

ON THE CAR

UP

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The
Of **TAO** 
BACKUP

*A novice wanted to learn the Tao of Backup.
The master said: "To become enlightened, you
must master the seven heads of Backup. He who
knows the heads will keep all his data forever.
He who knows them not will lose all his data,"
and with that, the lessons began...*



1. Coverage

The novice asked the backup master which files he should backup.

The master said: "Even as a shepherd watches over all the sheep in his flock, and the lioness watches over all her cubs, so must you backup every file in your care, no matter how lowly. For even the smallest file can take days to recreate."

2. Frequency

The novice asked the backup master: "How often should I backup my files? It has been a month since my last backup."

The master replied: "Just as night follows day, and Autumn follows Summer, so should backups follow work. As you work, so should you backup that work."

3. Separation

The novice asked the backup master: "Now that I regularly backup all my files, am I enlightened to the Tao of Backup?"

The master replied: "By regularly backing up all your files you are on the path to enlightenment, but you will never achieve enlightenment until you scatter your backups to the four corners of the earth. Does the dandelion drop all its seeds at the base of its stalk? Does the cuckoo lay its eggs in one nest? So long as your backups are in one place, you are vulnerable to the fortunes of the world."

4. History

The novice took an old backup tape to the backup master and asked: "Master, this tape is six months old. If I am to achieve oneness with the Earth, is it not right that it be re-used?"

The master took the tape and said: "I will re-use it. Now, quickly, go and examine your disk drive."

The novice examined his disk and discovered that a virus had corrupted hundreds of important, but rarely-used files. He loaded a day-old backup, but found that those files were corrupted too.

5. Testing

The novice asked the backup master: "Master, now that my backups have good coverage, are taken frequently, are archived, and are distributed to the four corners of the earth, I have supreme confidence in them. Have I achieved enlightenment? Surely now I comprehend the Tao Of Backup?"

The master paused for one minute, then suddenly produced an axe and smashed the novice's disk drive to pieces. Calmly he said: "To believe in one's backups is one thing. To have to use them is another."

The novice looked very worried.

6. Security

The backup master was visiting the novice who had just finished installing a network security system for his company.

"See", said the novice, "we have total security here. We have installed the most stringent Internet firewall. All of our staff have been trained to use obscure passwords and not to divulge them to anyone. We monitor all network traffic and all our email is encrypted. Truly our data is safe from disclosure."

The master fell silent, but on his way out he pocketed a 20 Gigabyte corporate backup tape that was lying around. Later he posted it to the novice.

7. Integrity

The novice was growing impatient on the road to enlightenment. "Master, as a follower of the Tao, I am taking regular backups of all my files. I am archiving them securely offsite, and testing them using Veracity. Surely, master, I am enlightened now?"

The backup master said only: "You will not achieve enlightenment until you control the integrity of your data, for a copy is useless if the original is corrupt. What use is a mirror if we cannot see? What use is an echo if we cannot hear?" But the novice did not understand.

Epilogue

The novice had just finished testing a backup of all his files, which he was now monitoring with Veracity. It was the fifth backup that week, and he had tested the backup by restoring it and checking the restored data with Veracity before taking it to a locked cabinet offsite to be stored with other backups made over the previous few months. The novice said "Now that I have coverage, frequency, separation, history, testing, security, and integrity, surely I have achieved enlightenment?"

The master said: "You are not yet enlightened, but you are on the final steps of the path to enlightenment. The next step is to buy some more copies of Veracity".

The novice became suspicious and said: "Master, is all this 'Tac of Backup' stuff just so you can sell more copies of Veracity?"

The master said: "Now you are truly enlightened."

Discussion?