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Dealing With the Loss of an Electronic

by Michael C. Sherrin
 EDGE Style Contributor
 Tuesday Nov 8, 2005



I woke up Saturday morning with a plan to have a massive plate of waffles and waste my whole week's income on a new pair of shoes. Instead, I had to call technical support. The screen of my laptop had gone crazy, warping and distorting and terrifying me. Was it a virus? Did I spill my soda? What would I do if my laptop was lost? To make a long story short, my laptop got fixed, but I still went a few days without personal access to the internet, my email, or my writing.

While technology may not have made our lives easier, it has gotten us hooked. Imagine living without your cell phone, Tivo, Blackberry, or iPod.

Now that you're back on your chair, you've got to realize that problems happen with electronics and when they do, we think about all the things we cannot do. Here are ways you can plan

ahead to avert disaster when disaster strikes.

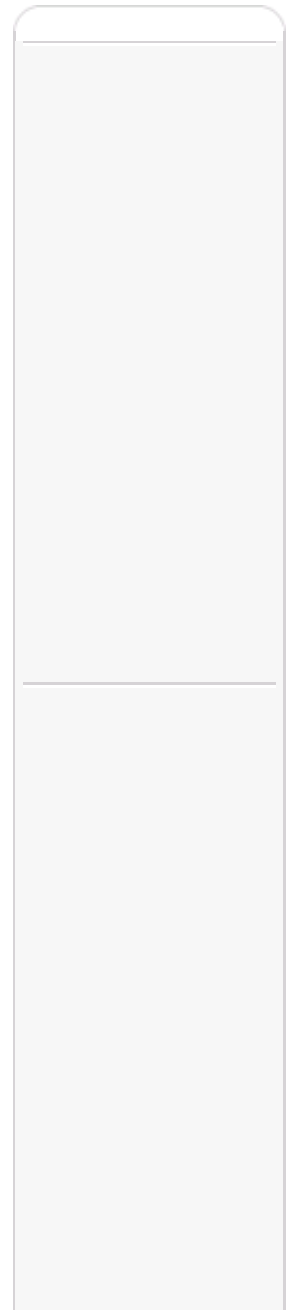
The biggest thing – don't keep your important information exclusively on fragile electronics. While most businesses have gone electronic in many ways, the completely paperless office will not be happening soon. Keep a file of all your important phone numbers (for example, of the business associates helping to get your next job, the cute bartender from Saturday night and, of course, your therapist). This applies to your computer, cell phone and blackberry. You'll be a lot happier programing 300 hundred phone numbers in your new phone instead of crying over losing them all.

When backing up your data, prepare for the time you can't access your computer. While you may have a library of zip disks, you cannot use these while your computer is in tech support. Keep a hard copy list of all important email addresses, passwords, important websites. Next, be aware of places in your area that provide computer access like your library or, more dishonestly, your place of work.

To back-up your actual data, there are two schools of thought. First, you can invest around \$200 in a DVD-Burner. DVD-Burners will store almost 5 gigabyte (gb) of information on a disc readable by most new CD/DVD drives. This way, it is more likely your DVD will be readable in a friend's or public computer whereas zip discs require a special drive. As hard drives continue to increase, you'll need too many DVDs to be worthwhile. You can purchase an external hard drive with 80 to 300 gb. Make sure it's an external drive, and look for a drive that runs about a dollar per gb . You can back-up your entire hard drive in a lone, small box.

While the technical support offered at Radio Shack is highway robbery, computer companies offer good technical support. Most companies have a special priority accesses system that gives you a special phone number guaranteeing a quick answer to any technical problem from pre-paid overnight mailing of parts to at-home service.

If the unspeakable happens and your computer does crash, data recovery can be attempted at places like Best Buy's Geek Squad. Keep a prioritized list of your most



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important folders in case everything can't be recovered. (And make sure you keep all your X-rated material in a separate folder.)

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