

Tech Tip Tuesday— May 12, 2015

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Backups

It's 2pm...do you know where your backups are?

As many of you know, Livery Coach runs as a "client/server" system. That means that each workstation runs the Livery Coach software (the "client") and the actual data is stored in a Microsoft SQL database on your server.

Over the past year, we have had a few cases of our clients experiencing a catastrophic server failure. This can happen if there is a hardware failure in the server, a power surge (and the server is not physically protected with a UPS), or for a variety of other reasons. Just like cars, occasionally servers break down.

Normally, while this can be a short-term annoyance, it should not be a long-term catastrophe, because your server and its data is backed up? Right?

Unfortunately, in a couple of these cases, it was discovered that the backups of the Livery Coach database (called "lcmain") had not recently been performed, or were on the same server hard drive that failed. Not having a current backup turns a minor annoyance into a major catastrophe.

When we initially install Livery Coach at a new client, we generally create a "Maintenance Plan" that uses the SQL Agent to automatically create a full backup of the Livery Coach database every 8 hours, and keeps about 3 days worth of backups. Additionally, a "transaction log backup" (everything done to the database since the last full backup) is generally made every hour. If you have the backups available, then Livery Coach can assist in restoring this file to a repaired, new, or even temporary server.

However, it is your responsibility (or your contract IT company's responsibility) to make sure that these backups are continuing to happen, and that they are accessible in the event of a failure. Ideally, these backups are stored offsite but easily accessible—we suggest using a cloud backup solution such as DropBox, Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive, iDrive, etc. (Generally speaking, these solutions are quite affordable—from about \$60 to \$100/year for up to 1TB of storage, which is more than enough for many backup copies.)

If you are running an "Express" version of Microsoft SQL (rather than a Standard version) that what you have given up to save the cost of the Standard version is the ability to automate SQL backups from within SQL—and you will have to use a third-party solution (talk to your IT people).

In addition to backing up your Livery Coach database, make sure that you also back up your QuickBooks (or Peachtree) data file—and that should be off-site too.

Imagine the worst-case scenario—a power transformer near your building blows up, cutting power—and emergency officials evacuate the area. Something catches fire in your server room. An enraged ex-employee breaks into your server room and smashes everything in sight (including backup media).

While hardware can be repaired or replaced, and temporary servers can be set up...if your data is gone...it's gone. So ask your IT people today—where are your backups, and how recent are they? If you needed them in a hurry, how long would it take?

Disaster planning is a bit like writing a will or paying an insurance bill—it's never fun to think about, and you hope it's something you will never need. But in the event that you need it, you'll be grateful.