

Re: WinXP install ruins two HDs – Help!

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- *From:* "BobV" <rvandy1613@xxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Wed, 6 Dec 2006 15:07:06 -0500
-

Thanks Ted,

I guess maybe I'm a little oversensitive at this point. I just can't figure out how I did what I did, and I've explained things in detail to the IT guys at work, and they tell me as well they have never heard anything like it. Actually, I do use Acronis as my backup program. I restored both my Data and Programs partitions with it onto my new HD after I installed XP on it, but after finally accepting my fate on the other drives didn't think anything would work. I haven't used Acronis for very long, but I guess I would just create a boot disk (or maybe the Acronis CD itself is bootable) and then try to restore the boot partition from there. I'll look at the helpfile and give it a shot—at least maybe I can reuse the drives that way. I know the data is lost, but I hate to lose two 400gb drives completely when they were fine before the reinstall.

Thank—you again.....I'll try to be more patient about reinstalling to fix things next time; although I can tell you a lot of the little irritating things that were happening have been resolved by the reinstall. A couple are: every time I stuck a blank DVD in my writer, the system would reboot as soon as I closed the door. It even got to the point where it would even reboot when I clicked a button to go from screen to screen in my DVD creation software program—Movie Factory. Another one was in Outlook Express which I use for newsgroup reading and posting only. If I wanted to forward a posting to an Outlook email addressee, it simply wouldn't do it. It would prompt me for which Outlook profile I wanted to use, but then when I selected it, it would do nothing. Also in IE, when I would click on a "Mailto" link, even though I had Outlook specified as my mail program, it would open up Outlook Express. Just a bunch of things like this, too many to name....so I just got to the point where I said what the heck, maybe if I just redo everything I can get it installed properly. Working better now, but at a cost of two HDs.

Anyway, once again, thank—you for your last post. I feel better, and have some hope that all is not lost.

Bob

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"Ted Ziegler" <teddy.z@xxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message
news:%23Yb2YHWGHHHA.5104@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Sincere apologies if I gave the impression that I thought you were a buffoon. That was not at all my intent. Much of whatever expertise I may have comes from having made mistakes myself, including some clearly in the buffoon category. I'm certain that my earlier exploits are legends in the hallways of Dell technical support.

One way that you can avoid reinstalling Windows is to backup your system partition. A more accurate term is to "image" your system partition. Disk imaging software makes an exact copy of a partition or an entire disk. The image of a system partition includes the master boot record, so if MBR corruption is your only problem you can restore the MBR in a minute and be back in business, provided the disk is not physically damaged (which I have done, by the way.)

Disk imaging software is not simple to learn but I guarantee it will be one of the best investments of your time that you can make in a computer. Popular programs include Acronis True Image and Symantec Norton Ghost.

Ted Ziegler
"Backup is a computer user's best friend."

BobV wrote:

Ted,

Points noted, however, I did not mean to imply that I'm constantly reinstalling Windows every time I encounter the slightest problem. Just that over the years, with the number of computers I have in the house, that I have installed one version or another numerous times. Do I reinstall it more than is necessary—well, probably, so again points noted and taken for future reference. On this particular box that I built about a year ago now, I have never actually reinstalled the system. I only meant to imply that with the number of times "over the years" that I "have" installed Windows I have never really encountered before what I experienced this time. Never really completely ruined physical drives before. I do also note that you say corrupting the master boot record is rare, and that it's usually not recoverable. Guess that's all I need to know—I've done the near impossible, and I'm screwed.

Ok, so not that it matters anymore, but I attempted to reinstall, not wipe the entire HD and install everything again. I did not attempt to partition the drive—it was already partitioned. It was just a matter of rebooting with the WinXP disk and going through the steps to reformat the C: drive and then install XP on it. Since something went very wrong somewhere I was just attempting to ascertain what or how it might have happened. Basically, you have as much information as I have to share—one minute the hard drives were fine, and after going through the

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Windows install procedure, they weren't.

Thanks anyway.....at least, as your signature says, I did have a backup of my most critical data. While I'm obviously certainly not at your level of expertise, I'm also not exactly the completely unknowledgable buffoon you make me out to be.

Thanks again,
Bob

"Ted Ziegler" <teddy.z@xxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message
news:%23PJx3eNGHHA.1064@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

I've said this many times before, but it bears repeating: Many people think 'my computer seems pretty messed up...guess I'll just reinstall Windows.' That way of thinking is wrong.

To begin with, reinstalling Windows won't make a bit of difference if you have a hardware problem, a problem with software other than Windows, malware or a problem with the logical structure of your hard disk. Reinstalling Windows is only useful in situations where critical Windows files are missing or damaged. If this is not, in fact, the problem reinstalling Windows is of no value. And, depending on what the real problem is, reinstalling Windows can make things much worse.

You haven't told us anything that might help to identify the underlying problem(s) you were facing, other than "some things weren't going right on my system".

Also: Reinstalling and installing from scratch are two different things. Installing from scratch means erasing your hard disk and starting over. You have not done this.

You have told us that you are receiving a message to the effect that your Master Boot Record is corrupted. There is usually no

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recovery from
this, although someone with the right tools and the training
to use them
might...might...be able to repair the damage. In most cases
you have to
erase your hard disk.

It's rare for a master boot record to become corrupted. When
that does
happen it's usually due to malware or an inexperienced user
who is
trying to use partitioning tools.

The fact that you have reinstalled Windows "plenty of times
before"
should, quite frankly, be a red flag to you. Windows XP is
inherently
stable and in the hands of a knowledgeable user it should not
need
reinstalling at all. This is a sign that you might want to take a
hard
look at how you are using your computer.

So in your case I would say 1) Ask a professional technician
with
experience in fixing boot records to help you out, and 2) Be
prepared to
erase your hard disk and reinstall everything.

Ted Zieglar
"Backup is a computer user's best friend."

BobV wrote:

I think I probably know the outcome of the
bottom line of what I'm
asking, but what the heck...I'll try anyway.
Had something "really"
strange happen, at least to my personal
understanding. It all started
about a week ago....some things weren't
going right on my system, so I
figured "well, I have quite a lot of junk on
the system at this
point—I'll just reinstall the system from
scratch". Done it plenty of
times before—shouldn't be a problem. First,
I had three 400gb hard
drives on my system, all SATA—the boot
drive had the OS, my data

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files, program installation files, etc., etc., each on a separate partition. Second and third just had a lot of video files on it. Ok, so.....I stick my WinXP disk in the DVD drive and reboot; it boots to the CD and starts inspecting the system and loading install files....gets to the screen where I'm supposed to select a partition to install it on. Ok, they don't look right; but it does show C, D, and E.....so I pick C and move forward. It seems to do okay, and after everything installs it reboots and "normally" loads WinXP and you begin setting it up. Instead, it starts the process all over again. This time, when I select C, it goes to a next screen and tells me there is no compatible WinXP partition and gives me the option of deleting the partition and re-creating it, so I did that. From there it pretty much just did that time after time. Rebooted again, and tried a different partition, which I realize now must actually have been another physical drive....because what I basically have now is two HDs that are totally useless. Fortunately, I had backups of my critical data; but lost a "bunch" of video that I would rather not have....most not anything I can't get again (recorded movies off the TV, etc.), except for a few are really quite unfortunate. The thing I guess I can't understand is exactly what happened from what should have been a simple system reinstallation. Anyone heard of something like this before? I mean these two drives are absolutely worthless at this point....I cannot even reformat them, wipe out the data, and start over with empty drives. Even in Partition Magic, when I attempt to format them, I get the error message "BAD MBR". Is there any way to get around this boot record error and at least "use" the drives

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again? Any info would help.
Some big lessons learned this time—for starters, unplug everything else before starting next time. I've bought another main drive in the meantime and have started reinstalling my system, and things are going fine, and as I would have expected them to go the first time; but I sure would like to know what happened before.

Thanks,
Bob