

IN-DEPTH GUIDE

INFRASTRUCTURE AND PERFORMANCE

Backups and continuity: the minimum viable plan

What an SME should absolutely have in place for its backups, without unnecessary complexity, with the four questions that define a real strategy.



GXN

Senior expertise · Digital governance

Quebec First

Quebec business context

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Updated

A black background featuring various backup media: a VHS tape, a 3.5-inch floppy disk, a clear jewel case with two CDs, a small black external drive, and a USB cable. A yellow line connects the first four items, ending with a checkmark. To the right is a black hard-shell case with a yellow tag and a notepad with a checklist and a pen. A yellow sticky note is at the bottom right.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND PERFORMANCE

Backups and continuity: the minimum viable plan

TL;DR

The answer in one minute

A minimal but truly reliable backup strategy answers four simple questions. What to save exactly, how often, where to keep these copies, and especially when the last check takes place that the restoration really works. This last question is the one that almost nobody asks, yet it is the only one that really counts the day of an incident.

01 · BACKGROUND GUIDE

Why backups almost always fail in silence

A poorly configured backup often continues to run without visible errors for months, even years, while actually saving almost nothing useful. Nobody finds out because nobody ever tried a real restoration to check. The problem only turns out to be the day we desperately need it, which is the worst time possible to discover a failure.

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Question one, what to save exactly

A full backup should include site files, the associated database if applicable, professional emails if hosted at the same location, and important system configurations. A partial backup, which covers only part of these elements, gives a false impression of complete protection.

DECISION CARD

The four angles to keep together

01

Why backups almost always fail in silence

02

Question one, what to save exactly

03

Question two, how often

04

Question three, where to keep the copies

GUIDE READING GRID

Angle	Dimension to examine	Use in the decision
01	Why backups almost always fail in silence	Setting the Context
02	Question one, what to save exactly	Identify dependencies
03	Question two, how often	Compare options
04	Question three, where to keep the copies	Preparing for the next step

Question two, how often

The right frequency directly depends on your tolerance for data loss. A showcase site that is rarely updated can be satisfied with a weekly backup. An online store that receives orders continuously needs a much closer frequency, potentially several times a day.

INTERACTIVE TOOL

Set your decision

Select the dimensions that describe your situation. The result is to organize the next conversation, not to replace an analysis.

WHAT CONCERNS YOU NOW

01 **Why backups almost always fail in silence**

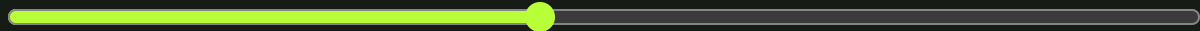
02 **Question one, what to save exactly**

03 **Question two, how often**

04 **Question three, where to keep the copies**

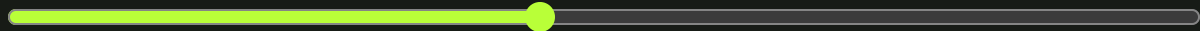
Urgent decision

5



Current control level

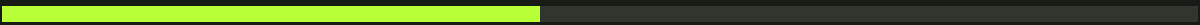
5



RECOMMENDED ANALYSIS

Several dimensions must be treated together

Avoid an isolated decision. Map out the dependencies and agree on an intervention order.



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Question three, where to keep the copies

A backup stored at the same physical or technical location as the original site does not protect against almost anything, since an incident affecting the site will likely also affect the backup at the same time. Copies must be outsourced, ideally in a location completely separate from the main infrastructure.

05 · BACKGROUND GUIDE

Question four, when the last restoration test took place

The most overlooked question, and the only real proof that a backup strategy actually works. A backup that has never been truly restored remains an untested assumption, not a guarantee you can count on when you need it.

06 · BACKGROUND GUIDE

The two business decisions that should precede technique

How long can your business tolerate the site being offline before it becomes a real problem? A few hours. A full day. How much recent data can your business tolerate losing in a worst-case scenario? Those of the last hour. Those from the day before only. These two answers, which belong to management and not technology, should determine the frequency and method of backup chosen, rather than the other way around.

What I see on the ground

I've seen a company lose several years of accumulated content because their automatic backup was silently writing to a folder that was full for a long time, without anyone ever noticing. Since this particular incident, my approach has fundamentally changed. I no longer rely on the existence of a backup. I only rely on a successful, verified restore.

When this guide does not apply

If your site is purely static, without content that changes frequently and without associated database, a very simple, less frequent backup strategy can reasonably suffice for your situation.

Frequently asked questions

01 **How often should we test our backups.**

Regularly, at a pace that depends on the importance of the site for your operations, but the essential thing is that this test really takes place, not only in paper theory.

02 **Are our current backups sufficient?**

03 **Does hosting normally include backups?**

EDITORIAL METHOD

In-depth guide prepared by GXN based on real business situations. Recommendations remain independent of brands and suppliers.

OFFICIAL SOURCES

References to be checked according to your situation

These references support the external rules and frameworks cited in this guide. They are not a substitute for legal or professional advice tailored to your organization.

Canadian Center for Cyber Security

Basic Cybersecurity Controls for Small and Medium Organizations



Canadian Center for Cyber Security

Save and Recover Your Data



ABOUT THE PUBLISHER

GXN

Senior expertise directly accessible, supported by specialists when the project requires it.

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NEXT STEP

Answer one question honestly. When was your last successful restoration.

If you hesitate to answer, free evaluation is a good starting point.

No call required. No sales sequence.