

# *5 Steps to Guard against Losing Data*

By Henry Nwaigwe

Regardless of how careful you are, you are likely to lose data once every 3 months if you generate a lot of written work or do a lot of research.

One could loose data or stored information due to three main reasons:

- 1. Virus attack**
- 2. Equipment or Device failure**
- 3. Equipment theft**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> reason is the least common in our society and is hardly reversible, the 2<sup>nd</sup> reason is the most painful because it is avoidable and hardly reversible and the 1<sup>st</sup> reason is the most common and the one **you could reverse given the right software**; though many are ignorant of that.

Just a fortnight ago, I could not access data I stored in a portable drive. I last backed up data from this drive a month ago because I was gathering specific information on a subject, so I said I would make the last backup once I finished the course. That was never to be. For the reasons stated above, I did not backup at the appropriate time and the drive failed. This is hardware or device failure. You are likely not to recover any data from this device unless you are ready to spend at least a thousand pula to do hardware data recovery. At the beginning of this year, we lost data stored on one of our systems due to virus attack. We were able to use data recovery software to recover data from the computer hard disk. Still we lost some data.

How then do we protect ourselves as small offices or home users from these horror stories of losing data? **5 steps you can take.**

## ***Accept you could lose data anytime***

Adopt the realistic attitude that you could loose data anytime without warning due to reasons given above. This attitude would spur you to take all necessary actions to backup your files promptly and regularly.

## ***Make back ups of your documents regularly unto blank CD or DVD.***

Back up important personal files such as (correspondence, pictures, letters, books, articles, music, assignments, thesis, movies etc) from your flash disks and computer hard disks every few days to a blank CD or blank DVD and If possible make duplicate copies of the CD or DVD and keep one in the office. After backing up, test the CD or DVD to confirm backup was properly done. Why do I recommend CD or DVD? I do so for 3 reasons. 1. They are affordable-the backup media is cheap and available everywhere. 2. They are durable as they do not have moving parts or electronic components like flash disks. 3. They are not easily attacked by viruses once you have written onto them.

## ***Use flash & hard disks strictly as temporary storage not as a back-up storage***

I have heard many people say they have a copy of their documents in their flash, or they have a copy in their computer; inferring that if anything goes wrong, they would fall back on the content in their flash disk or in the computer. They forget that it takes one computer filled with viruses to make such drives inaccessible. Again flash disks are easily lost or misplaced; moreover, many of them are mechanically unstable. When you have accumulated data on your flash disk or hard disk, quickly back the data up into a blank CD or DVD and keep the disk away. Then review your flash or hard disk and delete what you have backed-up to reduce clutter. Don't rely on the flash disk or hard disks as disaster recovery devices. They are not.

## ***Avoid copied CD or DVD from other people***

When you make a CD from a virus infected computer, such a CD would contain some of the viruses in the host computer. Painfully enough, anti virus software would not remove viruses from such infected CDs, though it would detect them. The danger is, in a computer with a weak or un-updated anti virus software, the viruses from the copied CD would quickly infect such computers. If you are lucky and you dictate a warning from a copied CD: move data from such a CD to a computer with active anti virus and scan the computer. It would delete the viruses then you can make fresh copies of the CD and destroy the infected one instantly. I have seen a whole organization brought to its knees because of infected copied CDs brought into the office by an innocent staff.

## ***Acquire and Install good anti virus software and update it regularly***

While the above may not protect you totally from data loss, it would protect you and those connected to you against virus related data losses. The internet is the greatest source of viruses; however, it is also the singular most effective way of remaining protected if you have a good anti virus software installed. How? This seemingly contradictory statement proves that you cannot completely be protected from virus attacks if you are not connected to the internet. It is mainly through the internet that an anti virus software is updated and therefore be effective even against viruses that may come through the same media-the internet.

## ***Summing Up***

Backup regularly to a permanent removable media like the blank CD or blank DVD. Never use a flash disk or computer hard disk as back up devices but only as a temporary storage. Update your anti virus software regularly and you won't suffer much. However, be sure of one thing: virus attacks would continue to be more deadly and intractable; storage devices would continue to fail from time to time. Therefore, keep several copies of important documents in different locations. I know we would always lose documents, but there are documents we lose and we would look foolish before our own eyes; nothing could be more humiliating than that. Good luck as you move the important documents from your flash or hard disks to a blank CD or DVD now.

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