



Active Directory Backup Service - 'shADow':

Service Description FAQ

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Overview

The shADow Active Directory backup service provides an invaluable shortcut in disaster recovery for the Microsoft Windows environment. This document describes what the service does, how this is beneficial and how it is delivered to the end user.

It is broken down into the following sections.

1.0 - Introduction to Digital Network Solutions Ltd.....	2
2.0 - What is shADow?.....	3
3.0 - How is this useful to me?	3
4.0 - Who is shADow for?.....	3
5.0 - I have a good tape backup. Why do I need shADow?	3
6.0 - Surely I can just restore from my tape?.....	4
7.0 - I don't like tape backup. Can I use shADow instead?	4
8.0 - What are the system requirements?	5
9.0 - How do I implement shADow?	5
10.0 - What is included in the service?.....	6
11.0 - What is NOT included in the service?	6
12.0 - Can I use the shADow server for other purposes?	6
13.0 - What are the payment terms?.....	7

1.0 - Introduction to Digital Network Solutions Ltd

Based in Old Catton, Norwich, Digital Network Solutions Ltd was started in 2002 by Tom Leaney and Patrick Peal. We provide a wide range of IT products and services, including (but not limited to) server and network products, telephone systems, voice over IP, computer-telephony integration, line rental, call routing, internet access, voicemail, call recording, hosting and bespoke development.

Our core business has always been the provision of Microsoft Server based solutions to small and medium sized businesses, particularly Microsoft Small Business Server. As part of this, our clients have often asked us 'what if' questions about disaster recovery. The shADow Active Directory backup service has been developed in order to simplify the process not only of disaster recovery itself but also of preparing for and safeguarding against such an event.

Further information is available via our website <http://www.dignetsol.co.uk>

2.0 - What is shADow?

shADow is a service where we provide you with a Microsoft Windows virtual server in one of our datacenters. This server is then configured to keep an up-to-date replicated copy of your Active Directory* information, including Account Security, Group Policy and Netlogon information.

The service can also be upgraded to include access to telephone support from our disaster recovery experts.

*Active Directory is the name of the security database Microsoft use to administer all their server systems. Without it, you are locked out of all your data and it's a complex and time consuming process to regain access.

3.0 - How is this useful to me?

If you are reading this, you are probably considering your Disaster Recovery (DR) options. shADow can make disaster recovery planning easier, cheaper, much faster to implement and easier to maintain. And should the worst happen it could save your business a fortune in lost revenue.

Disaster recovery plans are usually either complex and/or expensive. Having a live up-to-date copy of your Active Directory available after a disastrous event such as fire, flood or theft *will significantly reduce* the time required to get your business up and running again. Also because it makes use of the latest breakthroughs in virtualization technology, shADow does this at a massively reduced cost over dedicated hardware. This enables us to offer the service with just a small upfront payment and a monthly subscription (subject to contract).

Also, should the worst happen shADow can help you begin building your new *permanent* system much faster instead of wasting time and money on a temporary platform just to get you out of trouble.

4.0 - Who is shADow for?

shADow is for any organisation using Microsoft Windows Server products which doesn't have a Windows Server located on a premises remote from their main site. Essentially, if you work in a single building and all your servers are within that building you are very vulnerable and shADow will reduce your risks.

This is the case with over 90% of companies using Windows Small Business Server but also a significant proportion of those using the full version of Windows Server.

Its especially appropriate where Microsoft Exchange is in use as it significantly simplifies and speeds up mailbox recovery.

5.0 - I have a good tape backup. Why do I need shADow?

Tape/disk backup is a critical part of disaster recovery; however it's a long way from a complete solution.

All data stored on Microsoft servers is subject to security restrictions and without a working copy of your Active Directory, it very difficult to get access to your data. The Active Directory information is contained in a compete tape backup but there are *significant complications* in restoring it where the replacement server is even subtly different from the original one.

In addition to this, because the shADow server is virtual, it can be downloaded onto any available workstation (of a suitable specification) and can then act as a temporary file and print server while a new server is being installed. If you build your new server as a virtual, you don't even have to wait for the appropriate hardware to arrive, you can get started straight away. Meanwhile your users can get on with accessing files but still controlled by the original access privileges.

6.0 - Surely I can just restore from my tape?

Its not that simple. Microsoft's operating systems are can be very sensitive to hardware changes and unless you keep an exact hardware duplicate of your server offsite, restoring your Active Directory information could well be a very complex and time consuming process. Microsoft themselves say

“You can restore a system state [Active Directory] backup from one physical computer to the same physical computer or another computer that has the same make, model, and configuration (identical hardware).

Microsoft does not support restoring a system state backup from one computer to a second computer of a different make, model, or hardware configuration. Microsoft will only provide commercially reasonable efforts to support this process. Even if the source and destination computers appear to be identical makes and models, there may be driver, hardware, or firmware differences between the source and destination computers.”

Whilst many 3rd party backup systems claim to provide this facility, in reality a lot of them are not properly tested and are at best a gamble.

The process of restoring with the help of a shADow server is hardware independent. You can use whatever is available at short notice.

7.0 - I don't like tape backup. Can I use shAdow instead?

No! shADow only backs up the security information *not your files, emails etc* so is for use in addition to your existing backup solution. Its not a replacement for it in any way. It just makes planning simpler and recovery much faster.

8.0 - What are the system requirements?

You will need the following: -

Windows 2003 Server/Small Business Server

Reliable broadband Internet connection

Router/Firewall connection with static external IP address

Ability to permit incoming connections through your firewall

Someone competent in Windows Server administration

A regular and complete backup to removable media

Offsite storage of backup media updated at a suitable interval

There are other things you can do to prepare more comprehensively but so long as you have a reasonably up to date system backup and your shADow server up and running, recovering from a disaster will be a lot easier.

9.0 - How do I implement shADow?

After you have paid the setup fee and your first quarter's rental, we will send your technical contact a document which details the setup procedure. This should take less than an hour to implement; everything else is handled remotely by us.

10.0 - What is included in the service?

We provide you with

- a virtual server running Microsoft Windows 2003 Standard Edition
- a bandwidth allowance of 1Gb per month
- written instructions on setting up your equipment
- documents to assist you in producing your disaster recovery plan
- an hour's telephone support configuring your network (if needed)
- unlimited technical support for your shADow server
- a regular monthly health check on your shADow server

In the event you suffer a disaster we also provide

- a local copy of your shADow server by the fastest possible means – typically download
- 5 hour's telephone support from our disaster recovery experts*

* Subscription option

11.0 - What is NOT included in the service?

- technical support (beyond the initial hour) for issues relating to your own equipment
- bandwidth usage above 1Gb (additional bandwidth chargeable at £5 per Gb)

12.0 - Can I use the shADow server for other purposes?

No. The shADow server is designed and built specifically for the dedicated backup of your Active Directory. Although it will replicate other useful information such as your Netlogon folder and you will be able to login to it (as it forms part of your domain) we will not support any additional functionality.

13.0 - What are the payment terms?

There is an initial up front fee and a minimum rental term of 12 months. All payments are taken by credit card. Up to date prices are available from...

http://www.dignetsol.co.uk/Our_Products/shADow_Active_Directory_Backup.

Payment options are

- upfront for a year (15% discount)
- upfront for 2 years (20% discount)
- the setup fee and first quarter, then quarterly thereafter

You can cancel the service at any time during the first quarter, in which case we will refund you any remaining rental.

All prices are exclusive of VAT and are subject to our standard terms available from www.dignetsol.co.uk.

