Data Backup Options – Q&A

Question: We are currently centralizing all of our alumni and donor contact data into one spreadsheet. We eventually want to move all of this data into a donor database, but for now we are working in Excel. How can we backup this important information?

Answer: First, congratulations on taking the first step in organizing your data. Getting all your constituent data (don't forget your gift data!) in one centralized location is a very important step no matter what system you eventually use to manage your contacts and fundraising efforts.

Second, it's great that you are thinking about backing up your data. The last thing you want to happen is to lose all of this crucial data...and waste all of the time and effort you've taken to organize it.

There are a number of options available to back up your data. A very low-tech option is to email the spreadsheet to yourself regularly so that you have a backup copy available at all times. If the spreadsheet is too large, however, your email service may not accept the file. Instead, you can utilize a simple file storage service like www.box.com or www.mediafire.com to store your data. These services are free up to a certain amount of storage required. You simply upload your file and then receive a web address to access that file at a later date.

Finally, there are services available that will automatically back up your computer files on a regular interval. These offer a variety of services, amount of storage space, and pricing options. Two services - www.mozy.com and www.idrive.com - offer free automated backup up to 2Gb of storage space. The advantage of these services is that you don't have to remember to back up your files - the service will do that for you. However, these services will take a bit more effort to set up. Are you using an online backup storage service? Which service would you recommend? If your camp is using one of these services, please let us know!