

Dantz Development Retrospect

Laptop backup made easy.

BY RANDALL MAURO, PRESIDENT, HAPPY MAC & PC

We have a saying at our office, "There are two types of computers: those that have crashed and those that will." Every day, we see someone who has lost their data and needs to recover from a backup. Backing up your computer is absolutely critical and, if you do any traveling with a laptop, your odds of needing a backup are amplified by the odds that your computer will eventually be damaged or stolen while you're on the road.

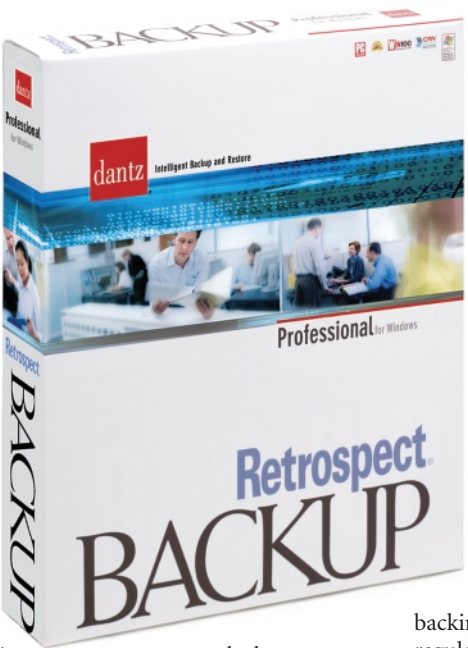
Finding a backup program that's easy to use, reliable, and inexpensive is no easy trick. For years, I've recommended a program called Retrospect from

Dantz Development. If you're a Macintosh user, you probably know about Retrospect; it has a long and proven track record in the Mac industry.

Because Retrospect is relatively new to the Windows platform (about four years) most Windows users have never heard of it. However, Retrospect is quickly taking market share from programs such as ARCserve and Backup Exec because of its reliability, cost savings, and intuitive user interface (figure 1). I can't tell you how many times new clients using backup software from a company other than Dantz couldn't decipher their logs, and therefore weren't even aware when their backups weren't working properly.

Compatibility

Dantz offers several versions of Retrospect designed for different backup needs. They all have the same interface and



important; they'll protect you and keep you healthy, but man are they painful! Without Retrospect, setting up a successful backup routine can seem like it requires a master's degree in computer science. You have to learn about back-up terms such as "archive bit" and "differential" and decipher complex logs to make certain the backup worked. A healthy understanding of statistics doesn't hurt, either. In the face of this complexity, many users just stop

backing up their computers on a regular basis.

work the same way so, if you know how to use one version of the program, you know how to use them all.

The least expensive version lets you back up a single computer. Upgrading lets you back up a network of two to 100 computers, regardless of their operating system.

Dantz allows true cross-platform backups (all versions of Windows, all versions of Macintosh, Red Hat Linux, and Solaris). This means you can have a Windows or Macintosh server back up a mixed environment of computers!

I have yet to see a piece of hardware that Dantz won't back up to, from CD/DVD, hard drives, AIT, DAT, DLT, VXA, NAS devices, tape autoloaders, regardless of whether you're connecting through IEEE 1394, USB, Parallel, or Ethernet.

Ease of use

Have you ever noticed how similar computer backups are to flu shots? You know they're

Retrospect's strength is in its ease of use. I installed Retrospect and performed my first backup in less than 10 minutes. The program uses easy-to-understand wizards to help you schedule backups. When the backups run, Retrospect prompts you for additional back-up media if necessary. When you need to perform a restore, even for a single document, Retrospect quickly locates files using its restore search

Dantz Development
<http://www.dantz.com>
 Retrospect Multi Server: US\$1,099
 Retrospect Small Business Server: US\$749
 Retrospect Single Server: US\$699
 Retrospect Professional: US\$129

PLATFORMS: Windows, Macintosh, RedHat Linux, Solaris

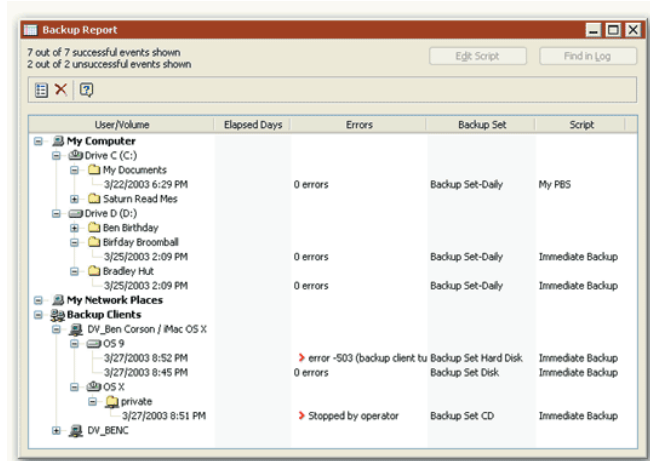


Figure 1: Comprehensive reporting—You get an executive summary of all backup and restore operations. You can also configure Retrospect to automatically export reports, either in raw or HTML format. E-mail notifications warn you about serious failures or problems.

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BUSINESS BENEFITS

Most backup software relies on a host of tricky procedures and complex interfaces. Retrospect takes a different approach and uses wizards to walk you through the procedure. Not only that, the reports are easy to read!

- + Easy-to-understand interface
- + Setup wizards make the first backup simple
- + Compatible with most hardware
- Log files could be simpler on single-user versions

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capabilities—even if you aren't sure on which piece of backup media they reside.

Industrial strength

Retrospect has all the features IT administrators have come to expect from an enterprise-level back-up solution—without the complexity. You also get many features that aren't available elsewhere. You can schedule your backup to automatically run uninterrupted late at night when network bandwidth isn't a problem. If a backup is interrupted, it automatically picks up where it left off, without requiring you to recopy files.

Back-up configurations

Because you can set the system to only back up new or changed files (even detecting identical files residing on different computers and backing up only one copy), backups are speedy and space sensitive. You can also use built-in software compression and predefined filters (which are

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fully customizable) to restrict what's backed up, for example, only specific types of files. Security isn't an issue with Retrospect's built-in encryption for network transfers and backup media.

Powerful enterprise-level add-ons are available for larger environments. These add-ons let you do things such as back up open files, multiple servers, and Microsoft Exchange server agents. A disaster recovery option lets you restore a non-bootable computer, and proactive client backups let you set the system to automatically back up laptops when they're connected to the network, regardless of whether the network is wireless or wired. We even have some clients backing up their computers from remote locations over the Internet using Retrospect's built-in encryption for security.

UpShot

Retrospect is a rare find in

today's world of convoluted, crash-prone, expensive software. I have to try hard to find complaints with it. However, some clients have mentioned they find the interface overly complex when checking if a backup was successful. Because the interface is the same on all versions—from the single-user version all the way to the enterprise version—I do agree the single-user version is a bit of overkill and could be easier to understand. However, if you've spent any time with the competition, I think you'll agree this software is still much easier to use.

If you're like most computer users, you probably haven't backed up your computer in a long time (if ever) and it's something you just don't want to think about. Unfortunately, at some point in your computer's life it's likely one of your files (or your entire computer) will be damaged or stolen and you'll need a backup. Don't wait for that day to come—be prepared. **ADVISOR**

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