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## Overcoming a False Sense of Security

Let's face it. Life happens; power outages, equipment failure, forces of nature, even theft and sabotage. We've all experienced it in one form or another. We make contingency plans or purchase insurance for these reasons. It lets us sleep in peace and provides us with a sense of security that if something did go bump in the night, we are covered.

Many of us have that same sense of security when it comes to our data – whether it's on our personal laptop or company server. We have contingency plans for those times when system failure happens...don't we? "We back up every week", says one CTO I recently spoke with, "but what I didn't realise is that the backup failed on the RAID's and left us paralysed for days".

Probably the most often overlooked threat to a company's data is the belief that the security of existing back-up procedures is foolproof.

Before you go running down the hallway to your IT tech, there are several other facts that should be considered. Most back up systems work. Most employees do what they are supposed to do. Most hardware does work the way it was designed to. Yet, "most of the time" doesn't cut it when we're running a business. The unexpected does happen. Equipment fails and Mother Nature throws the occasional curveball. Thankfully, there is another layer of security that many people don't know about. Chances are that even your best IT tech doesn't totally understand this side of the universe. It's called data recovery.

You might think of us as "the guys in white coats" who can retrieve data from hardware that most technicians, after their cursory inspection, would look at you and say "it's dead. Nothing can be done. Your data is lost". Not so! Guelph-based Recovery Force has a near 100% success rate of recoverable data and is often referred to crack the real tough jobs where others have been unable to retrieve the data.

The price range is anywhere from the \$500 to \$5,000 mark depending on the complexity, tools required and of course the amount of time it takes. On average, the recovery cost due to typical hardware failure is priced below \$1000 and your valuable data can be back in your possession within a couple of days. Several insurance companies cover data recovery work costs and it would be wise to ask your insurer or agent about what they cover and the benefits of adding a rider to your business coverage.

Another area of data recovery involves backtracking. These days, most people know how to empty the trashcan on their email and some even know how to delete files from system memories. For those employees who may have thought they covered their tracks (thinking the data has been deleted) should think again. Simply deleting cannot erase the data. (Only a talented technician using special software should actually WIPE the drive clean to ensure it's thoroughly done). So it goes for the files that were tampered with prior to termination or the forwarding of emails to home or private accounts. They can still be recovered and traced. The message? Be aware. Whether you are the boss or the head of the IT department, data recovery can 'almost' always be accomplished. (No Virginia, the hard drive that was crushed and broken into a hundred pieces is likely irretrievable).

There is, however, a condition to this. Data recovery is like getting a red wine stain out of very expensive white carpet. The more chemical and solvents you try, the less likely you are going to restore the carpet to its original state. In data recovery, we may only have one or two attempts. So, if your data is of value to you or your business, please don't try to recover it yourself or simply ship it to the tech guy down the hall. Immediately contact – or at least make sure your tech people do - a qualified data recovery firm. There are several very reputable companies in Canada that can restore your data to a workable condition. Whether it's your RAID drives in the server room, or your laptop that had your favourite beverage spilled on it, call a professional first.

Giving back to the community. We have recently seen several high profile cases where data has been recovered by the "new owner or recipient", after the original owner thought they had deleted their personal and professional information on the very same hard drive. In this age of disposing of computer hardware responsibly, many firms replace hardware on regular intervals and send their hardware to charities, schools or even recycling firms. HARD DRIVES should be properly wiped using special software. Finding leftover data poses not only a dilemma for the new user who may be shocked to find business records still resident on the computer, but it can also be a costly from a legal view point should the records found on the machine be a violation of privacy legislation.

So let's all understand what the real sense of security is about. If in doubt, call a professional first and contact your insurer so you can continue to have peace-of -mind.



**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**  
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Luke is the Vice President & CTO Recovery Force. Luke studied Computer Science at the University of New Brunswick prior to opening his first computer maintenance firm in 1996, where he first began developing data recovery techniques.



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