



Rob Miller, Owner, F1 Technologies: Offsite Backup Made Profitable Using Drobo

F1 Technologies provides computing, networking and web services to small and medium sized business clients. Rob has designed and managed his clients' data networks, telecom systems, Internet connectivity, and client-server systems. When clients started asking about offsite backup, Rob researched available solutions. When he saw the high costs of existing

services, he decided to offer his own branded solution. He chose Windows Small Business Server to run the solution, and Drobo for the redundant storage. "My environment is designed for my clients because they are smaller businesses, and they don't have the deep pockets that larger corporations have," said Rob. "This is for people that aren't big enough to have a data center."

"A client had a couple of external USB drives that they were storing their data on. They had more than one backup, but they had them both in the same location and their office got flooded. They lost both of their drives."

Who Needs Offsite Backup Services?

Everybody knows they should back up their data. Some businesses keep multiple onsite backups, and still lose their data. Rob Miller, owner of IT consulting firm F1 Technologies, has seen it happen. After many requests from worried clients, Miller started offering customized off-site backup as a service, using Drobo as the storage device.

Business is good enough that he's starting to plan his next step. At some point, Rob will have to add an additional Drobo to his environment, for onsite redundancy. He will have to decide between another four-drive Drobo or an eight-drive DroboPro. I'm liking the eight drives and ability to survive two simultaneous drive failures in the DroboPro.

A variety of different clients have turned to F1 for offsite backup services. They include a print shop that backs up graphics, video and Quickbooks files, and a medical imaging company that backs up encrypted hi-resolution scans. Client response has been excellent. "To date, I've yet to have a client complain about it. I have one client in particular that frequently restores files from the Drobo. They've never complained about performance. It's always there." Drobo costs a third of other RAID arrays on the market. Without Drobo Rob says he couldn't profitably offer his clients an offsite backup service.

QUICK FACTS

OS

- Windows Small Business Server 2003

Current Application

- Customized offsite backup service

Favorite DroboPro Features

- Easy replacement of failed disks
- Low cost

No Hiccups When Drives Fail

Rob uses Drobo as primary storage for his Exchange email database and website hosting, and to serve photo and video libraries. "I actually beat up my unit, if that's a useable term. I really have a wide variety of things that I do with the device and I do put a heavy load on it. Uptime is very good. I've never had a hiccup with my Drobo."

With the heavy demands Rob puts on his hard drives, he's had drives fail in his Drobo during the time he's owned it. "As an IT consultant, I see drives fail all the time. I've had two drives fail in Drobo. I popped the drive out, put a new drive in and it's seamless—just a matter of taking a drive off the shelf because I stock spares and popping it in. Within a matter of hours, it's back to normal. It does exactly what it's supposed to do."

Scaling Storage to Meet Customer Demands

F1's business is growing, and Rob is carefully considering how to scale his storage capacity to meet customer demand, while maintaining redundancy. "DroboPro will enable me to quickly add capacity as my offsite backup business grows. The upside of that is that as more and more people get digital cameras that have higher megapixel rates, and digital camcorders are going to high def, it's going to take up more and more space on their computers."

"DroboPro will allow me to throw larger, more economical drives in the unit without having to buy another chassis for storage. I can stick with a minimal amount of devices and still have the flexibility of the Drobo solution. And the ability to pick and choose faster interfaces if necessary."

Rob recommends Drobo to many small and medium sized businesses. "I can probably come up with hundreds of uses for it. Even schools that aren't big enough to have a data center, that would need something for centralized scores reporting, backing up whatever data their teachers have, plus homework storage. Schools are even doing video now in every classroom."

Drobo Maintenance Protects His Investment

Rob recently renewed the maintenance contract on his first Drobo. "Honestly, this device has made me so much money it was worthwhile to protect the investment at almost any cost. But it's valuable for my business to know that I was protected should anything happen to it. I've considered having a spare on hand just to have it anyway, but to get the 24-hour turnaround was good."