

## Re: Does DrivelImage 7 include the MBR in its image of a primary partition?

**Source:**

<http://www.tech-archive.net/Archive/WinXP/microsoft.public.windowsxp.general/2004-08/19979.html>

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**From:** I'm Dan (*dgREMOVE-THIS1261\_at\_cs.com*)

**Date:** 08/17/04

Date: Tue, 17 Aug 2004 13:18:02 -0700

"Chris" <nospam@[127.0.0.1]> wrote:

> > >> *This is what I want to do:*  
> > >> *Partition the 80 GB HDD thus:*  
> > >> *C: 10 GB for XP*  
> > >> *E: 50 GB for Drive Images and data*  
> > >> *Remainder for experimenting with Linux*  
> > >> *Install XP.*  
> > >> *Image its partition to E.*  
> > >> *Install Linux.*  
> > >> *Image its partition to E.*  
> > >> *But I'm wondering whether I need to do anything special*  
> > >> *about the MBR?*  
...(snipped)...  
> > > *The MBR is outside any partitions, in the very first sector*  
> > > *of the disk. If you copy across the partitions and want to boot*  
> > > *the resulting disk directly, you will have to arrange for MBR*  
> > > *code to be written – probably in your case by installing lilo again.*  
> > > *Another approach is to install lilo in the root partition rather*  
> > > *than MBR, and use an external Boot manager, eg BootIT NG,*  
> > > *installed in MBR and its own area*  
...(snipped)...  
> > *Think of the disk (in your example) as having \*four\* distinct parts:*  
> > *the MBR, partition 1 (XP), partition 2 (data), and partition 3 (linux).*  
> > *DrivelImage works on partitions. It will image part.1 or part.3 and*  
> > *save it to a file on part.2, but none of those encompasses the MBR.*  
> > *(There are good reasons for that.)*  
> > *When you install linux, you are normally given a choice of where to*  
> > *install the linux loader (lilo or grub). You can install it in the MBR*  
> > *or in the linux root partition (part.3). If you install it in the root*  
> > *partition, then your image of part.3 will include lilo, but you will*  
> > *need some other means to get the computer's boot process*  
> > *redirected from the MBR to lilo in part.3 – hence, Alex's suggestion*  
> > *of a boot manager like BootIt-NG. If you install lilo to the MBR,*  
> > *then you won't need another boot manager, but lilo will not be*

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> >included in your DriveImage images. Fortunately, there are  
> >easy ways to backup the MBR -- such as using MBRwork, a freebie  
> >available from www.bootitng.com.  
...(snipped)...  
> Thanks -- that's very useful indeed -- and has made me browse my  
> (old) Scott Mueller book to find out how hard drives actually work.  
>  
> Unfortunately I did buy Drive Image 7 -- and so I'm wondering what  
> is my best strategy. Everything I consider raises further questions!  
>  
> 1. LILO in MBR and image the various versions of the MBR to go  
> with the various images of the partitions (using something like  
> MBRwork that you mentioned).  
>  
> 2. Use BootMagic if I can find it -- I know I had it once.  
>  
> 3. Some other strategy that I am not yet aware of!  
>  
> What I'm aiming at is a dual-boot system where I can quickly and  
> easily restore either Operating System once my experiments have  
> mucked it up.  
>  
> How would you do it?  
> Or, how \*do\* you do it?

See if my webpage at [www.goodells.net/multiboot](http://www.goodells.net/multiboot) helps.

If you will have just one Microsoft OS and linux, lilo should be adequate and installed in the MBR. Save images of both OS partitions, and save an image of the MBR via MBRwork or similar. Note there is only one MBR, so no need to worry about saving "various versions" of the MBR. Your MBR would have lilo and be able to boot both Windows and linux. If you ever need to go back to a Windows-only machine, the original MBR is easily restored from the XP CD.

If you think you might install more than one Microsoft OS, then I would use a different approach. Lilo and the native MS boot loader cannot hide multiple MS OS partitions from each other, so I would recommend a competent third-party boot manager (such as XOSL or BootIt-NG) that has the ability to hide partitions from each other. Leave the MBR for the boot manager and install lilo in the linux root partition, with the boot manager chaining to lilo to boot linux. Again, you can save images of the separate OS partitions, and use MBRwork to save the MBR area (with its third-party boot manager) if you want. FWIW, I don't bother saving the MBR -- boot managers are usually easy to reinstall, so saving the MBR is of minimal benefit. Besides, the master boot sector also contains the master partition table, so any saved MBR image is obsolete if you subsequently make partition changes.

One use for multiple MS OS installs is to enable a "testbed" or "sandbox" partition that you can use to test new software before committing it to your stable OS installation. Clone your XP partition, hide the original

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partition from the clone, and use the clone to check things out with impunity. Sometimes you may need to run this "untrusted" partition for several days or weeks before you're sure the new software won't screw up your carefully maintained OS.

I'm no linux expert, but if you plan future partition changes, I think it might make sense to move your linux space closer to the front of the disk. If you subsequently add/remove additional partitions to the hard disk, they could mess with the embedded linux references ("/hda2", "/hda3", etc.) and perhaps break linux. But if your linux partition is where there will not be partition changes in front of it, then the embedded references should stay the same.