

Re: General instructions to re-install Windows XP

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- *From:* "Anna" <myname@xxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Sun, 15 Jun 2008 13:27:42 -0400
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"Anna" wrote:

Tom:

Not sure if my following comments will be "high level" and useful to you since I'm unsure as to the meaning of that phrase in the context of this issue, however, for what it's worth...

First of all, your statement that "it appears doing a periodic full reinstall of Win (XP) isn't such a bad idea." is questionable in & of itself. There's really no reason to undertake a "periodic" fresh install of the OS (or in the case of an OEM machine using the recovery CD or partition) unless one has good & sufficient reasons to do so, e.g., a seriously corrupted OS that cannot be overcome through a Repair install or >> other relatively simple processes, or some type of malware that is seemingly impossible to remove, or other software-related problem(s) that >> can't be corrected and which result in a dysfunctional system, etc., etc.

On the other hand I'm aware of many users who simply feel more comfortable with their PC when they fresh install the OS from time-to-time. >> So be it.

It seems to me that what should be a user's prime objective when he or she >> is satisfied with the operation of their system is to establish & maintain

on a routine basis a comprehensive backup program, particularly considering

a disk cloning or disk imaging system so that they routinely maintain an up-to-date backup of their system on another HDD. And that this backup should include *all* their data on their day-to-day working boot drive, including their OS, all their programs & applications, user-created data, etc. In short, *everything* that's on their internal HDD. Establishing & maintaining an up-to-date comprehensive backup system along the lines I've

described will surely negate the need for "periodic" fresh installs of

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the
OS and the onerous task of a user's need to re:install all their programs
&
data (as you have pointed out).

While there are so-called data migration programs (the Laplink program comes to mind – there are others) that are designed to move programs/applications >> from one system to another, most of them have serious limitations in our experience. In most cases the user will need to reinstall their programs following a fresh install of the OS. Not the most pleasant task for most users.

Then there's the need to reinstall the MS critical (and perhaps other) updates, although the recent release of SP3 makes that task less onerous.

But as the saying goes..."Yer pays yer money and yer makes yer cherce".
Anna

"tcarp" <tcarp@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message
news:79F85901-FFB4-472D-B068-1E5D49E73BE6@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Thanks for taking the time to post. I've already learned that my assumption about periodic re-install may be misguided (I certainly don't fit into the group that "just likes" having a clean system every so often). I've also learned that there are some other steps to take before going to a reinstall, that there's a backup strategy to be followed. And I've learned I have a lot to learn.

Let's start with what to do when things are acting a bit wierd. "Wierd" in this case starts with a call from a friend whose scanner stopped working. She's already been through a lot of hours with HP trying to get it fixed including making sure all the software components were there and functioning. It also included a complete reinstall of the scanner software. Along the way were some messages about corrupted .dll files. A local friendly Office Depot gave her an exact duplicate scanner to try but the problem persisted. The same OD gave her a very good deal on an older version of the scanner which eventually did work (but not without another corrupted .dll message during the install). Today a replacement scanner is working but the journey left a lot of questions thus the interest in possibly doing a full

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install.

Maybe the thing to do is to go through 1) what we should have done (and maybe still want to do) and 2) review the backup method she uses to see if there might be a restore possibility still available (this will also be a good review of my backup methods).

The only thing I did for them (other than offer a slightly higher understanding of Windows) was to have them clean the Registry. As we went through a complete uninstall/install of the scanner (it's actually a 4-in-1 device) we got past the point of failure that indicated a corrupt .dll. When we ultimately installed the new scanner that ultimately worked the first time through the install failed indicated a corrupt .dll (a different one). The HP installer recognized the failure, did an uninstall, and the next time the install was tried it finished fine and the replacement device worked.

What should we have done (or still might want to do)? Remember, the scanner stopping working was the original problem and the corrupt .dll file messages happened while trying to fix the problem.

I'm assuming a registry clean is one of the things to do. Is the only other thing a Repair?

Moving on to the backup strategy and whether there is still an option she might have available.

We both have good backup habits, meaning we do them every week or so. I use Retrospect and she uses the Bounce Back that came with her Seagate external HD. I have to check with her on what BB is backing up and whether it's incremental.

Let's assume that she has full system backups. Are you implying that she can "just" restore everything but the Documents folders to put the system back to a place before the failures began? In the case of the 2 .dll files that were said to be corrupted, the create and update dates are quite old which I assume means they are in an uncorrupted state on the backups.

Should she restore those two .dll files? Is that dangerous? Can it be done while the Windows is running?

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Let's turn now to the backup strategy and the idea of images.

From your note doing a "complete" backup periodically is the idea. Do incrementals count or are those mostly for documents (in case they are lost or a bad update is saved)?

What about the idea of images (which is what I'm assuming she has on her ThinkPad from Lenovo)? How do images differ from backups? Are they used to boot from (just in case) or are they used to restore Windows if needed?

As you can tell, my interest is to learn and avoid what one poster called the "cyber journey".

Sorry for the fragmented post. I'm not sure even how to ask some of the questions yet.

Tom

Tom:

First of all, with respect to "registry cleaners". I am far from being a fan of those types of programs. Over the years I've seen so many problems resulting from deficient programs of that type or user mishandling of same that by & large we recommend against their use as a general proposition. I realize there are many users who apparently use them with great gusto and repeatedly sing their praises. I'm just not one of them. In any event I seriously doubt a "cleaning" of the registry would have returned your friend's scanner to a functional state.

If I correctly understand your post, you're indicating that your friend's replacement scanner is properly functioning although you're still puzzled as to the cause & remedy of the problem she was experiencing with her original non-defective scanner. It's nearly impossible for me to diagnose what caused the precise problem she was having let alone the specific solution to that problem. It's possible a Repair install of the XP OS might have corrected the problem or possibly other approaches such as the chkdsk and sfc/scannow commands could have been tried to good effect – the preceding assuming, of course, that the problem involved some corrupted system files that caused the problem and not a driver issue.

All of which leads me to emphasize my original response to your query re the importance (in my view) of a user establishing & maintaining a comprehensive backup system whereby *all* the data on the user's day-to-day working HDD would, in effect, be copied to another HDD so as to create a precise copy of the "source" HDD at a particular point in time.

To that end our preference is for a user to employ a disk-to-disk cloning

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program or disk-imaging program and use such as a systematic backup program.

There's a better-than-even chance that had your friend had such a program in place at the time the scanner problem arose, her following difficulties would likely have been avoided in that she would have been able to relatively easily restore her system to a bootable, functional state including the problem-free operation of her scanner.

You mentioned the Retrospect & BounceBack backup programs. I did work with the Retrospect program some time ago. As I recall it was (is) basically designed to back up user-created data; it is not a disk-cloning or disk-imaging program as I recall. In any event I do recall that I wasn't particularly thrilled with that program but I can't recall the details.

I am not at all familiar with the BounceBack program. Assuming that program is a disk-cloning or disk-imaging program and your friend had previously cloned or imaged the contents of her internal HDD to her (presumably) USB external HDD prior to the time her scanner problem arose, could she not have resurrected her system and thus return to a functional scanner through the use of that program?

The disk-to-disk cloning program we greatly prefer is the Casper 5 program – see <http://www.fssdev.com>

The Casper program is extremely simple to use even for an inexperienced user, reasonably quick in operation, and quite effective. There's virtually no learning curve in undertaking the disk cloning process as one navigates through the few easy-to-understand screens with a final mouse-click on the button on the screen which will trigger the disk-cloning process. After undertaking one or two disk-cloning operations it should take the user no more than 15 – 20 seconds or so to get to that point.

But the truly significant advantage of the Casper 5.0 disk cloning program compared with other disk cloning programs that we're familiar with, e.g., Acronis True Image, is its ability to create *incremental* disk clones following the creation of the original (first) disk clone. Employing what Casper calls its "SmartClone" technology the program can create subsequent disk clones of the source HDD usually at a fraction of the time it takes to create a "full" disk clone. This results in a decided incentive for the user to undertake frequent complete backups of his or her system knowing that they can create "incremental" disk clones in a relatively short period of time. Understand that this "incremental disk clone" is a *complete* clone (copy) of the "source" HDD.

Bear in mind that the recipient of the clone – the "destination" HDD (internal or external) – would contain the *complete* contents of one's internal HDD (presumably the boot drive). Since that destination drive would be a precise copy of the source HDD, its contents would be immediately accessible and potentially bootable. Naturally its contents could be cloned back to a internal HDD should a restoration of the system be necessary.

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Again, what better backup system can one have? And again – because the Casper disk-cloning operation takes a relatively short period of time to complete its disk-cloning operations there's a strong incentive for the user to more frequently keep their backups up-to-date than they might otherwise do.

Again, I want to emphasize that the main advantage of the Casper 5 program in comparison with other disk-cloning programs is its rather remarkable ability to *routinely* clone the contents of one HDD to another HDD (following the initial disk-cloning process) in a fraction of the time it generally takes for other disk-cloning (as well as disk-imaging) programs to complete the process. In my experience this is a strong incentive for the user to back up their systems on a frequent basis – perhaps even once a day or two or three times a week – knowing that the disk-cloning operation will take only a few short minutes to complete the process. And at the end of that process the user will have at hand a "perfect copy" of their day-to-day working HDD. I ask again – what better backup system can one have? And have it in a relatively short time?

The Casper 5.0 program is also capable of scheduling the disk-cloning process on a daily, weekly, or other time period selected by the user so that should the user prefer he or she could arrange for automatic backups at pre-determined times.

There's a trial version available at <http://www.fssdev.com/products/casper/trial/> although it's somewhat crippled it should give one a good idea as to how the program works.

The downside to the Casper 5 program as compared with the Acronis and most other disk-cloning programs is the cost of the program which comes to \$49.95 for the program + \$9.95 for the "Casper Startup Disk" (the program to create the bootable CD containing the Casper program – needed to access the program in the event of a failed HDD). This "Startup Disk" is really an essential piece of the program; I can't imagine a Casper user not having this media. It's a pity that this "Startup Disk" is an added-cost option; in our view it should be provided as part of the overall program and included in the program's \$49.95 cost. We have complained to the developer about this but alas that additional cost for the "Startup Disk" is still present.

So the cost of the program is more expensive than the others. Be that as it may, in our view it's still well worth the additional cost considering its overall effectiveness and the fact that one will be using the program many, many times over the weeks, months, and years ahead. We've introduced the program to many users (including former ATI users) and I can't recall a single person who regretted his/her purchase. AFAIK, the program is available only through download from the developer.

Another possible downside to the Casper 5 program (depending upon one's interests) is that it's really not designed to create "generational" copies of one's system although it is possible to use the program that way

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depending upon the size of one's data and the disk size of the "destination" HDD (the recipient of the clones). Some users like to maintain complete copies of their system at various points in time. In other words, for example, a user might want to retain (for one reason or another) a complete copy of his or her system as it existed on July 1 and another copy as of July 3 and another copy as of July 5, etc., etc. To that end a disk-imaging program (such as the Acronis one) is more practical since to accomplish that objective using a disk-cloning program such as Casper 5 the user would obviously need a fair number of HDDs to serve as the recipients of the clones at those various points in time. But based on our experience I would say that the vast number of users are simply interested in maintaining only a current up-to-date copy of their system and have little or no interest in maintaining "generational" copies of such. But that capability may be a consideration for some users.

So I would recommend that you or any user who is interested in a comprehensive backup program should try the Casper 5 program to determine if that program meets their needs.

Anna