

WHITE PAPER



5 REASONS

WHY YOU NEED TO BACK
UP YOUR DATA ON
OFFICE 365





MICROSOFT OFFICE 365 IS A SUBSCRIPTION-BASED SERVICE WHICH WAS DEVELOPED FROM MICROSOFT'S POPULAR OFFICE APPLICATION.

This service includes access to Office applications such as Word, Excel and PowerPoint but more importantly also offers access to a range of productivity services which include, amongst others, Email via Exchange Online, File Sharing via OneDrive for Business, Collaboration via SharePoint Online and Unified Communications via Skype for Business.

Since its launch in 2011, the Microsoft Office 365 platform has grown from strength to strength and now boasts over 135 Million active monthly users. With so many services spread across data centers in locations around the world, data protection is a priority for Microsoft due to the large number of users and businesses who rely on their Office 365 platform.

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UNDERSTANDING DATA PROTECTION IN MICROSOFT OFFICE 365

Microsoft protects the data its subscribers generate on Office 365 in a few different ways. The size and scale of the Microsoft Office 365 platform provides redundancy and high-availability. This means that for each piece of data a subscriber saves on Office 365, multiple copies are replicated to alternate data stores across multiple data centres. This data protection solution ensures a subscriber's data is protected from environmental threats such as hardware or software failure, natural disasters and power outages which could put the integrity and availability of data hosted on the Office 365 platform in jeopardy.

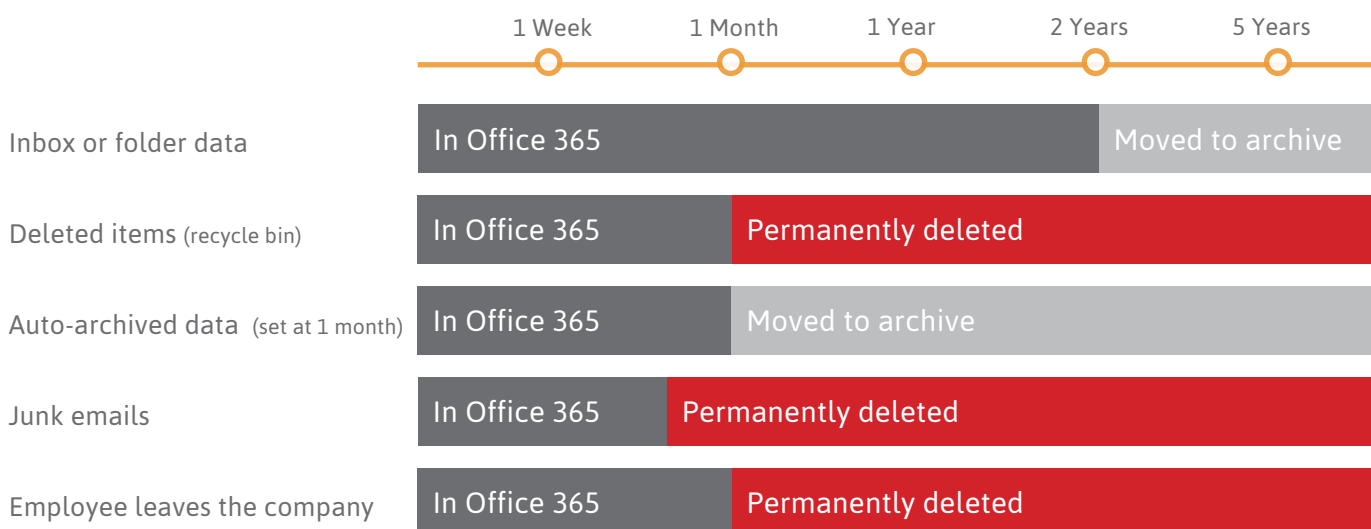
In addition to mitigating environmental threats and ensuring high-availability, Office 365 also protects data through retention policies.

Each online service, be it Exchange Online, SharePoint Online or OneDrive for Business, has different retention policies which the subscriber can set for data which is archived, or data which has been deleted.

Although redundancy, high-availability and retention policies do protect subscriber data from unplanned incidents such as environmental factors and human error, the standard Microsoft data protection offering on Office 365 does not cover all the bases. If an organisation relies on these measures exclusively, there is a real risk of data loss. The data retention feature on Office 365 is not a substitute for a comprehensive data backup solution.

WHAT DOES MICROSOFT BACK UP?

Microsoft Office 365 Retention Policies



Office 365 backup and retention policies are not intended to be a complete backup solution. Retention policies are always evolving and tend to be complicated to manage and monitor.

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5 REASONS WHY YOU NEED TO BACK UP YOUR DATA ON OFFICE 365

Since Microsoft Office 365 is a Software as a Service (SaaS) platform its primary data protection focus is ensuring availability which reduces the risk of downtime. High-Availability does not protect organisations from the risk of data loss, it only ensures data is available. The fact of the matter is that data protection on Office 365 is a shared responsibility between Microsoft and the Office 365 subscriber. As with other SaaS applications, Microsoft is responsible for the underlying infrastructure which hosts the service, and the subscriber is responsible for administering the application. This means the subscriber is ultimately accountable for managing the users and the data.

Microsoft Office 365 does offer some features which could be used to protect subscribers from data loss, such as its data retention policies. However, data retention solutions do not offer true data protection. Having multiple backup copies of data taken at a point in time is the only real way to ensure you can recover from a data loss incident. To illustrate this point let's look at a few real-world scenarios where the existing data protection features on Office 365 fail to protect data.



1. HUMAN ERROR

Human error is a known risk factor when it comes to technology. In fact, human error is one of the leading causes of data loss with 29% of all incidents being attributed to it .

The issue with Office 365 is that the standard data protection measures Microsoft has implemented, even though they offer high-availability and resiliency, will not prevent data loss from an incident involving human error.

The classic example which is often used to demonstrate this is the deletion of a user's mailbox. In a high-availability environment the deletion will replicate across the network destroying the mailbox with a restore from a previous backup being the only way to recover it.

If we take the same example on Office 365, the mailbox will be deleted but it will remain in the recycle bin for a set period as defined by the relevant retention policy. Once the retention period has lapsed, the mailbox will be lost forever. While this may seem like an acceptable protection measure it really is not. If the accidental deletion is not picked up in time the mailbox will be lost. In addition, an administrator could go and clear the recycle bin while the mailbox is within the deletion retention period which would have the same result, the mailbox will be expunged.

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2. SECURITY THREATS

Data breaches which have the potential to cause data loss are a daily occurrence across the world. In 2017 alone, there were 1,442 security incidents which exposed a total of 3.4 billion data records . And, according to a recent survey conducted by the UK government, over four in ten businesses (43%) and two in ten charities (19%) experienced a cyber security breach or attack in the last 12 months . These statistics show that security breaches pose a clear and present danger to any organisation which utilises, operates or consumes an online service.

In addition to data breaches, other security threats also pose a threat to data being stored on online systems. Disgruntled employees and malware are just two further examples of security risks which have been known to destroy data. Because of the way Microsoft Office 365 protects data through solutions which involve high-availability, resiliency and retention policies, it does not have an effective data protection mechanism to defend against data loss as result of a security related incident. As with the risk involving human error, once data has been deleted or corrupted, it is either lost permanently or stored in the recycle bin until the retention period lapses and the data is deleted.



3. RETENTION POLICY MISALIGNMENT

Office 365 retention policies are extremely complex to understand and implement effectively. This complexity poses a risk to an organisation consuming Office 365 services. Complexity could result in a retention policy misconfiguration which would then result in an inconsistency in what the organisation believes is being retained, and what is actually being retained by Office 365.

Other than the complexity involved in setting up retention policies, this Office 365 feature has other factors which make it a less than perfect data protection solution.

If we take Exchange Online as an example, retention policies do not prohibit a user from removing an email message from their mailbox and any message over two years is automatically archived, if the default retention policy is activated, without any user intervention. These examples clearly show that retention policies do not offer the robust data protection enterprise organisations need from their email service.



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4. COMPLIANCE

Another area where Office 365 may fall short with regard to data protection concerns the important matter of legislation and compliance.

The ability to retrieve mailbox data during legal action and to meet any regulatory compliance needs is a key necessity for organisations due to the legal status email enjoys under national laws across the world. For example, staff who work for the Australian government need to ensure they keep any email correspondence as this data forms part of the Commonwealth record which is protected by the Archives Act 1983 .

The fact that a user can delete an email and that retention periods on Office 365 have a set time limit poses a risk to organisations who need to keep email records for legislative or compliance purposes. As such, organisations need to look at other options when considering data protection to ensure they do not fall foul of the law.



5. HYBRID DEPLOYMENTS

Hybrid cloud deployments offer a host of great business benefits such as business continuity, an enhanced ability to innovate and scalability.

By having the choice to deploy workloads to the cloud, or keep them on-premise, organisations gain the flexibility they need to make technical decisions which improve their efficiency, increase their ROI and enhance their agility. However, managing a hybrid cloud environment does come with added complexity which raises the risk of possible data loss.

Microsoft Office 365 gives organisations the ability to run a hybrid cloud environment where they can blend Office 365 online services with on-premise Microsoft applications like Microsoft Exchange. There are many reasons an organisation may choose a hybrid-cloud deployment. It may be a transitional phase as part of a cloud migration project, or it may be a strategic choice to keep certain data on-premise while offloading other data to Office 365. Whatever the reason, data in both environments needs to be protected from possible loss.

If an organisation is using an on-premise solution to protect its on-premise data, while utilising Microsoft's Office 365 data retention feature to provide some protection to its cloud-based data, the organisation is at a risk of data loss.

At the very least its cloud-based data is at risk due to the weakness of data retention as a data protection solution. In addition, the fact that multiple solutions are being used to protect a single dataset could lead to issues in protection disparity where some data could fall between the gaps and remain unprotected.

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PROTECTING OFFICE 365 DATA WITH VEEAM

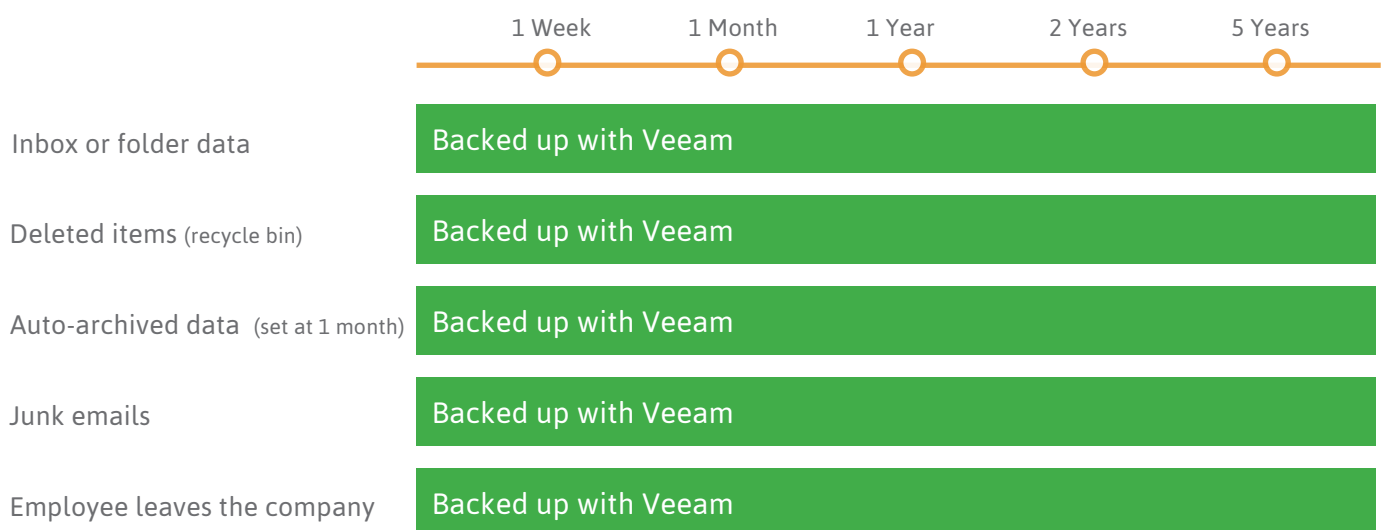
The fact is, Microsoft does not offer a comprehensive backup of your Office 365 data. As there is no independent copy of data that can be restored if the original source data is unavailable, Office 365 subscribers run the risk of possible data loss either through human error, security breach or retention policy misconfiguration. In addition, Microsoft Office 365's data retention policy features are not well-suited to protect hybrid cloud environments and may not provide the level of archiving needed for organisations to meet legislative or compliance requirements. To adequately protect data on Office 365 organisations must invest in a solution which has the comprehensive features they need to protect their critical cloud-based information.

Veeam Backup for Microsoft Office 365 gives organisations the ability to protect their Office 365 data from accidental deletion, security threats and retention policy gaps, quickly restore individual Office 365 items, and meet legal and compliance requirements with efficient eDiscovery of Office 365 backup archives.

Furthermore, Veeam Backup for Microsoft Office 365 allows organisations to effectively protect their data across a hybrid cloud environment. With Veeam Backup for Microsoft Office 365, organisations have the ability to seamlessly migrate mailbox data between Office 365 and on-premise Exchange. They also have the option of enabling the creation of consistent backups of Office 365 archives to streamline eDiscovery and mailbox item-level restores.

WHAT DOES VEEAM BACK UP?

Veeam Backup for Office 365 Retention Policies



Veeam Backup for Microsoft Office 365 protects ALL of your Exchange Online email and stores this data in one location, making recovery fast, easy and reliable.

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ABOUT TASMANET

TasmaNet is a leading digital service provider specialising in world class IT hosting infrastructure and telecommunication services. Established in 2004 they provide world-leading managed network services, Internet, co-location services, hosting & storage, disaster recovery, backups and cloud solutions.

TasmaNet is considered the benchmark for clever, innovative solutions and a customer-focused approach. Their success and strategic directions have enabled them to form strong partnerships with major global 'players' in cloud services, hosting infrastructure and networks.

As a Veeam partner, TasmaNet is proud to offer organisations solutions built on Veeam's award winning platform. Acknowledged as the global leader in Availability across multi-cloud environments, Veeam solutions can help organisations transition to Intelligent Data Management for the Hyper-Available enterprise.



READY TO BACK UP YOUR OFFICE 365?

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  9