

CACHE – September 2003

PC Users Group of South Jersey

Backup for Workgroups Version 1.0.0

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Company: Lockstep Systems, Inc. www.backup-for-workgroups.com

Price: See below

System Req: Windows 95/98/NT4/ME/2000/XP

Program Storage: 10 MB of hard drive storage on the “server” PC per “client” PC (I think 4 GB of storage is more like it for people with lots of pictures or other files that take up a lot of disk space.) The common files fro Windows in an office will consume a lot more space but will only have to be backed up one for a PC.

Network Connection: TCP/IP Protocol

License Costs:

- Server plus 3 clients, \$299
- Server with 5 clients, \$399
- Server with 10 clients, \$599
- Server with 25 clients, \$1,299
- Server with 50 clients, \$1,999
- Server with 100 clients, \$3,499

My System Configuration:

- Server PC: AMD Athlon 700 MHz, 80 GB Hard Drive and 384 MB RAM
- Client PC: Intel PIII/450, 60 GB Hard Drive and 384 MB RAM

My Rating System is based on a 5 scale with 5 being GREAT and 0 being a ZERO.

Overall Rating – Overall Rating is a summation of all the categories

Usability – How easy is it to use and understand the software.

Functionality – Functionality is the ability of the software to do what you need it to do.

Summary

Overall Rating – 4.8

Usability – 4.8

Functionality – 4.8

Get the feeling that I like the program? I wonder ho w you figured that out? This is an excellent program. It is easy to use, easy to setup and easy to recover from that inevitable disaster. If I had a business, I feel that I could not do without it.

If you like “no brainer” software, then Backup for Workgroups is for you. It is so easy to install, setup and use that you’ll wonder how you got along without it.

As I type up this review, I am backing up my hard drive right now and I do not notice any problems despite all of this multi-tasking. The transfer of data was smooth, quick (approximately 450KB/sec on my 10 Mb/sec Ethernet connection) and effortless. The software did everything that I expected it to do without any intervention on my part. With everything I was doing, surfing the Internet, writing this review, search for SETI and having 2 chat programs running, I was able to backup 2 GB of data in less than 2 hours. My total, selective backup of 15 GB took under 7 hours, and that was a backup of over 100,000 files. I wanted to give the software a good workout for both backing up as well as seeing how it operated while I was working on my PC.

After I backed up the data, I selectively restored certain files/folders. The restoration process was just as easy as the backup process. Based on what I had experienced during the backup up process, I did not expect anything else.

How lucky do you feel?

If the answer to that question is very lucky, then you don't need a data backup program, and you should run out now to buy your PowerBall lottery ticket now. But, if you're like most people who do computing, you'll need some sort of backup to protect your precious data from loss. Can you afford to loose your data? You probably can not.

Backup Tools

What tool you use to backup your data depends upon your company and personal needs. If you're an individual, your needs can be fulfilled with any number of products and methods including CD-RW drives. If you are a small to mid-sized company, then Backup for Workgroups is a product worth looking at to fill all your needs.

Reduced Resource Requirements

To help make life easier for the small company, Backup for Workgroups requires fewer resources to perform its intended function than other backup programs. To that end, the software does not require a dedicated server. This saves you not only on direct hardware costs, but also in labor costs. Backup for Workgroups uses an existing PC to act as the "server" for the other PCs on the network. By structuring itself in this manner, Backup for Workgroups does not require a dedicated server administrator. Bottom line is reduced costs. As the company owner, you'll like that benefit.

Network Setup for Backups

For you "networkaphobis," you'll like Backup for Workgroups. Backup for Workgroup uses standard Peer to Peer network configurations to facilitate data backups. By leveraging the simplicity of Peer to Peer topology, Backup for Workgroups makes configuration as straight forward as possible. By using the "server" PC's hard drive as the backup platform, there is no need for tapes and the manual intervention that is required when using tape backup. Since hard drives have a higher throughput than tape drives, backup can be completed quicker. Data restoration is also quicker. The hard drive also improves reliability due to its inherent reliability over tape drives as well as the elimination of the "man-in-the-loop" associated with tape drives.

Hard Drive Based Backups

Backups on a hard drive are also available 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. That "man behind the curtain" is there when you need him and not when the "backup server" administrator is available. Your backups and restoration are available when "you" need them without the normal delays associated with the typical tape backup mechanisms. How often have you waited for the IP department/person/computer guru to restore your lost files from backup tapes? I am sure it was not a fun experience. The problems ALWAYS happen when you have no time to wait for someone else. Now you can be the master of your own ship.

Configuration Made Easy

You'll find installing, configuring and setting up the backup software on the "server" and the "clients" to be so easy. If you can read what is on the screen and follow simple instructions, you'll master the basics of the software on your first try.

Features:

Automatic Backups

You can setup automatic backups of your data to occur at your convenience and not at the convenience of your system administrator or computer guru. You can choose daily backup; specific days, weekly or even do it manually. I chose to backup my PC every Saturday morning at 1AM. This is when my PC is idle and doing nothing but looking for ET. I use the SETI screen saver to crunch through signal responses from the SETI Program. The SETI screen saver can be downloaded from: <http://setiathome.berkeley.edu>.

Selective Backup

You get to choose what files or folders you want to backup as opposed to being saddled with backing up everything or trying to figure out how to select those things you need backed up. Setting up the backups is so intuitive.

Backup Wizard

The backup wizard helps make backing up sets of data so easy. You can set up "backup sets" that allow you to schedule different sets for different times. You get to define them. You can setup each PC backup any way you want. Each PC gets a different backup set (backup set is the term used for the various backup options.). You can setup multiple backup sets for a single PC also.

This will help make backing up specific files and folders at specific dates and times so easy to accomplish.

Non-Redundant File Backup

To help conserve disk space with multiple client PCs, Backup for Workgroups only backs up those files that are unique. It does not backup files that are the same on multiple PCs. By not having to backup redundant files, it is quite a saving in both backup times as well as backup space. After all, why backup files that are standard on the office PCs?

Backup File Compression

To save space on the backup hard drive, Backup for Workgroups compresses the data. My compression ratio was about 55% for all 8,262 files that I backed up.

File Recovery Assurances

While Backup for Workgroups performs its assigned tasks, it verifies that the data written to the backup hard drives matches the original file. By verifying the data accuracy at backup time, on the fly, it will save you time as well as give you the peace of mind that what you backed up is going to be recoverable.

How many times have you backed up your data to tape only to find that when you needed it, it was somehow or other corrupted or unrecoverable? Well, Backup for Workgroups does a simulated data restoration process to verify that you have 100% data recovery with each data backup.

Secure

You can add encryption to the backups to help secure your data from prying eyes while it is being transferred over the network. The encryption process is straightforward. Most people will not need it, but if you have specific PCs, such as the accounting PC with payroll data, you might want to encrypt the data so no unauthorized people are able to look at it.

Mirroring

Want an added layer of protection for your data? Well, you got it.

Backup for Workgroups can mirror your data onto a removable hard drive or on the hard drive of another PC. Now you can store your backup data at a remote site just in case that disaster that you hope never comes – happens.

Windows Registry Backup

Ever boot your PC and find that you can't or your boot into Safe Mode because of a corrupted registry? Well that is going to be a thing of the past. You'll now be able to quickly, easily and safely recover your Windows Registry because Backup for Workgroups automatically backs up the Windows Registry with each client backup.

Conclusion

Lockstep Systems' Backup for Workgroups has a free 30-day trial offer. You might want to download it and try it out to see if you like it. I think you will find it to be all that you need in a backup program.