

Re: EMERGENCY! Offline Files Disappearing / Vanishing

My Documents\School Files\School 2005\Science
Class\ScienceProject1.doc

AND

My Documents\School Files\School 2006\Civics Class\CivicsProject1.doc

However, in the "Science Class" or "Civics Class" folders, there should be hundreds of files, not just the ScienceProject1.doc and CivicsProject1.doc files. Additionally, there should be (lots of) files in the folders above these. eg: the "School 2006" folder should also have hundreds of files in it, as well as other folders. They are all missing.

ATTEMPTED FIXES:

FIRST TIME:

The first time this happened (at 11PM at night, when he had a flight at 6AM):

- I drove to his house, picked up his laptop, and drove to his office where the server lives.
- I first of all looked on the server, and sure enough his "missing" files were all there under his appropriate user folder on the server.
- Next, I hooked up the laptop, and logged onto the network as the user.
- I DID NOT SYNCHRONIZE (YET)
- I opened up his My Documents, and sure enough, there were his files
- all WITHOUT the blue synchronization arrows next to them. The only ones that DID have the arrows, were the ones mentioned above (ScienceProject1.doc, CivicsProject1.doc, etc.)
- I then performed a full synchronization. This took about three hours, over a 100mbps network. It appeared to have to rebuilt the offline cache from scratch.
- Once the synchronization was complete, I did another synchronization "just to be sure." This time it ran like a normal sync, and took about a minute. - I then powered down the laptop, disconnected the network cable, and rebooted in offline mode. All the files were now there - everything seemed fine.
- I returned the laptop to the client (at about 4AM).

SECOND TIME:

My client worked away merrily for about a week, then disaster struck again: Exact same symptoms - only about the most recent 7 to 10 files he had been working on, were available. Again, the tree structure above the 7 to 10 files was intact, but there was nothing else in the folders.

This time (about 1PM in the afternoon), he was again about to leave

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for the weekend at 8PM.

- I rendezvoused with him at his office.
- I synched up the laptop as before.
- THEN -
- I COPIED the contents of his My Documents onto his Desktop.
- I DELETED the contents of his My Documents
- I did another sync (of his now empty My Documents)
- I deleted his Offline Cache (Folder Options, on the Offline Files tab, press CTRL+SHIFT, and then click Delete Files).
- I did another sync.
- THEN -
- I COPIED the (previously copied) My Documents contents, from his desktop, back to his real My Documents.
- I performed another full sync.
- I then did another sync (just to be sure), and rebooted.
- Everything was still there. I synched again.
- I shut down, rebooted in offline mode.
- All the files were there. "This is fixed!" I thought.

THIRD TIME:

Everything was okay for about a month. Then lightning struck a third time. Again, the exact same problem – only a few files available.

This time I really went overboard: It is a small office – three users only. (I have a client with FIFTY users, and have never had these problems).

His assistant (let's call her "Mary") has a workstation. She sometimes needs access to his files, so sometimes she logs onto her workstation as him (let's call him "Joe").

Why do you not simply grant Mary rights to this folder if Joe doesn't mind ? Nobody should ever log in as another user. There's no need.

There is also a laptop which Mary uses, and sometimes she logs on as Joe on the laptop too. I figured that perhaps there was some conflict between the three machines. I therefore decided to re-image (wipe) ALL THE MACHINES and start afresh.

- I first of all made a systemwide backup.
- For added backup, I then burned several DVDs with each user's My Documents on them.
- I deleted the contents of the User's folders on the server.
- I re-imaged all the machines.
- I deleted the computer accounts of the old machines (using the proper SBS tools).

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- I joined the "newly minted" computers to the domain (using the proper SBS wizards).
- I logged on each machine as Administrator on the domain, and added a few extra apps that were not on the image.
- I then logged on as the respective user who would be using that machine.
- I copied the contents of the User's My Docs DVD to their desktop first...
- Then I COPIED the contents of the desktop folder to their My Documents (thereby repropogating their empty/clean User folder on the server).
- I then synched up each machine.
- THIS ALL TOOK A–G–E–S BY THE WAY!!!
- I then went offline with Joe's laptop, checked the files were there, etc.
- Everything was fine.
- That was back in January.

FAST FORWARD SEVEN MONTHS...

FOURTH TIME:

I really thought that was the end of it. There have been no problems since January. To my horror, I received a call from my client on Monday of this week (today is Wednesday). MISSING FILES AGAIN!

Same problem – exactly.

I thought there may be some "salvation," as he said he had been "moving a lot of files around." My guess was that he had just moved some files around while in the office, and then forgot to synchronize at the end. He had basically moved older folders into a new "Past Years" folder in his My Documents. Nothing wrong with that – you should be able to do that! I guessed he hadn't synchronized.

So, back over to his house, and back down to the office...

- Hooked up the laptop
- Logged onto the network as Joe.
- Synched files – took a good while (half-hour on his new 1000 mbps network)
- Synched again (just to be sure)
- Shut down.
- Rebooted in offline mode.
- All the files were there.
- Returned the laptop to him.

FIFTH TIME (TODAY):

– I get a call from Joe at 6AM. I am asleep. He is at the airport in San Francisco. (We are based in San Francisco).

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- HIS FILES ARE GONE AGAIN!
- He is flying (via Chicago) to a small town in the East Coast for business
- He needs his files.
- I may lose Joe as a client as a result of this.

SUMMARY / ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS (POSSIBLE OTHER REASONS):

This is clearly unacceptable. This is business "make or break" stuff.

I have a single rule for myself and my employees: I don't care if you go out and get drunk every night. I don't care if you prefer to work naked at your desk. I don't care if you masturbate for an hour each day in the bathroom at work. I don't care if you lose your temper and take a hammer and chisel to a computer (as long as it's backed up). I really don't care what you do, as long as...

*** YOU NEVER EVER EVER E-V-E-R LOSE A CLIENT'S DATA – NEVER. ***

You will be fired immediately. We can work on your personal problems. We can replace broken equipment. We can get you in a recovery program. We can buy new computers. WE CANNOT BUY NEW DATA. Therefore it must never happen.

POSSIBILITIES:

1) The one common thread in all of this, is that this ALWAYS seems to happen when Joe is AWAY from the office: He has all of his files offline and working fine. Then, suddenly, they disappear. There is no VPN involved. He is not connecting to the network remotely (except for Outlook via RPC over HTTPS).

2) THIS MAY BE IMPORTANT: There was a time, that Mary had direct access to Joe's User folder on the server. He would occasionally need her to go in and modify a file. However, when I reimaged all the machines (see "Third Time"), I explicitly removed her permissions from his folder and restored the folder to it's default state – and replaced permissions with the proper ones. Maybe that has something to do with it, but I don't see how? It has been working for seven months without a hitch.

CAN ANYBODY HELP ME?!!! Thank you.

You've now seen why I use SecondCopy from www.centered.com and special OUs & GPOs for folder redirection for laptops to a local path.

Sorry I can't help more specifically with the lost files, but this has happened to me before and I won't use offline files again.

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