-sufficiency that was not provided in the on-premises world of IT. This applies to SaaS backups as much as any other technology, so companies are turning to third-party solutions that are reliable and easy to use for non-IT personnel.

A backup solution should provide these end users with an open and transparent view of their data,

allowing them to clearly see what is being backed up and when. When issues do arise—for example because a file to be backed up contains no data—users need to be given a clear view of that too. Such a user-friendly interface makes it much easier for nontechnical users to restore lost or deleted items with no frustration or wasted effort.

RECOVERY

Backup alone isn’t enough; it must connect seamlessly with data recovery. It’s important to note that SaaS vendors are generally good at disaster recovery, but that only covers disasters for which they are responsible. No SaaS provider can protect you from yourself, whether that means the malicious actions of an insider at your company or simply an accidental deletion.

Jeff Erramouspe, general manager and vice president of SaaS data protection provider Spanning by EMC, explains that the application vendors actually have a legal obligation to delete data whenever a user tells them to and that the vendors “can’t discern whether that deletion request is legitimate or correct.” That is why you need a third party backing up that data and giving you a clear path to recovery. Without it, data recovery can require weeks of work and thousands of dollars, if it can be achieved at all.

As you rely more on SaaS applications for critical business functions, you need a plan and the supporting technology to minimize risk. Your approach should fully address how you will recover when a data loss event occurs, and it should take into account how you will comply with data protection and recovery requirements imposed on your company by Sarbanes-Oxley, COBIT, FINRA or other regulatory standards.

Erramouspe notes that many of the businesspeople he talks with become aware of the need for SaaS data backup specifically because of those requirements: “More compliance people are saying, ‘why are we treating SaaS application data differently than we treat data in an on-premises application?’” He also finds that awareness of the need for SaaS data backup keeps growing as more enterprises adopt SaaS applications. For instance,

as large companies move away from on-premises Microsoft Exchange servers to Office 365, many of them take the viewpoint that “we’re not going to the cloud unless we have a viable backup solution in place.”

RESTORE

Finally, you need to ensure that you can restore data back to its original state in your applications quickly and easily. Just as many SaaS applications are implemented by non-IT personnel, users should be able to restore their own SaaS data without the help of IT.

Erramouspe emphasizes that this function must be straightforward enough that people will use it not only for large data losses, but also for the frequent small losses that impact individual users. Clearly a big loss in Google Apps or Salesforce data will draw attention, but a low-level data loss will likewise drain energy and resources from your organization. He offers the examples of a financial analyst who accidentally deletes something important from a spreadsheet, or a sales director who makes a similar mistake with client notes in Salesforce. It’s easy to imagine either of those professionals wasting half a day recreating that information while their other responsibilities have to be put on hold.

Incidents like these, Erramouspe says, “at a minimum are going to hurt the business in some way and, at the extreme, could damage the business significantly.” That pain could be felt in lost revenue, for instance if you lose contracts or the details around a business deal that you’re working on. Or it could be felt because you are legally liable when you lose a customer’s data.

Efficient operation means that the technology you use to restore has seamless usability even for nontechnical users. Data is not merely recovered, but restored in the right format to exactly the right places in the application where your end users need it. The best SaaS backup solutions achieve this by retaining not only the raw data, but also the metadata that maintains the correct relationships among data elements. In practical terms that means that if your financial analyst or sales director makes a mistake with data, they can quickly restore it and move ahead with their pressing work.

PROTECT YOUR DATA

As you find the right SaaS data protection solution for your critical cloud application data, be sure that it:

- Works as promised across the backup, recovery and restore functions
- Offers easy usability for your non-technical personnel
- Operates at the service level you need to ensure effective operations

When it comes to SaaS data protection, it pays to be proactive and find the solution that will bail you out when you lose data—before you need it.

Learn how a SaaS backup and recovery solution from Spanning by EMC can help you preventing data loss. Visit spanning.com or start a free 14-day trial at spanning.com/try-it-now

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