

Five Risks with Traditional Backup Solutions for Dental Software

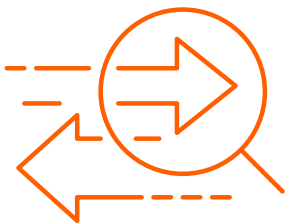
We all know that backups are important for any dental practice that uses dental software. We've all heard the saying about computers: "It's not if it will fail, but when it will fail." Given the surety that the computers in your dental office will fail, you are probably backing up your data regularly. Backups are critical to any business continuity plan, just as important to a dental practice as to any other company. However, you may not realize that there are risks with traditional backup solutions implemented to backup most dental software data.

Traditional backup solutions include some type of removable computer media, like a tape drive or writeable CD/DVD.

Some practices might still use older floppy discs to store their data. At the end of a business day an office staff member typically creates a backup of the practice's data using one of a number of different applications. Theoretically this backup can be used to restore all your data "just in case" the inevitable happens. Your team member may take the media home, so it's "offsite".

No doubt, backing up is important. It is also important to recognize risks inherent in this traditional process that may cause you to believe you have a useful backup when in reality you probably don't.

Here are the five risks inherent in traditional backup processes for dental software:



1. Oops! I'm backing up the wrong data files

It happens all the time. When you make a backup, your software doesn't know anything about what you want backed up. It only knows what you told it to back up. Many times, the person setting up the backup will identify files that are not the active data files the office is using. Perhaps the most common way this happens is when a new backup script is being created, the data that is being backed up is actually an old copy of the same data files that were copied to a different place on the computer. The person making the backup script sees the right file names and assumes they are the actual data files that the software is using on a daily basis, when in fact they are just a copy that was made. There used to be many good reasons for copies of a database to be made such as creating a quick backup when someone is working on that computer (just in case or a new version of the software was installed), or possibly the installation of an update automatically made a backup or moved the data to a new place but left the old data files in place.

The five risks inherent in traditional backup processes for dental software (continued)



No malice is required. Everyone intended to do it right, just an honest mistake. Still the result is that all your data is gone, all your submitted insurance is not traceable, all of your patient history is unavailable, and you don't have a complete record of your patient database. Ouch!

2. I didn't know that backup tapes can "rust"

Did you know that backup tapes rust? The material on the tape that holds the data is a magnetic layer commonly made of a ferromagnetic material. These magnetic compounds oxidize and corrode (or rust) just like any other ferrous metal when they are exposed to water or humidity. It doesn't take too much corrosion to ruin data. In addition to the oxidation of the metallic surface, tapes can become polished from excessive use. This is sometimes called "shoe-shining." Some organizations even suggest that you don't write on the backup tape labels with pencil or ballpoint pens because the graphite or ink particles can flake off and get into the machine transport mechanisms (it is suggested to use felt tip markers instead). Additionally, there is the issue of getting a magnetic backup tape close to some other magnet that can erase all the data on an otherwise good backup tape. Even CD or DVD discs have a shelf life and will deteriorate with time. If your backup tape becomes physically damaged, your backup data is not usable.

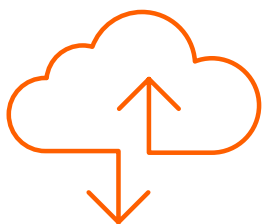
3. "I'm in a rush" (also known as, "I forgot")

Most office staff are understandably anxious to get home at the end of a day. And, it's usually the end of the day that the backup needs to be done. We all have good intentions, and we all try to do what we're asked to do. However, when it's your daughter's birthday party or your son's basketball game on the line, sometimes the more important personal priorities are paramount. Backups take time and with the hustle and bustle in a busy dental practice, forgetting is, well, human.

4. Offsite is my home office

We all know that backup tapes should be taken "off-site" just in case there is a fire or flood in the building that destroys your computer and the backup tape. There are some significant aspects to consider. First, there's legally protected personal health information that is bound by HIPAA regulations—information that is burdened with the responsibility of protection and the consequences of loss or theft. Though putting a backup tape in a bag and taking it home to get it "off-site" is helpful in one way, it creates an incredible risk and liability. You really don't want that liability. Most judges would not consider a backup tape in the home office as reasonable protection for personal health information. It's best to treat this information the way you would your bank access codes. In many respects the government expects you to, so make sure you store data in the cloud.

The five risks inherent in traditional backup processes for dental software (continued)



5. I need to back up the software too?

If one of your computers crashes, or is stolen, or some other event happens that compromises your data, it's all too common that you have the data, but not the software to run it. Sure, you can get the original installation discs, start to reinstall the software, configure the computer, set up the default printers as well as the directory paths. You probably remember that process from the first time you did it. The reason you remember it is because it was such a pain. Not only is it a pain, but it takes a lot of time, time that would be better used treating patients and generating revenue for your practice. The cost of having only the data backed up is tremendous. Unfortunately, backing up the whole software system, not just the data, can take up significant room on a disc or a tape. Sometimes it takes more room than is available and as a result you resort to just backing up the data. It is really frustrating when you have almost finished the backup and the tape runs out of space. Again, the most efficient and effective place to store data is in the cloud.

Fortunately, there is an alternative that we've already mentioned. Web-based systems or cloud-based practice management software take the burden of data backup off the dental office to-do list. Data is backed up continuously during the day, automatically, without anyone making a request.

Next time you plug in a backup tape, think to yourself: Is this backup really good? Will it protect me when my computer fails me? When you're finished, look to the cloud for the best method to back up your critical data

About Curve Dental

Founded in 2004, Curve Dental provides cloud-based dental software and related services to dental practices within the United States and Canada. The company is privately held, with offices in Provo, Utah, and Calgary, Alberta. The company strives to make dental software less about computers and more about user experience. Their creative thinking can be seen in the design of their software, that's easy to use and built only for the web.



Visit us at www.curvedental.com