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[The value of EFFECTIVE computer backup procedures](#)

My pc 'died' a couple of weeks ago and I was forced to find out how effective my backup procedures were. Do you know how good yours are?

Before I became self employed I didn't have any formal backup procedures on my home pc. It took me until September 2006 to obtain an external hard drive and some backup software. The hard drive sits under my desk. The backup software runs at 3am every morning. I was able to set it to backup all my documents, my presentations, spreadsheets, emails, calendar entries, contacts and a number of other programmes and data files.

I was lucky that when the pc packed up my son was home from Uni and he checked everything out for me - to no avail. He got in touch with Hewlett Packard who helped him diagnose a broken motherboard. (Always think that sounds like something from a space-ship). The computer is not yet one year old so I resolved to take it back to CostCo who are renowned for their returns policy. Sorry. They were renowned for this policy but it seems that for computers they enforce a 6 months cut-off.

Oh well, I'd been thinking about getting a laptop anyway so off I went to John Lewis (who provide a standard 2 year warranty for computer equipment). Having unpacked the laptop and run through the setup procedures I connected my external hard drive and found I was able to restore EVERYTHING.

However, amongst the generally small glitches I found out that my email management programme had not kept a complete record of previous email campaigns. I can't pretend to understand what went wrong or whether operator error was involved. Still I have now migrated my system to Constant Contacts which should avoid a recurrence.

I couldn't believe how easy and hassle free it was to use the backup 'restore' programme (from www.genie-soft.com). All my data is fully restored and all the programmes are running fine.

The reason for sharing this story is to highlight how easy it is to run effective backup procedures. I really don't want to imagine how annoyed, frustrated and sick I would have felt had I lost any of the data and information I've been working on over the last

year. Also I know how much time I could have had to spend attempting to replicate my old pc and data files if I hadn't been backing up every night.

The hard drive and the back up programme together cost less than £150. What a bargain!

Of course having an external backup drive under my desk isn't ideal. I'm planning to invest in a simple online backup facility now in addition to my previous procedures - which have already been replicated. You may want to do the same. Don't wait until it's too late.

What do you do?

Of course you know the answer as regards what you do. But are you confident that everyone you have met recently could answer the question a day or so later? Think back to someone you met at the weekend or last week. Do you remember what they do? Not what they 'are' but what they do?

I know many people who just identify themselves by reference to their profession (eg: I'm an accountant) or their specialisation (eg: I'm an employment lawyer). Is this enough? Well it might be but if you meet lots of accountants and lawyers, as I do, how easy do you find it to remember who is who after a few weeks or months? And guess what? The feeling is probably mutual unless you have thought about how you might answer the question so as to make yourself more memorable.

There are two things we all want to happen after we've been networking. One is to be liked by those we have met. The other is to be remembered by those we have met. Indeed if we are not remembered what is the point of networking and meeting new people? The problem is that our egos assume that something we have said or the way we look will ensure that we are memorable. But if we're really honest how likely is it? After all, how many people whom you met over a month or so ago can you honestly remember?

A key element in any form of networking training is to consider how easy do you make it for new acquaintances to remember you - especially if they regularly meet other people in your profession, your business sector or with similar skills?

Part of the answer is the few words you say initially in answer to the question: What do you do?

Try to avoid offering a laundry list. Instead focus on one thing that is phrased so as to encourage a follow up question. If the only response you get involves a change of subject you probably haven't made the most of your opportunity. And you'll never get a second chance to make a first impression.

These days if someone asks me what I do - I have learned to resist the temptation to talk about a portfolio career. My simple answer is: "I help professional firms retain and develop their best people".

I would normally add that "I do this through 1:1 mentoring and that I'm normally engaged by managing partners who are frustrated that junior partners and prospective partners are not as profitable as they could be."

Now here's your chance to let me know if that resonates with you. I'd welcome your feedback both on what I say and on the views expressed in this article.

How do you move forwards?

If I've piqued your interest in my mentoring programme please check out the 5 minute webcast on the mentoring page of my website.

You might also be interested in the free guide I have prepared setting out 12 key skills for ambitious professionals and what they each involve. It's available from the home page of my website.

Also available is my **Personal development 'white paper'**. You can download this directly from the [free resources page](#) of my website. It compares the benefits and results of alternatives to traditional personal development courses for ambitious professionals.

Fun stuff

Here's just one short fun item I recently added to my accountancy jokes and fun blog. You're welcome to check it out to find more such nonsense. Also do please let me know if you have suggestions as to what else I could add to the blog.

To the optimist, the glass is half full.

To the pessimist, the glass is half empty.

To the accountant, the glass is twice as big as it needs to be.

(There are also those who don't waste time describing the glass; Realists: They just want to drink whatever it contains)

Independent Tax Specialists

Do you know anyone who operates on their own account and provides tax support to smaller firms of accountants and other advisers?

I'd be grateful if you would pass on their details to me or ask them to contact me. I have an interesting proposition that they may appreciate. Many thanks.

Final question

This relates back to the networking article above - "*What do you do?*" Please send me a one-line email that answers the question and see if you can ensure that it makes you stand out as different to anyone else who might be replying.

I would also welcome your general feedback by phone, email or through comments on my blogs.

Thanks for reading to the end of this newsletter. Please forward it to your colleagues, to other ambitious professionals and to anyone else who you think might find my activities and ideas of interest.

Many thanks
Regards

Mark Lee