

Business Exposed to Virtual Data Storage Risks, Survey Finds

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A survey reveals most organizations are storing data in a virtual environment, but safeguards against that data are falling short.

While nearly 90 percent of IT professionals surveyed at VMworld 2010 reported their organizations are storing data in a virtual environment, a third of respondents admitted their organization has not updated or they do not know if it has updated its data loss and/or business continuity plan to account for new storage mediums such as virtual storage, according to a report from Kroll Ontrack, a provider of information management, data recovery, and legal technologies products and services.

The survey, conducted by the company on the show floor at VMworld, Aug. 30 - Sept. 2, offered insight into if and how IT professionals are managing data in a virtual environment. Key findings indicated that of the 90 percent of respondents that reported storing data in a virtual environment, 27 percent have experienced data loss from that environment. Nearly 150 IT professionals participated in this in-person survey, according to the company's manager of Ontrack Data Recovery operations Jeff Pederson. The survey consisted of separate questionnaires to capture the perspectives of virtual environment and non-virtual environment users.

"Virtualization adds an extra layer of complexity, and when data loss occurs, it is critical to get the data recovery right because the amount of data stored in a virtual environment is exponentially more than the amount stored on a single, physical server," Pederson said. "In a large amount of cases, attempting a do-it-yourself (DIY) data recovery can prove fatal and render vital data irrecoverable."

When asked about how their organization responds to data loss, only 24 percent were confident in their organization's response. The majority of respondents (71 percent) reported that their IT team handles all their organization's data loss incidents, while only eight percent seek assistance from a third-party data expert. "The best advice is to take a step back and assess the amount and value of the information stored in the virtual environment," Pederson said. "Then, make an informed decision as to whether the best course of action is to contact an expert."

A September report from Veeam Software, a provider of VMware data protection, disaster recovery and VMware management solutions for virtual data center environments, also found data protection in virtual data center environments lags among cost-conscious companies. Even though a VM (virtual machine) can be built and deployed in minutes, performing a full recovery of a backed-up VM still takes nearly five hours, according to survey results.

Currently, 47 percent of such recoveries are being performed to recover a single file or application item. Nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of organizations surveyed said they experience problems every month when attempting to recover a server, and failed recoveries cost the average enterprise more than \$400,000 every year. However, only two percent of all server and VM backups are tested for recoverability each year, the survey found.