

Tech Tip Tuesday—March 10, 2020

Do You Know Where Your Backups Are?

As most of you know, Livery Coach uses a Microsoft SQL database to store all your data in your system. The Livery Coach program, web reservations, apps—they all interact directly or indirectly with that database.

The Microsoft SQL database (it's a computer program) is supplied by you (or your IT folks, or your cloud provider), not Livery Coach. It's merely the environment in which your system runs (just like your cars run on the roads supplied by others.)

What if something happened to this database? A hard drive could go bad, the server could crash, someone could click on that fake "Fedex Tracking" number and unleash a virus—there are lots of things that could cause harm to this database.

So the key to avoiding disaster is to make sure that your database is backed up often. This is something you, or your IT person/firm, or your cloud provider, is responsible for. Your support dollars that you pay to Livery Coach go for program enhancements, fixes, and upgrades, and providing program support. It doesn't extend to your systems environment.

If you are using one of the "paid" versions of Microsoft SQL, then these backups can be automated. Using SQL Management Studio, you can set the system to automatically do a full database backup several times a day (we recommend at least 3 times a day, and suggest 4am, noon, and 8pm, since usually that minimizes your peaks—and your system will slow slightly for the 1 to 4 minutes while the backup is taking place.

You can also set your system up to take "transaction log" backups, which is basically all the changes made to your database in between the full backups. Depending on how often those are taken (we recommend at least hourly), then your database could be restored to within an hour of the failure. (Some systems are set to take transaction log backups every minute or two, which gets you even closer.)

If you are using the free version of Microsoft SQL (called "SQL Express"), then the built-in automatic backups are not available.

But there are still affordable third-party tools that can automate these backups—such as SQL Backup Master (<https://www.sqlbackupmaster.com/>) – so that you can still make sure you have these backups.

The other important thing is to make sure that your backups are stored somewhere other than on the same server hard drive as your database. Otherwise, if the hard drive fails, all your eggs are in the same basket. We recommend putting them in a cloud drive (DropBox, OneDrive, etc)—this way you should be able to retrieve them even in the event of a major disaster.

To summarize: make sure you are backing up your database frequently, and are storing the backups somewhere you can get to even in the event of a major computer disaster. And while you are at it, where's your QuickBooks backups?