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Wired to the World

Mozy vs. Western Digital

Losing important files when your computer system fails is something that we can all relate to and taking steps to prevent this problem should be a high priority for WTW readers. Two different technologies that I tried recently were the Mozy system (www.mozy.com) and a one terabyte Western Digital My Book. Mozy requires an Internet connection and works best when connected to a fast broadband network, while the My Book system is a portable USB hard drive that you can carry around with you "like a book." The 1 TB My Book can sometimes be found on sale for as low as $99.00, while Mozy charges nothing for 2GB of storage. Mozy has a fee storage service that allows you to store more files for $4.99 a month. Backups on both systems can take hours the first time you run a machine backup.

Mozy of course since it is Internet based requires a high speed data network connection. After logging on to their home page (at www.mozy.com), you must register using an email account, and download the Mozy software on your computer. After installing the Mozy software, you follow a couple of simple configuration/setup screens. These setup choices determine which files are stored on the Mozy system. You do not have to install all of your files on Mozy, you can restrict the backup to just the important ones you select. I backed up around 350 MB of files which took around four hours to complete. During the software install Mozy asks you to select the encryption method you wish to use. The default is a high level 448 bit security key called "Blowfish." Blowfish prevents anyone but you from reading your files while they are stored on the Mozy system. You can select your own password encryption key, but then if you ever forget the key you are out of luck getting your files back. Better to choose the Mozy key and not have another password to remember. The next step during the installation is to actually select the files you want to back up on the Mozy system. You can backup all files or just some of them. I selected the most important data files and did not save everything. You can select files by type using the basic system (browser favorites, presentations, photos, etc.) or you can select from an advanced menu that enables you to specify which actual folders on your computer you want backed up. Mozy next checks your Internet connection bandwidth and estimates how long the backup will take. The time needed varies depending on how you are using your computer. There is a slider bar that allows you to slow down

(or speed up) the backup process. There is also an advanced configuration menu that allows you to customize your backups and the status window on to the Mozy system. A user's guide is available here: http://support.mozy.com/docs/en-user-home-win/downloads/mozyhome_client_guide.pdf. In addition to setup instructions, the guide also provides excellent instructions on restoring the data to a new computer in the event you lose your system. The Mozy system allows you to store information from multiple computers for $4.99 a month each. Only one computer can be backed up on the free Mozy system. One person on the web reported that they started their backup on January 9th and it completed on March 15th, but that was for 446 GB of photos. Also remember that if you reboot your computer you have to log back on to the Mozy system for the backup to continue! Mozy will also make a DVD of your files and ship it to you via FedEx for restoring your computer (but not for free). The Mozy system will backup your computer at set intervals which you can choose from the setup menu. The default is no more than twice a day. One interesting side effect of having Mozy on your computer is that if someone steals your computer their files will be backed up on Mozy and you may be able to find out who they are if they leave their name and address on the backed up files!

The Western Digital My Book portable backup system has the additional advantage for some of not being tied to the web. Others will feel that having access to the web is in itself an advantage. The My Book system connects via a USB cable. The USB system was slightly faster than the Internet based Mozy backup. Basically you plug the My Book into a USB port and you will see the device in your My Computer window. You can then click and drag files individually to the My Book or perform a complete system backup at specified intervals. While you can carry your My Book around with you as a portable drive, you can also attach it to your main computer and if you leave the computer connected to the web, access the files remotely. Security is an issue with the portable drive, in that if you leave it behind you will lose all your files. In addition if you have not password protected the My Book, the files are open to anyone who finds your lost drive. The Western Digital My Book comes with a proprietary backup software called "Memeo AutoBackup" which you can use for the first time backup. There is also a 30 day trial version of encryption software included with a trial automatic synchronization software

"Memeo AutoSync." More information can be found at www.memo.com. My Book also comes with a Firewire cable which can improve read/write times on some more modern computers. The My Book drive automatically powers up and down with the main computer power condition. Disconnecting the drive is best done by using the Windows system "Safely Remove Hardware" function or dragging the My Book icon to the trash can in Macintosh systems. Then turn off the power manually by hitting the power LED on Macintosh systems. Windows machines will automatically power down following the "Safely Remove Hardware" routine.

Comparing the two systems, with Mozy you don't have to lug your backup along with you which can be either an advantage or disadvantage. With My Book you have the initial backup system purchase price. Mozy on the other hand is free or $4.99 a month for the deluxe version. With My Book you can designate folders that you want to open to sharing with others. Mozy does not allow for this type of sharing. Google Docs is a better document sharing service (www.google.com) than you can accomplish with Mozy. There are a number of other backup services on the web (Carbonite for example www.carbonite.com), but right now Mozy is the most used and best. All of these systems work with both Windows and Mac platforms.