

Managing the Daily Data Deluge

Not all the information we receive every day has a specific location, uses organizational software, or easily fits into a designated area on our computer systems. Therefore, we must use all the tools at our disposal to track and store miscellaneous data. Sometimes you receive very important and useful information verbally, in email, or scribbled on a sticky. In this chapter, you learn how to capture, organize, and store that data electronically, so it doesn't become lost or overlooked. Even the most valuable data is worthless if we can't remember or access it; in this chapter, you learn how to avoid that loss.

We also discuss what to do with information you uncover during online research. You learn the most effective—and efficient—methods for saving and organizing web addresses and Internet pages, so you never have to waste time searching for something valuable you previously found online. You also learn how to best manage the data you keep on your computer desktop. We discuss how to use shortcuts and toolbars to quickly locate any file or tool, while making the most efficient use of your computer's storage space. Finally, this chapter explains important techniques for setting up and using a backup system to secure your electronic data, so that *none* of the important

In this chapter:

- * Learn how to organize and track information that gets placed on sticky notes and other scraps of paper
- * Discover how to organize your desktop and remove the clutter
- * Find out how to save Internet information efficiently
- * Learn how to schedule and manage backups to keep your data safe and secure

information you receive, create, and track each day is lost to computer failure or virus threats.



To do list

- Discover options for capturing, storing, and tracking information that enters your office.
- Learn how to track information using your time-management tool.

Freedom from Sticky Notes

Who doesn't love sticky notes? I almost certainly do and use them frequently. However, some individuals can go sticky note crazy, covering their office walls, working surfaces, and computer screens with tiny jotted messages on various-colored sticky notes. They think that if they write that data on a sticky note, somehow they will remember it better. But when you have too many sticky notes around you, your mind begins to block them from your radar screen because it finds the sheer number of these reminders too visually overwhelming. A double-edged sword scenario, so to speak!

On most working days, a lot of information enters your office or crosses your desk, much of it in the form of a dropped word from a co-worker, a brief phone conversation, or a note left lying on your chair or scribbled on a scrap of paper near the phone. Whether you are in the habit of writing on sticky notes, writing on floating pieces of paper, or simply making a mental note of information you think you will remember, the result is still the same: Much of your important daily data is fragmented and difficult to access when you need it most.

Things You'll Need

- Desktop or laptop computer
- Electronic or paper-based planning tool
- Database, word processing, and contact software, as appropriate
- Spiral-bound or hardback notebook
- All miscellaneous information recorded on sticky notes or small pieces of paper on your desk or in your office

Setting Up a System for Filing Reference Data

First, consider which types of data you receive every day—specifically those types of data that have a tendency to become lost on sticky notes or floating pieces of paper. Some of this information is useful right away, but more often, it's reference

information you won't use for some time. This latter group could include items such as these:

- A movie title your colleague recommended that you must see
- A great B&B located in France
- Instructions for doing a mail merge
- The phone number of a great massage therapist



This kind of reference-type information will be useful to you someday, but only if you can find it. You might have already designated a proper home for this particular type of information, such as in the Notes section of your planning tool or in a file folder you keep in a desk drawer. But, if a pack of sticky notes is lying nearby, you might be tempted to jot the data down on one of these notes and stick it on your desk calendar, your computer monitor, or the front of your desk drawer.

By determining which kinds of this reference information you receive, you can create a system and location for filing it. Given the preceding list, for example, you might want to designate a location for the following types of topics: recommended movies, travel information, computer instructions, and referred vendors. Each person wants to save a different type of data, and each has her own preferred way of organizing and filing it. You can create as many topics as you want or just determine one location for all reference information.



Devising a simple and easy-to-use location and method for filing these types of reference information will encourage you to use it consistently. And using your system will save you a great deal of time and frustration you would otherwise invest in trying to track down that phone number, address, or other small piece of information you received—and lost—some time ago.

The best location for storing this data depends on how much and what types of data you want to track. The best storage option, however, will always fulfill these two criteria:

- It must be an area or place that is convenient and easy to use.
- It must be an area that will provide easy access to your data when you need it.

Here are a few options, both electronic and paper-based, for tracking miscellaneous and reference-type data:

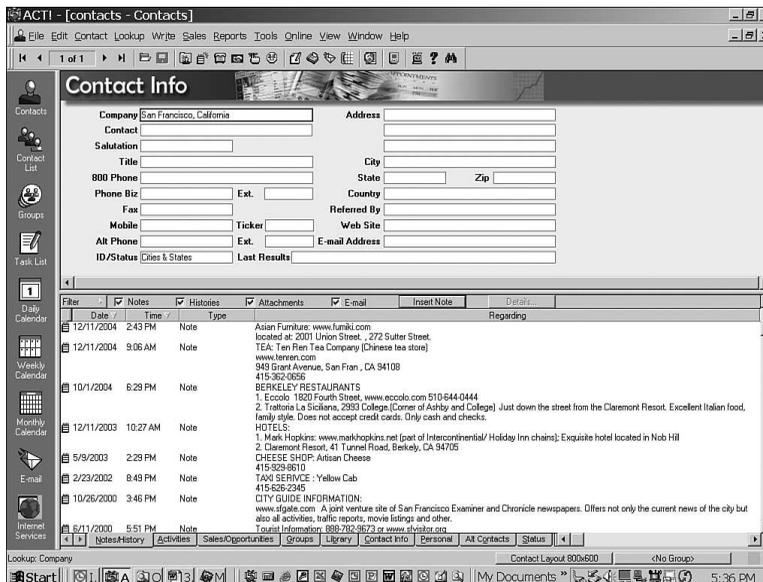
- **Address book**—Your electronic address book is a great way to track miscellaneous information. Instead of each contact entry being a person's name, you can create contact entries as organizations or even topical names. Then, you can use the notes field to track information and data about that particular organization or topic. Tracking information in your address book allows you

to find information by name or topic and, if you use a handheld device or laptop computer, the information can go with you when you are out of the office.

For example, you could create a new contact and in the Company field enter the name of a city, such as San Francisco, as shown in Figure 1. Then you could enter all the miscellaneous information into the notes field, such as favorite hotels, restaurants, and sites to see. Either option gives you one location in which to find that particular topic and data.

FIGURE 1

Shown here in ACT! is a contact that was created as a topic called San Francisco; in the notes section, we tracked information about San Francisco that will be useful during our next visit to the city.



- **Memo/Notes areas**—In most personal-information managers (PIMs) such as Outlook and Palm, there is way to track notes through a separate function in the program. In the Palm software, this function is called Memo, and in Outlook it's called Notes. These areas are useful for miscellaneous information you want to track. You can create a separate note/memo for each piece of information or create one note for a particular topic of information and keep adding to it.
- **Separate documents**—Some individuals like creating a separate Word or Excel document to track miscellaneous information. This is especially useful for information that requires a listing and needs a spreadsheet or table format.
- **Databases**—Some individuals who gather a large amount of one particular type of data might want to develop their own databases in either Access or FileMaker Pro. This can be useful especially if you need to quickly sort and organize data by multiple fields.

- **Day planner**—If your main time management tool is a day planner, use it to its full potential as an information manager, too. Write all reference information into the day planner by creating separate tabs for various topics, such as “Computer,” “Instructions,” or “Recommendations.” Or you can create one tab just called “Reference” and create separate pages for various topics.



For those of you who want to simplify and just have one area to capture all your notes and reference information, consider using one spiral notebook to capture all miscellaneous and reference-type information. Some individuals prefer this method because it is more visual and they remember where they wrote the information. The other advantage is that the data stays in chronological order. Writing your data in one place is optimal over tracking it on small pieces of paper and sticky notes. Don't forget to date the top of each page so that you remember when you received the information. Consider purchasing a hardback notebook versus a plain spiral notebook. The hardback notebook will have fewer tendencies to get lost on your desk, is more durable, and looks better at meetings.

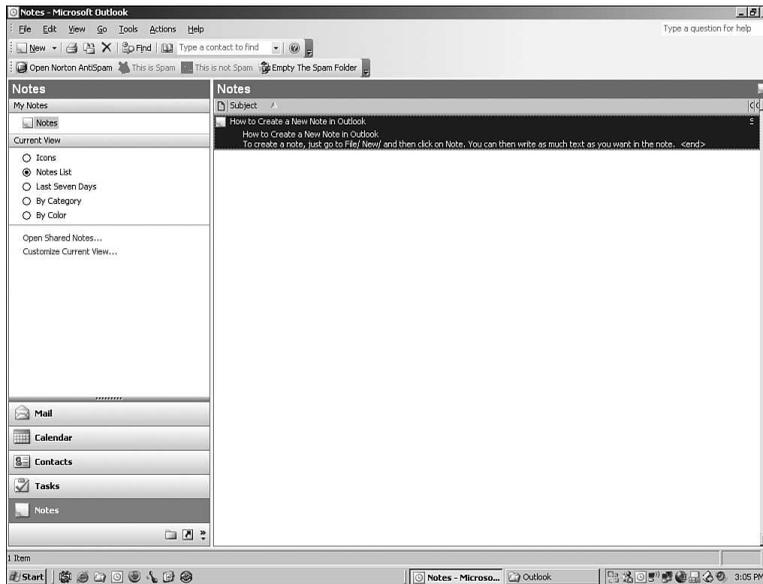
Other Ideas for Tracking Miscellaneous Data

Beyond the types of reference data we've just discussed, you might need to track a variety of other types of data that cross your desk each day on sticky notes, on floating pieces of paper, or in email. Here are some alternatives for capturing this type of reference information:

- **Phone numbers and contact information**—All contact information, including email and phone and address information, should be kept in your primary electronic or paper address book. This ensures that you can find that information quickly as opposed to searching your desk for that sticky note or scrolling through emails. Develop the habit of taking the time to copy this information in the designated address book area.
- **Phone messages and conversation notes**—Most individuals like to have a phone log that is a running log of all voice mail messages and phone/verbal conversations. You can track this information in one spiral notebook, a separate Word document, or the notes field for each contact record in your contact manager (CM) or PIM. Remember to determine a location that will be easy for you to input information quickly.
- **How-tos**—You might collect a variety of instructions for performing specific tasks or using various tools or pieces of equipment. You can create a note in your CM or PIM tool, as shown in Figure 2. Or you can create a separate document for each piece of equipment or software that includes directions, tips, and shortcuts relating to that tool.

FIGURE 2

Shown here in Outlook is an example of tracking how-to information in the Notes folder for quick access. To create a new note, just select File, New, Note.



- **Ideas**—All of us get ideas and want to capture the thought before it's forgotten. If your ideas are important enough to capture, consider having one location for storing them. You can create a note in your CM or PIM tool, create a separate document, or have a designated area in your paper planner solely for ideas. If you like to brainstorm and draw your ideas, consider purchasing a separate blank-page notebook solely for ideas and brainstorming.
- **Tasks and task details**—All details associated with your daily tasks should be incorporated with your task list in your daily planner, whichever form of planner you have chosen. If you have further details for appointments or tasks, use the notes field in the electronic window to capture those details or write them in the notes section of your paper planner. Two chapters in the book—Chapter 5, “Using Your Contact Software to Its Full Potential,” and Chapter 6, “Hardcopy: Using a Paper Planner”—provide full directions on how to record and maintain task lists.

To do list

- Discover options on how to track your Internet/URL addresses.
- Learn alternative methods for saving Internet pages.
- Determine a location for usernames and passwords.

Organizing Internet Websites

Internet data is another type of electronic information we now need to keep track of and organize. As our dependency on Internet information grows, it will become even more critical to be able to find data we've downloaded or copied from the Internet when we need it. Internet research typically turns up numerous sites and references, and tracking down a single item of information within these results can be time-consuming. Further, with many sites now requiring a login, we have to track many usernames and passwords. You'll save a great deal of time by developing and using a system for tracking Internet data, so you don't have to search twice for the same information.

Things You'll Need

- Computer or handheld device
- Internet browser software
- Contact, spreadsheet, and word processing software, as appropriate
- Paper-based planner
- Desktop phone number/contact information card file

Tracking Website Addresses, Usernames, and Passwords

You can track your Internet addresses, usernames, and passwords in a few ways. You can organize your Internet information by site name, topic, or both.

Here are some specific suggestions for tracking website information:

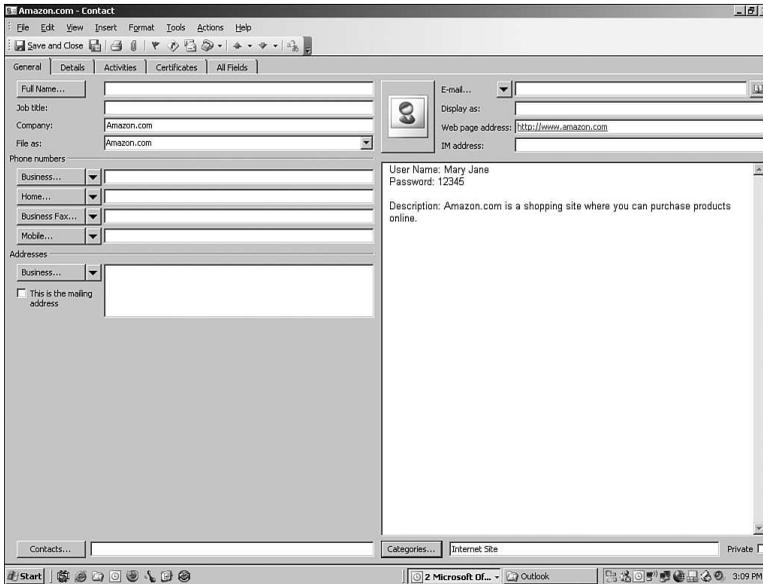
- **Internet browser**—Bookmark the website in your Favorites folder in your Internet browser. Bookmarking only allows you to track websites addresses, however, so you have to separately record and store passwords and usernames. Consider creating file folders in your browser by topical names and organize your website addresses accordingly.
- **Electronic address book**—Add website addresses associated with companies and organizations in the URL/website field in your address book or contact software, such as Outlook. Create a new contact with the site name listed in the Company field. Most of the URL/website fields are hyperlinked, so you can access that site just by clicking the URL, as shown in Figure 3. Use the notes or comments field to track your username and password; then assign a

tip If possible, keep your username and password information connected with the website address. This allows you to quickly view all necessary access information in a single document or view.

category or group. You can also use the notes/comments field to record a short description of the site or key data you've found there. With some software, such as ACT!, you can customize fields and create separate designated fields for username and password data. Using this method to track Internet sites enables you to access the site by name or category.

FIGURE 3

Shown here in Outlook is a contact record created to track Internet site information. In the notes field you can list your username, your password, and a short description about the site. You can also create a category called Internet Sites for viewing one list in the future.



- **Handheld or PDA**—Splashdata (www.splashdata.com) is the producer of a specific software for handhelds, called Splash ID. This software safely stores (under password protection) personal identification information, such as usernames, passwords, account numbers, and PINs, on your handheld and syncs with your desktop computer. You can also store password information in the notes or memos section of your handheld. Just make sure that information syncs with your desktop in case something happens with your handheld device.
- **Separate file**—If the website addresses you collect are referenced by a particular topic, create a separate database or spreadsheet to track them by category. Creating separate files and storing them in a password-protected electronic system is a good way to keep usernames and login passwords private and secure from access by others. Create fields or columns for the website address, category, username, password, and description. Depending on the program, you can quickly sort by any of those column names to access any information about the site. If you use Microsoft Access or Excel, the website can be automatically hyperlinked for immediate access from the spreadsheet or database program.

- **Paper planner or Rolodex**—Use a Rolodex or index card system to store website addresses, usernames, and passwords by topic, site name, or category. On each card list the Internet address, username, password, and site description. You can also create a separate tab in your paper planner and keep a running list of all Internet information.

Saving Internet Pages

Often Internet pages and articles you want to save contain reference information buried within a number of graphics, animated advertisements, and other data you neither want nor need. Avoid printing and saving lengthy Internet articles on your hard drive. Make sure in your electronic file structure that you have created a system to file and organize this type of information. If not, create a Reference file folder; then create subfiles by topic, as needed.



If you save a web page as an HTML file, your PC system often creates a separate folder in that file's name and stores in it all graphic, formatting, and text documents associated with that page. In many cases, you don't need to store and view the graphics and formatting that accompany web page information, nor do you want to allow those files to take up space on your system. Further, you don't want your system to become populated by numerous files and subfiles that you don't want or need to use. But if you delete the HTML file folder, you automatically delete the original text document, as well. To eliminate this problem and confusion, here are a few options for saving information from Internet pages:

- **Printer-friendly version**—Many sites now offer a printer-friendly version that eliminates the graphics and online advertisements and shows only the relevant web page text. Save this version instead of the HTML.
- **Copy/Paste text**—Use the copy/paste function to copy and insert the text you want to save into a Word document. Then save the document under a name you can easily translate when trying to locate the information. With Office

caution If you work in an office where others can have unrestricted access to your desk, paper-based planning tool, or desktop phone/address filing system, be aware that your online passwords and usernames could be in danger if stored in one of these devices. Further, if you keep usernames and passwords in a paper-based planner and the planner becomes lost or stolen, your passwords and usernames could fall into the hands of someone who would misuse them. If you choose to keep a paper record of this information, treat it as carefully as you would your credit card information, and keep a separate backup list for use in canceling and changing your passwords should your main list leave your control.

tip If you can't remember that website you visited earlier in the day or even in the last week, use the History icon in MS Internet Explorer to see the list of past Internet pages you accessed. If you click in the View drop-down in the History window you can choose to access them by date or site name.

XP, you have the ability to choose text only when copying Internet pages into documents. After you paste the information into a Word document, Word XP pops up a user interface icon that looks like a little square with a clipboard in the square, usually located on the right side. Click this icon and select Keep Text Only. This deletes all the formatting that automatically came from the website.



- **Save as PDF**—If you have the full version of Adobe Acrobat, you have the ability to print HTML as a PDF file. This saves the page with all the graphics and pictures located in one document. To do this, you need to ensure that you have installed the Acrobat Distiller tool. To check, go to the list of your printers and it should be listed. If you do not have this Acrobat Distiller function available in your printer options, reinstall your Adobe Acrobat and select the Custom install. Check the box labeled Acrobat Distiller and click OK. You then see this option when you use the Print command. For more information about Acrobat Distiller or purchasing Adobe products, go to www.adobe.com.

A blue icon of a clipboard with a white sheet of paper and a silver clip at the top. The text "To do list" is written in a bold, blue, sans-serif font to the right of the clipboard.

To do list

- Learn how to organize and de-clutter your desktop computer.
- Discover how to insert toolbars onto your desktop.
- Understand the importance of creating shortcuts on your desktop.

Managing Your Desktop Data

The computer desktop is an easy and visual way to access computer programs, files, and documents. However, desktops can get cluttered with documents, pictures, downloaded items, program icons, and other data that make it difficult to determine what's what and to quickly find what you need. It is important to determine what you really need to have on your desktop and then to organize that data for access through shortcuts and toolbars.

Using Shortcuts

In the book, Chapter 4, “Creating the Perfect File System,” shows you how to create and use shortcuts (see “Creating Shortcuts to Find Files Fast”). Your desktop files should include shortcuts only to frequently used programs, working documents, and files you access often. It is best not to save the original document or file to your desktop for the following reasons:

- **Data is fragmented from the primary file system**—To keep your electronic data consolidated and integrated with your master electronic file system, keep all your original documents and files in one master location under My Documents, as described in Chapter 4.
- **Usually the desktop files do not get backed up**—If you are on a networked system, files that are located on the hard drive (or C: drive) are generally not backed up. If you have an individual system and are responsible for your own backup, it is easier to have one location of original files, such as My Documents, to back up than multiple locations. (More information about backing up is located at the end of this chapter.)

It is best to keep all your data consolidated in the proper file and location under My Documents and to create shortcuts to your desktop as described in more detail in Chapter 4. Then, when you are done working with that particular file or document, you can merely delete the shortcut and not worry about filing that document or file. Remember that deleting shortcuts does not delete the original file.

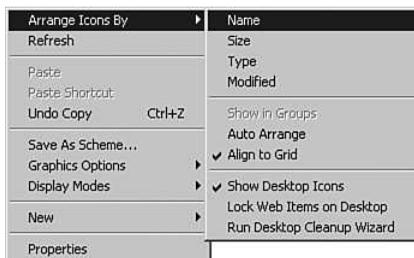
As you learned in Chapter 4, there are multiple ways to create shortcuts in PC systems. You can create them from Windows Explorer or directly on your desktop by right-clicking and selecting New, Shortcut. The shortcut wizard window walks you through creating your own shortcuts.

Organize the shortcuts on your desktop to fit your visual needs. You might want to move all your program shortcut icons to one side of the screen and your document file and folder icons to a different area on the screen. You might want to have a certain area that is designated for working documents. On a Mac or PC, you can arrange desktop icons and aliases manually by clicking and dragging to the preferred location on your desktop. You also can have the system arrange them automatically. On a Mac, click anywhere on the desktop and from the header select View, Arrange; then choose an arrangement option from those presented.

On PC systems, right-click on the desktop, and choose an option from the Arrange Icons pop-up menu, as shown in Figure 4.

FIGURE 4

Shown here is the Arrange Icons pop-up window that provides options to organize your desktop icons.



If you no longer want the shortcut, do one of the following: Highlight the icon and press the Delete key, drag the icon to the Recycle Bin or Trash, or right-click and select Delete (PC) or Move to Trash (Mac).

Adding Toolbars

With PC systems, you have the option to add toolbars to your desktop or your Start toolbar. This is another option to have quick and easy access to your files and programs from your desktop view. The Start toolbar is located at the bottom or the side of your desktop. Your Start icon is usually the first icon in your Start toolbar.

You can add toolbars to this Start bar that include shortcuts to programs, files, or functions. To add toolbars, right-click in your Start toolbar and select Toolbars. You see a list of toolbar options. Click the toolbar you want to add; this puts a check mark next to the toolbar.



One useful toolbar is the Quick Launch toolbar. You can add shortcuts of frequently used programs to it. Click and drag the program icon from your desktop view into the Quick Launch toolbar. This makes a shortcut copy. Then, you can either delete the shortcut directly on your desktop or keep it there for additional desktop access. Having shortcuts located in the Start toolbar lets you quickly and easily open other programs with one click, no matter which application you are currently using.

You can also create your own toolbars by clicking New Toolbar and choosing a folder or an Internet address. I suggest adding your My Documents folder as a toolbar. This is another way to get quick access to your files and documents without using the Open function in each program application. When you select a document from this new toolbar, it automatically opens the program with which it is associated.

note

When you download programs files, often they are downloaded to your desktop. After you have downloaded and installed the application onto your computer, you can choose to delete the download file on your desktop or save it. If you want to save the program download, you can create a file folder in My Documents called Downloaded Programs. The other option is to move the program file, with the same filename, under C:\Program Files where all your program files are located.

To do list

- Create a backup plan.
- Check your backup on a monthly basis.
- Consider putting a backup offsite or in a safety deposit box.

Backing Up Your Data

It's everyone's nightmare—you walk into your office one morning and discover that all your electronic data has disappeared and is now gone forever. Your stomach sinks and your heart races. "Where is the backup?" is everyone's first thought and question. All IT departments have backup systems and plans; however, most IT departments back up only shared drives and do not usually back up C: or D: drives on employees' desktops or laptop computers. So, if you are on a large networked system and have data saved on the C: or D: drive, that data might not be backed up by your office-wide IT backup system.

Backup systems are not infallible; often through human error, equipment failure, or simply a lack of knowledge about what types of information is being backed up, the backup system fails to capture important data. If you want to be more organized electronically, take control of your data and implement your own backup plan and system.

Data loss is usually caused by computer viruses, hardware failure, backup system failure, data corruption, human error, or building disasters such as fire or floods. When such failures or incidents occur, it is estimated that it costs the average IT department about \$800 per individual computer due to recovery time and loss of employee productivity. In addition to the individual computer cost, the time required to reenter or re-create data carries a cost. It is estimated that data worth about 1¢ can cost up to \$2,500 to re-create or reenter. Even though backing up takes time, attention, and money, it can save even greater amounts of time and money.

Things You'll Need

- Floppy disks
- Backup system such as CD-RW, DVD-RW, Zip drive, Internal hard drive, or USB Flash drive
- Disk labels and pens

Determining Which Data to Back Up

I am a proponent of multiple backups. The IT department has its backup, and you should have your own backup. If your system does crash, it is much quicker and easier for you to restore data from your own backup than for the IT person to retrieve your data from the backup tape drive. Retrieval of data from large backup tape drive systems can be time-consuming. If you have your secondary backup available, it puts you back in operation quickly after computer failure and gives you added protection against a failure of your IT department's backup system. If you have a standalone system or laptop, it is vital that you have a backup plan and system in place.

With most PC systems today being over 80GB, you might think that backing up your PC or Mac is a large job. The important data you need to back up, however, requires much less space than the entire system—typically less than 3GB–5GB. Depending on the type of backup system you choose, that can take anywhere from 1 to 2 hours.

The three categories of data on your computer system to consider when backing up are

- **Recoverable data**—This is data that is recoverable without the need of backing up, such as program and software applications that can be restored through reinstallation.
- **Temporary data**—This is data that are temporary files, such as **.tmp** files, or cookies that were created by software programs or the Internet and are not needed if erased.
- **Unrecoverable data**—This is data created in software programs such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Adobe Acrobat, and so on. These are documents, spreadsheets, databases, and other data files that cannot be restored if erased.

The last category, unrecoverable data, is the type of data most individuals need to back up. Here are the files and locations of the most common unrecoverable data that you might want to back up regularly:

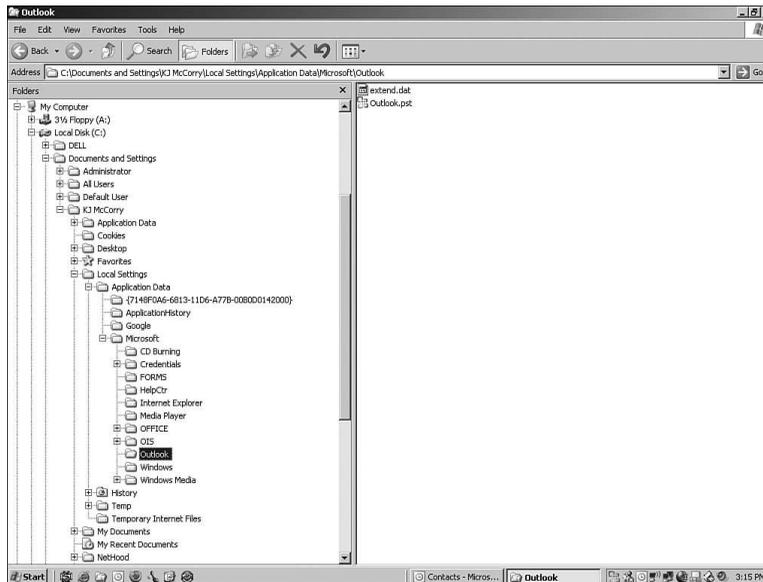
- **My Documents or Data file**—This is the My Documents or Data file that is usually stored under your profile name on your C: drive under Documents and Settings (C:\Documents and Settings*<your name>*\My Documents). If you are in an office environment and on a shared network, your documents might be located on a personal drive designated for you.
- **CM or PIM data files**—These are the files that contain all your data for the calendar, contacts, email, and task lists from your CM and PIM. These files are located in various locations on your system, depending on the type of software program you have. Some CMs and PIMs have one file in which all your data is stored—for example, in Outlook it's called the **.pst** file (see Figure 5). Other programs, such as ACT! and Lotus Notes, have multiple data files. If you can't find the data file on your system, perform a backup from the software itself. View the File menu options and look for the option named Backup or Export.

note As discussed in Chapter 4, it is important to have one file location where your electronic file system and documents are stored. This enables you to easily back up one folder instead of multiple folders. With Mac OS X systems, the data files are usually stored under the user's home file, which is represented by a house icon.

FIGURE 5

The Outlook data file is usually located on the C: drive under your username. The Outlook file is usually located at

**Documents and Settings\
<username>\
Local Settings\
Application Data\
Microsoft\Outlook.**



- **Internet favorites or bookmarks**—Your Internet Favorites folder is also usually located on the C: drive under Documents and **Settings\
<username>\
Favorites**. The XP version of Microsoft has a star icon next to the Favorites folder, as shown in Figure 5. Inside the Favorites folder are the Internet addresses or bookmarks to the website and not the complete download of the Internet site.

Technology can be extremely frustrating when it is not working properly. Taking control of your data and backing up regularly allows you to feel secure that your data is safe in case something happens. No longer do you need to rely on external forces to ensure it is safe—take the control and perform regular backups.

Choosing a Backup System and Schedule

You should back up daily or weekly. However, depending on your data and how often you make changes, you might not need to back up so frequently. I call it the “sinking stomach schedule.” If you lost all your data from the past day, would your stomach sink? If not, how about a week? A month? Two months? You get the idea. When you cringe at the notion of losing that much data, that is the time frame in which you should perform your backups.

There are multiple ways to back up your data. Finding the right type of medium that is economically efficient and has the capacity to store all your data is essential. I recommend four methods:

- Second internal or external hard drive
- Removable storage drives and discs

- USB Flash drives
- Online backup



Hard Drive Backups

You can create a backup to another drive on a networked system. If you have a standalone system, consider purchasing another internal or external drive solely for backup. If your documents are saved on the network drive, back them up to your C: drive. If you use the C: drive, back up to the networked drive. The same process is used for an internal or external drive for an individual system. That way, if one drive crashes, you have the other drive to work off of. This is the simplest and easiest method of backing up. Because this method requires copying a large amount of data, it is best to do so at the end of the day.



If you have a laptop and travel regularly, set up and perform regular sync operations between your laptop and a desktop system.

You can purchase and install special file syncing software, such as BeinSync (www.beinsync.com) or Save-n-sync software (www.peersoftware.com), that makes the process of updating files easier. This way, your data will be stored on two computers and you won't need to remember which one has the most recent files. When you sync, both computers update themselves.

Removable Storage Drives

Removable storage drive systems include CD-RW and DVD-RW. These types of backup systems are good because they allow you to store the backup discs offsite in the case of a building disaster.



With the storage systems, I recommend purchasing automatic backup software such as Stomp's Back Up My PC (www.stompinc.com) or Dantz Retrospect (www.dantz.com) so you can schedule the backup's operation regularly and automatically. You should store your backup media somewhere other than your office building. You can store CDs, DVDs, or other removable media in your safety deposit box, your car, your home, or any other safe location.



Label your backup media with the backup name, documents contained on it, and date. When you need your backup, you won't have the time or patience to hunt through multiple media, trying to find the most recent one. Write clearly and legibly on all your backup discs.

tip

To date, tape mediums, such as Zip drives, are



becoming outdated within 5–6 years, and floppy disks are quickly becoming an obsolete medium for storing data. Within the year, it will be difficult to find a floppy disk or Zip drive on a new computer, and soon the floppy disk will become part of computer history. So, if you have past data stored on floppy or Zip disks, move the documents and data onto your hard drive. Newer hard drives have large capacities, so you don't have to move documents to another tape medium, such as CD or DVD, unless that is preferred. Then, send all your floppy disks to be recycled at Green Disk (www.greendisk.com) or Eco Disk (www.ecodisk.com). They will send you a certificate of destruction to ensure that the data has been completely erased and destroyed.



Online Backup

If you have a high-speed Internet connection and travel frequently, you might consider using an online backup service. All online backup services charge a monthly fee based on amount of data capacity you require. All the services also have a secured password-protection system. Here are a few recommendations of online backup services:

- www.xdrive.com
- www.mydocsonline.com
- www.ibackup.com

USB Flash Drives

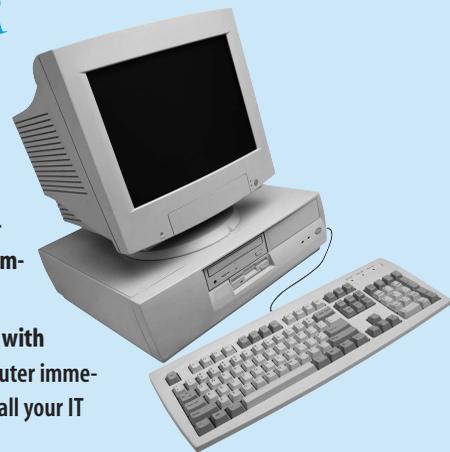
The USB Flash drives are an extremely convenient and handy way to back up data that's 1GB or less. They are becoming less expensive and increasing in memory size. Because these devices fit on a key chain or in your pocket or purse, they make for a backup system that also can be offsite in case of a building disaster. You simply insert the Flash drive into your USB port, and it automatically creates a drive letter on your computer system. Then, you just click and drag files into Flash drive.

tip Create a Word document outlining personal preferences for installed applications, in case of a system failure that requires a complete reinstallation. Or create a screen snapshot of your program files in Windows Explorer.

WHAT TO DO (AND WHAT NOT TO DO) IF YOUR COMPUTER MALFUNCTIONS

If your computer goes on the fritz, don't panic. If you don't have an IT department technician standing by, follow these guidelines:

- **Do not shake, hit, disassemble, or attempt to clean a computer that has been damaged if you're unfamiliar with computer hardware equipment.**
- **If water has been spilled, do not try to dry your computer with a hairdryer or other heating method—Turn off your computer immediately and gently soak up the moisture with a towel. Then call your IT professional.**
- **If your computer system appears to be getting worse with continued use, close out of all the programs and shut down your system completely—Wait 10 seconds before rebooting. Perform disk defragmentation, mentioned in Chapter 3, "Joining the Electronic Age of Organizing." If system performance does not improve, call your IT professional.**



- **If you think your computer has contracted a virus, immediately refrain from using your computer**—Update your virus protection software and perform an immediate full-system virus scan. If a virus was found on your system, perform the recommended steps of removal from your virus scan software. Also call your IT professional, who might have additional steps of removal depending on your system and the virus contracted.
- **Never assume your data is unrecoverable**—Special computer data recovery specialists often can recover damaged or lost data. Depending on the type of system failure, data recovery by a specialist can be expensive. Call your IT professional for a local recommendation.

Summary

Our day-to-day activities bring us a wealth of important information. Unfortunately, none of this information is useful if we can't access it quickly and easily. It is important to organize the information you value in a form that you can easily input and later access. Then, and only then, does your data become valuable.

In this chapter you learned the following:

- How to organize and track miscellaneous reference and information that enters your office on sticky notes, through conversations, or in email
- How to create and use desktop shortcuts and toolbars to make finding and using stored documents easier
- The fastest and most efficient ways to save and organize information from the Internet
- Effective and efficient methods for regularly backing up important data