

Backing up Critical Data: Tape Backup Drives and Tape Libraries

Although tape storage is one of the older ways to backup computer data, it remains one of the most popular and reliable ways to store data. Tape backup drives have come a long way since IBM developed the technology in the 1950's. Today's systems are a complex network of tape drives and tape libraries that store the data of the world's largest corporations.

Aside from reliability, the other factor that makes tape drives so successful is their scalability and low cost. Tape backup drive technology can range from well under \$1,000 dollars for a simple system for a small business or well into the 100's of thousands of dollars for a large corporation.

Scalability

As a business grows, tape libraries can expand to meet new data demands without a complete rebuild of the system. These tape libraries, are storage devices build to hold multiple tape drives. Some tape libraries are monstrous, with thousands of cataloged tapes containing barcodes to identify the data. Most businesses won't need tape libraries of this magnitude. The majority of tape libraries sold start with a mere 10 slot, 1 drive and the larger units can support 12 drives with the slot count exceeding 500 before expansion units are required. Many businesses with a plan to grow, start with 1 or 2 tape drives solutions and as many of the libraries are modular, the slot count can grow very easily.

How much storage size do you need?

For a small operation, a good rule of thumb is to choose a current model tape drive, invest in the media and over time move to a library, utilizing a similar tape drive or one that will be backward compatible. A good backup system will operate seamlessly without much maintenance.

Choosing a tape drive that fits your backup window

Ideally, the backup of your data should occur when the systems are not in operation. If your business closes during certain hours of the day, then you'll have fewer restrictions when it comes to choosing tape drives. However, if your business operates round the clock, you might want to implement a different strategy called "disk to disk to tape" where data is stored to a second disk and then recorded on tape drives, from the secondary storage while you continue to operate.

Consider the maintenance costs

While you'll buy a tape backup drive only once, you'll be buying tape for your tape drives on a regular basis. When shopping for tape drives and tape libraries, inquire about the cost of the media. A tape backup drive that is more expensive than its competitor may work out to be more cost effective over the long run if the cost of media is less expensive.

When implementing a tape backup drive system, its best to consult with a professional who will learn about your current business needs and future plans and help you design the most cost effective and reliable system. Otherwise, you find yourself purchasing completely new equipment when it's time to grow or buying mismatched equipment. Vendors are often the best no-cost resources for quality consultation on tape drive architecture and can help you get a system in place that is cost effective, reliable, and perfectly suits your needs.

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About the Author

The author is a freelance copywriter. Visit <http://www.SunstarCo.com> to find addition information on backing up data with tape backup drives and tape libraries.