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Extending Your Backup Rotation with a Limited Number of Tapes

Backup Maintenance Support TechTip

It's quite common for small businesses to have a standalone backup drive and rotate through a small set of backup tapes, one for each day of the week. Many people are under the impression that this is all the protection they need for their business. Provided that the most recent tape is always taken offsite, this is indeed good practice, but it may not be enough.

While daily backups with an offsite copy can help you recover from hardware failures, virus attacks and natural disasters, anything that goes unnoticed for more than the length of your rotation will cause you major headaches.

The solution is simple: increase the length of your rotation. Unfortunately, at $50-$100 per tape, many budgets don't allow for 90 backup tapes to cover three months of nightly backups. One of the easiest ways to stretch your tape budget is to use an alternate rotation. My favorite is a modified versions of the popular Grandfather-Father-Son (GFS) rotation:

Using only 4 daily tapes (Mo, Tu, We, Th), 3 weekly tapes (Fr-1, Fr-2, Fr-3) and 3 monthly tapes (Fr-4.1, Fr-4.2, Fr-4.3) you can get reasonably good coverage of 3 months of changes at the low, low price of only 10 tapes. By using 20 tapes you can get an entire year of retention!

No more excuses for not being able to recover that PowerPoint presentation you accidentally deleted 3 weeks ago. :-)

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