### 1.111.5

# Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

Linux Professional Institute Certification — 102

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2005 July

#### 1.111.5 Maintain an effective data backup strategy

### Weight 3 Grant Parnell

Contex

Objectives

Deciding what to back up

Types of data

irectories

Methods of Backup

Raid Systems

aid tape array

Backup Serve

Broken Mirror

ommand line tools

ckup Applications

ation strategie

License of this document

Restore

1.111.5 Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

Grant Parnell

Context

Objectives

eciding what to bac p

Types of data

irectories

Methods of Backup

Raid System

Raid tane an

Backup Serve

Prokon Mirror

Command line too

Backup Application

otation strategie

License of this

Context
Objectives
Deciding what to back up
Types of data
Databases
Log files
Home directories
Code
Web Sites
Web sites with volatile data

Important Linux Directories Methods of Backup and

Backup to tape
Backup to standby disk
Backup to CDROM/DVD
Raid Systems
Raid tape array
Backup Server
Broken Mirror
Command line tools
Backup Applications
Rotation strategies
License of this document

Another directory

Standby partition

## Topic 111 Administrative Tasks [21] Where we are up to

Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

Grant Parnell

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v	u	ч	Щ	C	•	ļ

Objectives

Deciding what to back

Types of data

Important Directories

Methods of Backup

Raid Systems

laid tape array

Backup Serve

Broken Mirror

Command line tool

Command line tool

ckup Applicatio

ation strategies

icense of this

1.111.1	Manage users and	group	account	s and	rel	ated
	system files [4]					

- 1.111.2 Tune the user environment and system environment variables [3]
- 1.111.3 Configure and use system log files to meet administrative and security needs [3]
- 1.111.4 Automate system administration tasks by scheduling jobs to run in the future [4]
- 1.111.5 Maintain an effective data backup strategy [3]
- 1.111.6 Maintain system time [4]

### Description of Objective

1.111.5 Maintain an effective data backup strategy

Candidate should be able to plan a backup strategy and backup filesystems automatically to various media. Tasks include dumping a raw device to a file or vice versa, performing partial and manual backups, verifying the integrity of backup files and partially or fully restoring backups.

#### Maintain an effective data backup strategy

Weight 3 Grant Parnell

Objectives

### Key files, terms, and utilities include:

1.111.5 Maintain an effective data backup strategy

cpio — creates an archive of data

dd — can copy raw filesystems

dump — backs up ext2, ext3 systems

restore — restores files from dump backups

tar — creates "tarballs" and creates archives on tape

1.111.5

Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

Grant Parnell

Context

Objectives

Deciding what to back

Types of data

irectories

ethods of Backup

Raid Systems

Raid tape array

Backup Serve

roken Mirror

mmand line tools

ackup Applications

ation strategies

tation strategies

License of this document

### **Backups**

Decide what data is important and how long you can do without it.

- ▶ Is this used 24×7 or just business hours?
- During business hours how long can you do without it? 4 hours, 30 minutes, 5 minutes?
- ► How up-to-date is it required to get you running in an emergency?
- Are you backing up for archival or high availability or espionage?

#### 1.111.5

Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

Grant Parnell

Context

Objective

Deciding what to back up

Types of data

mportant Linux

Methods of Backup

Raid Systems

Raid tape arr

Backup Serve

. Broken Mirror

sroken wirror

Command line tools

tation strategies

License of this



### **Examples of Data** Static

Configurations of running servers. You need these 24×7 but they don't change much.

Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

#### Grant Parnell

#### Types of data



Context

Deciding what to back up

### Types of data

#### Databases

Log files
Home directoric

Web Sites
Web sites with volatile dat

Important Linux Directorie

Methods of Backup and Restore

#### Another directory

Standby partition
Backup to tape
Backup to standby disk
Backup to CDROM/DVI

Raid Systems
Raid tape array
Backup Server
Broken Mirror
Command line tools
Backup Applications
Rotation strategies

#### 1.111.5 Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

#### Grant Parnell

#### Contex

#### Objective

Deciding what to back

#### Types of data

#### Databases

og files Home directories Code

Web sites with volatile data

### mportant Linux

Methods of Backup

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Broken Mirro

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Command line tools

#### Backup Application

Rotation strated

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# Databases / Transactions — financial & otherwise

These are updated frequently and need to balance. Associated with these are logs & duplication & other means of rollback & integrity checking. With databases it's often a good idea to dump them in a good portable format, especially if the inbuilt format is not cross platform or cross version compatible. Example:

\$ mysqldump mydata >mydata.dump ←

This will give you a text file which can be used on most mysql versions and possibly adapted to other database packages.

#### 1.111.5

Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

Grant Parnell

Context

Objectives

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Datahases

Databases

Log files

de

leb Sites

mnortant Linux

portant Linux rectories

lethods of Backup

aid Systems

. . .

id tape array

ckup Server

Broken Mirror

Command lin

Paoleus Application

ackup Application

Rotation strategi

document



Deciding what to back up

#### Types of data

#### Log files

### Another directory

#### Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

#### Grant Parnell

Log files



People don't tend to read them unless something goes wrong in which case they're valuable. These need to be kept but don't need to be restored in a hurry.

Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

#### Grant Parnell

Log files





Context

Deciding what to back up

### Types of data

Databases

#### Home directories

Code

Web sites with volatile data

Important Linux Directorie

Methods of Backup and Restor

### Another directory

Standby partition
Backup to tape
Backup to standby disk
Backup to CDROM/DVI

Raid Systems
Raid tape array
Backup Server
Broken Mirror
Command line tools
Backup Applications
Rotation strategies

#### 1.111.5 Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

#### Grant Parnell

Context

01.1.....

Deciding what to back

Types of data

Log files Home directories

ode

Web sites with volatile da

rectories

Methods of Backup and Restore

Raid Systems

Raid tape array

Dackup Oct vo

Broken Mirro

Command line tools

Backup Applications

Rotation strategie

License of th document



### Home directories

Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

Grant Parnell

Context

Objectives

Deciding what to back up

Databases

Log files
Home directories

Web Sites

Web sites with volatile da

irectories

Methods of Backup

laid Systems

Raid tape array

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Broken Mirror

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ackup Application

License of this

This is a mixed bag of everything but some policies could be

instated to make the admin's life easier.

E.G., Making specific sub-directories for things and assigning them different backup/restore priorities.

Often the existence of a home directory is more important than the rest of the contents as it may make a user unable to login without it.

Context

Deciding what to be

Deciding what to back up

#### Types of data

Databases Log files

#### Code

Web Sites
Web sites with volatile data
nportant Linux Directories

#### Another directory

Standby partition
Backup to tape
Backup to standby disk
Backup to CDROM/DVI

Raid Systems
Raid tape array
Backup Server
Broken Mirror
Command line tools
Backup Applications
Rotation strategies

#### 1.111.5 Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

#### Grant Parnell

Context

Ohi----

Deciding what to back

atabases

ome directories

Code

Web sites with volatile data

oortant Linux

Methods of Backup

Raid Systems

Raid tape array

васкир Serve

Broken Mirro

Command line tools

ckup Applications

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License of the



### Code repositories

Programmers should be accustomed to doing regular backups anyway, they often need to revert to an old version to figure out what they broke.

Any tools used such as CVS that have a central repository should be backed up almost as often as programmers commit code, at least once a day but they could probably cope with it being missing for half a day.

#### 1.111.5

Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

Grant Parnell

Context

Objectives

Deciding what to back

Databases

me directories

Code

b Sites

eb sites with volati

nportant Linux

rectories

Methods of Backup and Restore

idia Oystoms

Raid tape array

backup Server

Broken Mirror

Command line tools

ckup Application

Potetion atratagion

License of this document



Context

Objectives

Deciding what to back up

### Types of data

Databases Log files Home directories

#### Web Sites

Web sites with volatile data Important Linux Directories Methods of Backup and Restor

#### Another directory

Standby partition
Backup to tape
Backup to standby disk
Backup to CDROM/DVE

Raid Systems
Raid tape array
Backup Server
Broken Mirror
Command line tools
Backup Applications
Rotation strategies

#### 1.111.5 Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

#### Grant Parnell

Context

Objective

Deciding what to back

ypes of data
Databases
Log files

ome directories

Web Sites

Veb sites with volatile data

portant Linux ectories

Methods of Backup

Raid Systems

Raid tape array

Backup Serve

Broken Mirror

Command line tools

Backup Application:

Detetion strategie

License of the



### High availability — read only

Websites frequently used by your clients. They can contain dynamic data but customers don't update it. This sort of scenario lends itself to frequent replication to a backup server.

#### 1 111 5

Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

#### Grant Parnell

Context

Objectives

Deciding what to back

atabases og files ome directories

Web Sites

nortant Linux

Methods of Backup

Methods of Backup and Restore

aid Systems

Raid tape array

Drokon Mirror

Broken Mirror

Command line tools

ackup Applications

Potation atratagion

License of this



Context

Objectives

Deciding what to back up

#### Types of data

Databases

Home directories

Code

Weh Site

#### Web sites with volatile data

Important Linux Directories

Methods of Backup and Besto

#### Another directory

Standby partition
Backup to tape
Backup to standby disk
Backup to CDROM/DVI

Raid Systems
Raid tape array
Backup Server
Broken Mirror
Command line tools
Backup Applications
Rotation strategies

#### 1.111.5 Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

#### Grant Parnell

Contex

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Deciding what to back

ypes of data

atabases og files ome directories ode

Web sites with volatile data

portant Linux

Methods of Backup

and Hestore

Raid Systems

Raid tape array

Drokon Mirro

Broken Mirro

Command line tools

Backup Applications

Rotation stratoni

License of th



### High availability — interactive

Taking a website again, this one might allow the customer to do such things as place orders. The website maintains some state information to allow building of an order. This is the most difficult, the state information can be stored in a replicated database. In the event of web server failure the other one comes into play and the customer may have to login again but the information is kept. (Otherwise complex designs and expensive hardware can be used to seamlessly migrate the state to the other webserver).

#### 1.111.5

Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

Grant Parnell

Context

Objectives

Deciding what to back

Databases
Log files

Code Web Sites

Web Sites

Web sites with volatile data

portant Linux rectories

Methods of Backup

aid Systems

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Irokon Mirror

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Command line tools

ickup Application

Rotation strategie

License of this document



### Important Linux directories

/var/spool/mail

/var/lib/mysql

/var/log

/home

1.111.5
Maintain an effective
lata backup strategy
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#### Grant Parnell

**Objectives** 

Deciding what to bac

Types of o

#### Important Linux Directories

Methods of Backup

Raid Systems

Raid tape array

Broken Mirror

Broken Mirror

Command line too

Backup Application

otation strategies

License of this

daily backup

databases — backup the dumps, and

possibly the binary.

from "don't care" to "backup daily"

/etc backup config changes

be selective, but if you can't, backup

daily.

/home/<user>/mail contains the user's mail folders (may

also be Mail or Maildir)

/home/<user>/.ssh If you login using ssh keys only, this

is a must have.

/usr/local locally installed apps & data

Application specifics

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Context

Objectives

Deciding what to back up

Types of data

Databases

Loa files

Home directories

Code

Web Sites

Web sites with volatile da

Important Linux Directories

Methods of Backup and Restore

#### Another directory

Standby partition
Backup to tape
Backup to standby disk
Backup to CDROM/DV

Raid Systems
Raid tape array
Backup Server
Broken Mirror
Command line tools
Backup Applications
Rotation strategies

Grant Parnell

Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

Contex

Objective

Deciding what to back

Types of data

Directories

Methods of Backup

Another directory

Standby partition

Backup to tape

Backup to standby disk Backup to CDROM/DVD

aid Systems

id tape array

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roken Mirror

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kup Applications

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### Backup & Restore methods

Copy the files to another directory

This is the poor mans backup and does not offer much peace of mind. It does protect against accidental deletion & corruption by users. One advantage is that it can be very quick for things such as log files. You can also keep multiple copies, one for every day of the week for example. See /etc/logrotate.conf.

Maintain an effective

data backup strategy Weight 3

Grant Parnell

Context

Objectives

Deciding what to back

Types of data

Important Linux Directories

Methods of Backup and Restore

Another directory

Standby partition Backup to tape Backup to standby disk

Backup to CDRON

aid Systems

aid tape array

... ....

oken Mirror

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ackup Applications

Rotation strate

cense of this

Context

Deciding what to back up

Types of data

Databases

Log mos

Codo

Weh Sites

Web sites with volatile da

Important Linux Directories

Methods of Backup and Restore

#### Another directory Standby partition

Backup to tape Backup to standby disk

Raid Systems

Raid tape array Backup Server

Command line tools

Backup Applications

License of this documer

# Weight 3 Grant Parnell

Maintain an effective data backup strategy

Context

Objective

Deciding what to back

Types of data

mportant Linux Directories

Methods of Backup and Restore

Another directory

Standby partition

ndby partition

Backup to standby disk

Backup to CDROM/DVD

id Systems

id tape array

.....

roken Mirror

Jililiand line tools

kup Applications

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### Backup to a standby partition

This has about the same level of peace of mind as the above. The backup partition can be left un-mounted after the backup. The backup is slower than the above but the restore operation can be guick. See also "Broken Mirror" method below.

#### 1.111.5

Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

Grant Parnell

Context

Objectives

Deciding what to back up

lypes of data

mportant Linux Directories

Methods of Backup and Restore

Standby partition

ackup to tano

Backup to standby disk Backup to CDROM/DVE

aid Systems

id tape array

ia tapo array

okon Mirror

Backup Applications

Rotation strat

cense of this



Deciding what to back up

Methods of Backup and Restore

#### Another directory

#### Backup to tape

Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3 Grant Parnell

Backup to tape



### Backup to tape

This is probably the most common backup used in the commercial world. It's easy to backup the lot every day provided you have the tape capacity. If you don't, you become more selective as to what to backup. There's a variety of software to do this but there are three main basic systems: tar, cpio and dump. Often commercial software uses these basic systems and provide for labelling & indexing as well as multi-server capability from a simple GUI. The reason for using the basic systems is you can restore from them if you have to.

#### 1.111.5

Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

Grant Parnell

Context

Objectives

Deciding what to back

ypes of data

mportant Linux Directories

Methods of Backup and Restore

Standby partition

Backup to tape

васкир to standby васкир to CDROM

aid Systems

d tape array

icitap ocivei

Broken Mirror

Command line t

ackun Annlication

васкир Арріїсаціон

Rotation stra

cense of this



Context

Objectives

Deciding what to back up

Types of data

Databases

Log mos

Code

Web Sites

Web sites with volatile da

Important Linux Directories

Methods of Backup and Restore

#### Another directory

Standby partition Backup to tape

Backup to standby disk

Backup to CDROM/DVI

Raid Systems

Backup Server

Broken Mirror

Command line tools

Rotation strategies

Rotation strategies

License of this documen

#### data backup strategy Weight 3 Grant Parnell

Maintain an effective

OUTILOAL

Objectives

Deciding what to back up

Types of data

mportant Linux Directories

Methods of Backup

Another directory Standby partition

Backup to standby disk

Raid Systems

aid tano array

aid tape array

.....

roken Mirror

kup Applications

- . .

cense of this

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### Backup to standby disk

This can offer peace of mind and a fairly cheap backup for people that don't require 24×7 service. Basically a removable drive bay houses another hard disk of similar capacity and the entire system is backed up. This can be done partition by partition or file by file using dd, cpio or rsync.

Additional steps can be taken to ensure that the backup is also bootable. The backup drive should be removed once done and treated like a tape. The disadvantage here is that you most likely will need to power down the system twice for one backup. Alternately, if you have an external USB or fire-wire storage medium it becomes possible to do this without downtime.

Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

Grant Parnell

Backup to standby disk



Context

Objectives

Deciding what to back up

Types of data

Databases

Log files

Home directorie

Codo

Web Sites

Web sites with volatile da

Important Linux Directorie

Methods of Backup and Restore

#### Another directory

Standby partition
Backup to tape
Backup to standby o

### Backup to CDROM/DVD

Raid Systems
Raid tape array
Backup Server
Broken Mirror
Command line tools
Backup Applications
Rotation strategies

#### 1.111.5 Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

#### Grant Parnell

Contex

Objective

Deciding what to back

Types of data

mportant Linux Directories

Methods of Backup

Another directory Standby partition

Backup to standby disk
Backup to CDROM/DVD

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Backup Applications

otation strategi

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### Backup to CDROM/DVD

Under Linux (as far as I know) there's no software to directly write data without creating an image first. This means there must be sufficient space available. It would be possible to create a bootable CD with restore software and a compressed filesystem but I haven't seen this. It may be OK if you don't have a large filesystem or you have a DVD writer or you're not backing up everything.

#### 1.111.5

Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

Grant Parnell

Context

Objectives

Deciding what to bac

ypes of data

Directories

Methods of Backup

Another directory Standby partition

tandby partition ackup to tape ackup to standby

Backup to standby disk
Backup to CDROM/DVD

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.... ., .....

aid tape array

okup Sorvor

roken Mirror

Backup Application

Rotation strateg

cense of this



### **RAID System**

Not strictly a backup but a RAID system can protect against hard drive failure by providing redundancy. Data is written simultaneously to 2 or more hard drives and can include parity information. It does not protect against corrupt databases and people removing files. It will corrupt & remove files equally well on all disks. Linux can do RAID in software very well but the ideal is a hardware solution involving hot swapable disks so they can be replaced while the system is fully running. A RAID system can mean the difference between going on-site at 3am and saying "Oh dear, we'll replace that first thing in the morning". Just ensure that you do have a replacement readily available and do not have to wait a week.

### Maintain an effective

data backup strategy Weight 3

Grant Parnell

Raid Systems

### RAID Tape array

In a similar manner to RAID 5 disks, data is written in parallel to 5 tape drives which increases throughput and data integrity.

Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

#### Grant Parnell

Raid tape array

### **Backup Server**

All of the methods discussed so far involve direct transfer from server to backup medium. If you have a number of servers it may not be practical to install backup devices on each. Another way is to remotely access the required medium directly (/dev/rmt0) but arbitration of access can be an issue. An increasingly popular way is to provide a super-server with a huge amount of disk space capable of holding everything required by the other servers. Transferring the data can happen at any time in either a batch or continuous process. A batch would be say backup a whole directory at once whereas a continuous operation might be transmitting log information or database updates. The backup server itself may then employ any one or more methods to perform backups of itself, possibly based on some statistical analysis. An example of this is a system called ADSM which employs RAID arrays, multiple tape drives, a tape robot with barcode reader and intelligent software that tells the operators which tapes are to go off-site and which ones it wants back. It essentially is a huge cache that stores frequently changing data locally and stores old data off-site.

1.111.5

Maintain an effective data backup strategy
Weight 3

Grant Parnell

Context

Objectives

Types of da

Important Lin

Methods of Backup

and Restore

laid tane array

Backup Server

backup Server

Broken Mirror

ommand line

Backup Applications

otation strategies

License of this document

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### **Broken Mirror**

If you've got about 100GB of data on a mirrored pair of disks and only have a 10 minute backup window this may be for you. Basically you bring the system down, unhook one of the mirrors and replace it with another set of drives and bring the system up again. Mirroring starts from scratch during quiet time and should be finished before load picks up again. With the drive set you just un-hooked this can then be loaded into the standby server and backed up to tape over the course of many hours. Some high end servers can perform this operation without downtime as the hooking up can be done using inbuilt hardware or such things as dual-port fire-wire drive bays. All that is required in this case is an application shutdown, sync, dismount, remount, application start type operation.

### Maintain an effective

data backup strategy Weight 3

Grant Parnell

Broken Mirror

Command line tools

Copy and Convert can be used to copy raw disk blocks, even to tape (yuk). Example:

dd if=/dev/hda1 of=/dev/hdb1

Tape ARchive — you all know how to unpack tgz tar files, and maybe even create them. Just remove the 'f' option. It also can be an advantage not to use compression as some drives have this built in. Also, a portion of the tape being corrupt can ruin the rest of the data, whereas you can skip corrupt bits and pickup the next file if not compressed.

Example:

tar -c /home cd /tmp; tar -x

Command line tools

serverA/

cpio CP I/O — Similar capabilities of tar but different methodology. Example:

- \$ find /home | cpio -oB >/dev/tape
- \$ cd /tmp; cpio -idB </dev/tape</pre>

**rsync** — remote sync — can sync a directory or whole filesystem by only transferring the changes between them. Be careful about trailing slashes. Example:

- \$ rsync -a /home /backup/
- \$ rsync -a -e ssh /home backup@backup:/

### **Backup Applications**

Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

Grant Parnell

Context

Objectives

Deciding what to bac

Types of data

Important Directorie

ethods of Backup

Raid Systems

oid topo orro

Backup Serve

Broken Mirror

Command line

Backup Applications

Rotation strategies

License of this

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Arkeia — commercial package
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BRU — commercial package

bacula — Open source

Amanda — Open source

mondorescue — Open source

taper — mature open source (ncurses)

kdat — KDE backup tool (alpha software—not my data!)

Thousands more, some are client/server model and can backup multiple operating systems which is great.

See http://www.linuxhelp.com.au/free.shtml for

our generic CPIO backup script.

Objectives

Deciding what t

Types of data

Directories

Methods of Backup

Raid Systems

Raid tape array Backup Server

. Broken Mirror

ommand line

ackup Applications

Rotation strategies

icense of this

It's no good having a backup if it's sitting next to the computer when there's a fire. You've got to have some off-site backups for really important stuff. On a small scale a friend of mine has a backup of all my music CD's I couldn't live without.

You could use this example strategy with any bulk medium but typically people refer to tapes or a set of tapes and for convenience I'll refer to a tape. If you can fit everything on one tape good for you, life is easy, backup the lot daily. If you don't you'll have to do an incremental backup (ie what's changed) daily and do a whole backup with multiple tapes weekly. Take the weekly backup off-site home from work or over to a trustworthy friend's place. Once a month take a weekly backup to long term storage and keep it for 7 years or something if it's got all your tax info on it. It goes without saying the tapes should be labelled full/incremental and a date, hostname and what sequence in the set they are. Daily backup tapes may be rotated once a week with a new tape supplied once a week for a specific day of the week. Eq week1 will be all new tapes with

### Rotation & off-site strategies II

one shipped off on Monday morning, week2 it'll be a new tape for Sunday morning, week3 it'll be Saturday mornings tape that's new. Alternately, some people believe the weekly or monthly should be on a fresh tape that's never been used.

With this strategy you get reasonable rotation of the tapes keeping costs down and for archival purposes, if you keep at least a months worth of data on the server you'll be able to go back to any point over the last few years and pull out a file. If you keep at least 3 months on hard disk you'll have 3 copies of this on 3 separate tapes because believe it or not they do fail and it will happen to you. To explain this more fully lets look at the following table and assume we have some wages data every week and the company's just started and there's 4 weeks per month.

### Maintain an effective

data backup strategy Weight 3

Grant Parnell

Rotation strategies

### Rotation & off-site strategies — 2

	server has	weekly tape has	monthly tape has
wk1	wk1	wk1	
wk2	wk1-2	wk1-2	_
wk3	wk1-3	wk1-3	_
wk4	wk1-4	wk1-4, month1	wk1-4, month1
wk5	wk1-5	wk1-5, month1	_
wk6	wk1-6	wk1-6, month1	_
wk7	wk1-7	wk1-7, month1	_
wk8	wk1-8	wk1-8, month1-2	wk1-8, month1-2
wk9	wk1-9	wk1-9, month1-2	_
wk10	wk1-10	wk1-10, month1-2	_
wk11	wk1-11	wk1-11, month1-2	_
wk12	wk1-12	wk1-12, month1-3	wk1-12, month1-3
wk13	wk2-13	wk2-13, month1-3	_
wk14	wk3-14	wk3-14, month1-3	_
wk15	wk4-15	wk4-15, month1-3	_
wk16	wk5-16	wk5-16, month2-4	wk5-16, month2-4
wk17	wk6-17	wk6-17, month2-4	_
wk18	wk7-18	wk7-18, month2-4	_
wk19	wk8-19	wk8-19, month2-4	_
wk20	wk9-20	wk9-20, month3-5	wk9-20, month3-5
wk21	wk10-21	wk10-21, month3-5	_

1.111.5 Maintain an effective

data backup strategy Weight 3

Grant Parnell

Context

Objectives

Directories

lethods of Backup nd Restore

Raid System

Backup Server

Broken Mirror

Command line

заскир Арріісаі

Rotation strategies

License of this

### Rotation & off-site strategies — 3

A complete backup and archive strategy should provide a means of going back to any point in time for critical data. Sometimes keeping the whole lot of data is not required. For example you could drop the weekly information and keep the monthly summary information and do a dedicated monthly backup for this data. The monthly data may be optimised and arranged for searching and an index provided but essentially contain all the information from the weekly data.

### Maintain an effective

data backup strategy Weight 3

Grant Parnell

Rotation strategies



#### 1.111.5 Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

#### Grant Parnell

Context

Ohiectives

Deciding what to back

Types of data

Important Linux Directories

Methods of Backup and Restore

Raid Systems

Raid tape array

Backup Server

Prokon Mirror

Command line too

Johnnand line tools

Dackup Applications

### Rotation strategies

License of this

### Context

Objectives

Deciding what to back up

Datahase

Databases

Log files

Home directories

Code

Web Sites

Web sites with volatile data Important Linux Directories Methods of Backup and

Restore

Standby partition
Backup to tape
Backup to standby dis
Backup to CDROM/D\
Baid Systems
Baid tape array
Backup Server
Broken Mirror
Brommand line tools
Backup Applications

#### 1.111.5 Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

#### Grant Parnell

Context

Objectives

Deciding what to back

Types of data

mportant Linux Directories

Methods of Backup

Raid Systems

Raid tane arra

Paakun Carvar

Backup Server

Brokon Mirror

ommand line tools

Deal of Assertant

### Rotation strategies

License of this

### Context Objectives

Deciding what to back up
Types of data

Databases

Log files

Home directories

Code

Web Sites

Web sites with volatile data Important Linux Directories Methods of Backup and

Restore

Standby partition
Backup to tape
Backup to standby dis
Backup to CDROM/DN
Raid Systems
Raid tape array
Backup Server
Broken Mirror

#### 1.111.5 Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

#### Grant Parnell

#### 01-1----

Deciding what to back

Types of data

Important Lir Directories

Methods of Backup and Restore

Raid Systems

taid tape array

Backup Server

Name - Minama

Command line too

ommand line tools

sackup Applications

### Rotation strategies

License of this

# Context Objectives Deciding what to back up

Types of data

Log files

Home directories

Code

Web Sites

Web sites with volatile data Important Linux Directories Methods of Backup and

Restore

Standby partition
Backup to tape
Backup to standby disl
Backup to CDROM/DV
Raid Systems
Raid tape array
Backup Server
Broken Mirror
Command line tools

1.111.5 Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

#### Grant Parnell

#### Objectives

Deciding what to back

Objectives
Deciding what to back up

Types of data

Context

Databases

Home directories

Code

Web Sites

Web sites with volatile data Important Linux Directories Methods of Backup and Another directory
Standby partition
Backup to tape
Backup to standby disk

Backup to Standby disk

Raid Systems Raid tape array Backup Server Broken Mirror

Command line tools Backup Applications

Rotation strategies

License of this documen

Types of data

mportant Linux Directories

Methods of Backup and Restore

Raid Systems

Raid tape array

Backup Server

troken Mirror

ommand line tools

ackup Applications

### Rotation strategies

#### 1.111.5 Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

#### Grant Parnell

Context

Objectives

Deciding what to back

Types of data

Important Linux Directories

Methods of Backup

Raid Systems

Raid tape array

Backup Server

Command line tools

Daorap Applications

#### Rotation strategies

License of this

Context
Objectives
Deciding what to back up
Types of data
Databases

Log files
Home directories

Code

Web Sites

Web sites with volatile data Important Linux Directories Methods of Backup and Another directory
Standby partition
Backup to tape
Backup to standby disk
Backup to CDROM/DVI

Raid Systems
Raid tape array
Backup Server
Broken Mirror
Command line tools
Backup Applications
Rotation strategies

1.111.5 Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

#### Grant Parnell

Context

Objectives

Deciding what to back

Types of data

Important Linux Directories

Methods of Backup and Restore

Raid Systems

Raid tape array

Backup Server

\_

Command line tools

Daorap Applications

### Rotation strategies

License of this

Context
Objectives
Deciding what to back up
Types of data
Databases
Log files
Home directories
Code

1.111.5 Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

#### Grant Parnell

Contex

**Objectives** 

Deciding what to back

Types of data

Directories

Methods of Backup

Raid Systems

Raid tape array

Backup Server

Command line tools

Backup Applications

### Rotation strategies

License of this

Context
Objectives
Deciding what to back up
Types of data
Databases
Log files
Home directories

Web Sites
Web sites with volatile data
mportant Linux Directories
Methods of Backup and
Restore

1.111.5 Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

#### Grant Parnell

Context

Objective:

Deciding what to back

Types of data

mportant Linu: Directories

Methods of Backup

Raid Systems

Raid tape array

Backup Server

Command line tool

David and American Control

Daorap Applications

### Rotation strategies

License of this

Context
Objectives
Deciding what to back up
Types of data
Databases
Log files
Home directories

Code

Web sites
Web sites with volatile data
Important Linux Directories
Methods of Backup and

1.111.5 Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

#### Grant Parnell

Contex

**Objectives** 

Deciding what to back

Types of data

Directories

Methods of Backup

Raid Systems

Raid tape array

Backup Server

\_\_\_\_

Sackup Applications

### Rotation strategies

License of this

Context
Objectives
Deciding what to back up
Types of data
Databases
Log files
Home directories
Code
Web Sites

Web sites with volatile data Important Linux Directories Methods of Backup and Restore

1.111.5 Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

#### Grant Parnell

#### Objectives

Deciding what to back

Types of data

Directories

Methods of Backup

Raid Systems

Raid tape array

Backup Server

### actup Applications

### Rotation strategies

License of this

Context
Objectives
Deciding what to back up
Types of data
Databases
Log files
Home directories
Code
Web Sites
Web sites with volatile data

Context Objectives Deciding what to back up Types of data Databases Log files Home directories Code Web Sites Web sites with volatile data Important Linux Directories

#### 1.111.5 Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

#### Grant Parnell

Contex

Objectives

Deciding what to back

Types of data

mportant L Directories

Methods of Backup

Raid Systams

Dackup Serve

roken Mirror

Command line tools

Backup Applications

### Rotation strategies

Restore

Context Objectives Deciding what to back up Types of data Databases Log files Home directories Code Web Sites Web sites with volatile data Important Linux Directories Methods of Backup and

#### 1.111.5 Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

#### Grant Parnell

Contex

Objectives

Deciding what to back

Types of data

Important L Directories

Methods of Backup

Raid Systams

Raid tana array

Backun Server

ackup serve

Johnnand line tools

Backup Applications

### Rotation strategies

Restore

Context Objectives Deciding what to back up Types of data Databases Log files Home directories Code Web Sites Web sites with volatile data Important Linux Directories Methods of Backup and

#### 1.111.5 Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

#### Grant Parnell

Contex

Objectives

Deciding what to back

Types of data

Important L Directories

Methods of Backup

Raid Systams

Raid tana array

Backun Server

ackup serve

Johnnand line tools

Backup Applications

### Rotation strategies

Context Objectives Deciding what to back up Types of data Databases Log files Home directories Code Web Sites Web sites with volatile data Important Linux Directories Methods of Backup and

Restore

Standby partition

#### 1.111.5 Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

#### Grant Parnell

Context

**Objectives** 

Deciding what to bac

Types of data

nportant Lini Directories

Methods of Backup

aid Systems

Raid tape array

Backun Server

ackup Serve

Johnnand line tools

sackup Applications

### Rotation strategies

Context Standby partition Objectives Backup to tape Deciding what to back up Types of data Databases Log files Home directories Code Web Sites Web sites with volatile data Important Linux Directories Methods of Backup and Restore

### Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

### Grant Parnell

Context

Objectives

Deciding what to back

Types of data

mportant Li Directories

Methods of Backup

Raid Systems

Raid tape array

Backun Server

Command line too

command line tools

sackup Applications

### Rotation strategies

License of this

Context Objectives Deciding what to back up Types of data Databases Log files Home directories Code Web Sites Web sites with volatile data Important Linux Directories Methods of Backup and Restore

Standby partition Backup to tape Backup to standby disk

#### Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

#### Grant Parnell

Rotation strategies

Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

Grant Parnell

Context

**Objectives** 

Deciding what to bac

Types of data

Directories

Methods of Backup

Raid Systems

Raid tape array

Paakun Carvar

Samuel Bara 4...

ommand line tools

ackup Applications

Rotation strategies

License of this

Context
Objectives
Deciding what to back up
Types of data
Databases
Log files
Home directories
Code
Web Sites
Web sites with volatile data

Important Linux Directories

Methods of Backup and

Restore

### Another directory

Standby partition
Backup to tape
Backup to standby disk
Backup to CDROM/DVD

Raid Systems
Raid tape array
Backup Server
Broken Mirror
Command line tools
Backup Applications
Rotation strategies
License of this document

Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3 Grant Parnell

Rotation strategies

Context Objectives Deciding what to back up Types of data Databases Log files Home directories Code Web Sites Web sites with volatile data Important Linux Directories Methods of Backup and

Restore

Standby partition Backup to tape Backup to standby disk Backup to CDROM/DVD

Raid Systems

Context Objectives Deciding what to back up Types of data Databases Log files Home directories Code Web Sites Web sites with volatile data Important Linux Directories Methods of Backup and

Restore

Standby partition Backup to tape Backup to standby disk Backup to CDROM/DVD Raid Systems

Raid tape array

### Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

### Grant Parnell

### Rotation strategies

Context Standby partition Objectives Backup to tape Deciding what to back up Backup to standby disk Types of data Backup to CDROM/DVD Databases Raid Systems Log files Raid tape array Home directories Backup Server Code

Web sites with volatile data Important Linux Directories Methods of Backup and

Restore

Web Sites

Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

#### Grant Parnell

### Rotation strategies



# Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

### Grant Parnell

Objectives

Deciding what to bar

Types of data

irectories

Methods of Backup

Raid Systems

Raid tape array

Backup Server

Dackup Gerve

Command line to

ommand line tools

ackup Applications

#### Rotation strategies

License of this

Context Objectives Deciding what to back up Types of data Databases Log files Home directories Code Web Sites Web sites with volatile data Important Linux Directories Methods of Backup and

Restore

### Another directory

Standby partition
Backup to tape
Backup to standby disk
Backup to CDROM/DVD

Raid Systems
Raid tape array
Backup Server
Broken Mirror

Command line tools Backup Applications Rotation strategies License of this documen

Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

Grant Parnell

Context

**Objectives** 

Deciding what to bar

Types of data

Directories

Methods of Backup

Raid Systems

Raid tape array

Rackun Server

Daorap Ocive

TOROTT WILL TO

Command line tools

ackup Applications

Rotation strategies

License of this

Another directory

Standby partition
Backup to tape
Backup to standby disk
Backup to CDROM/DVD

Raid Systems
Raid tape array
Backup Server
Broken Mirror

Command line tools

Backup Applications Rotation strategies License of this docun

Context Objectives

Deciding what to back up Types of data

Databases

Log files

Home directories

Code

Web Sites

Web sites with volatile data Important Linux Directories

Methods of Backup and

Restore

Home directories

Important Linux Directories

Methods of Backup and

Web sites with volatile data

Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

Grant Parnell

Context

**Objectives** 

Deciding what to bac

Types of data

Directories

Methods of Backup

Raid Systems

Raid tape array

Backup Server

Dackup Gerve

Command line too

Johnnand line tools

ackup Applications

Rotation strategies

License of this

Context
Objectives
Deciding what to back up
Types of data
Databases
Log files

Another directory
Standby partition
Backup to tape
Backup to standby disk
Backup to CDROM/DVD
Raid Systems

Raid Systems
Raid tape array
Backup Server
Broken Mirror
Command line t

Command line tools Backup Applications

Rotation strategies License of this docu

Restore

Code

Web Sites

Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

Grant Parnell

Rotation strategies

Context	
Objectives	
Deciding what to back up	
Types of data	
Databases	
Log files	
Home directories	
Code	
Web Sites	

Web sites with volatile data

Important Linux Directories

Methods of Backup and

Restore

# Standby partition Backup to tape Backup to standby disk Backup to CDROM/DVD Raid Systems

Raid tape array Backup Server Broken Mirror Command line tools

**Backup Applications** Rotation strategies

Maintain an effective data backup strategy Weight 3

Grant Parnell

Context

Objectives

Deciding what to bar

Types of data

nportant Lini irectories

Methods of Backup

Raid Systems

Raid tape array

Backup Server

. Broken Mirro

Command line tool

Backup Applications

Rotation strategies

License of this

Context
Objectives
Deciding what to back up
Types of data
Databases
Log files
Home directories
Code
Web Sites
Web sites with volatile data
Important Linux Directories

Methods of Backup and

Restore

Another directory Standby partition Backup to tape Backup to standby disk Backup to CDROM/DVD Raid Systems Raid tape array Backup Server Broken Mirror Command line tools **Backup Applications** Rotation strategies License of this document

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