

The Academy of Plumbing 29

Open All Hours

I observed last month that in 2008, for anyone in the industrialised world carrying out work that is not exclusively manual labour, no functioning computer means no functioning business. Noone has yet called me to contradict that statement. How do we survive the inevitable breakages and losses of computers and Internet connectivity? The following is a somewhat terse set of recommendations: fuller explanations, along with links and instructions for setting up all of these procedures can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/6g3fty>.

YOUR MAC

Back up your hard disk. If you're running Leopard, use Time Machine. For Tiger, use Carbon Copy Cloner to maintain an incremental bootable backup of your main disk. *Both are free.*



Keep a note of your user names, passwords and serial numbers with you. I use 1Password, which synchronises with my iPhone, so I have secure, up-to-date access to all of this stuff in my

pocket. Indispensable. *Don't bother with AppleCare.* You can't work while your Mac is away being fixed, even if that only takes three days. I have one laptop, which I use all day, every day. I don't have a second laptop, but I have a credit card. I have an up-to-date Time Machine backup and a weekly bootable backup. If my MacBook Pro breaks or gets nicked I'll march straight to the Apple Store with my credit card and Time Machine disk to do the obvious and be back in business within an hour and a half of getting it. My repaired laptop would then become the new one's backup, or go on eBay if I'm feeling lucky. If you have a MacBook Pro and a souped-up Mac Pro at your studio and the Mac Pro breaks, Apple ProCare *might* be worth it for fast repair turnaround while you get by with your MacBook Pro. *Don't bother with rental,* either. It can take a whole day to get a rental machine organised and you'd pay more for a week's rental than you'd lose by getting a new computer to use while your old one is repaired and then selling it again, especially if you use your AOP Apple Store discount.

Keep original memory. If you've replaced or installed additional memory, hard disks or PCI cards, keep the Apple-supplied originals somewhere safe and replace them, removing your upgrades, if you need to get your Mac repaired under warranty. That's one less thing for Apple to complain about.

INTERNET & COMMUNICATIONS

Have multiple email accounts. People have told me in the past that they don't like to use Hotmail addresses because

they think it looks "unprofessional". I don't agree: in the modern world it's unprofessional to be unable to send and receive email. So, as well as your main email address, get Gmail, Hotmail and Yahoo accounts. At least one of them will work.

Get your main email account converted from POP to IMAP.

Get an Authenticated SMTP Server account. Many ISP's block the outgoing SMTP email port 25 and insist you use their SMTP server, which is tedious and problematic when travelling. www.authsmtp.com provides service over alternative, unblocked ports that work from just about anywhere; www.smtp-server.com offer a similar service that includes SSL-encrypted connections.

Keep a note of your email login name, password and mail server address with you. That way, if all else fails, you can use <https://www.mail2web.com> for quick and dirty email from any browser.

If your home or studio is in range of someone else's wireless connection, swap wireless passwords with them. That way, if your broadband connection fails for any reason you can get temporarily back online using their connection, and vice-versa.

When travelling, have a list of local wireless hotspots with you. www.hotspot-locations.co.uk is a good place to start. Many public libraries offer free wireless connection.

Set up your mobile phone as a cellular modem so that you can get online via the mobile phone network.

Get a second broadband connection at your studio and a load-balancing router to combine the two. If one

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connection fails, you're automatically switched over to the other.

SECURITY

Follow all the suggestions in Digital Plumber 25: MacHygiene to create strong passwords, apply a firmware password, secure your System Preferences and set up OpenDNS.

Get into the habit of turning off your laptop rather than putting it to sleep when travelling. A sleeping laptop can easily be broken into; a properly secured laptop that is turned off is very much harder to crack.

When using a public wireless hotspot, use a proxy browser connection to your studio to encrypt network traffic and keep your connection safe from prying eyes. ShareTool is designed to create this in a very simple and straightforward manner and works a treat.

STORAGE

Get a professional disk enclosure that easily allows you to swap disks such as the Sonnet Fusion D400Q or Wiebetech RTX200. It usually has a better build quality, much better power supply components, fan cooling and of course requires far fewer wires to connect up than a bunch of consumer external disks. Use your collection of external drives as offsite archival backup or sell them to clients when delivering large jobs.

Buy disks in sets of three and set them up as a master data volume with two backups, one of which is kept onsite, the other offsite. Swap the backup disks around weekly. Set up a Chronosync backup job to keep everything up to date.

Get three mobile hard disks to accompany your laptop. Use one to create and maintain a Time Machine and bootable backup, shoot to the second and back that up to the third. If your Mac crashes or gets stolen, your shoot remains safe and you can boot another Mac from your backup.

BACKUP

If you're running Leopard, use Time Machine. It's obvious.

Create a clone of your boot drive with Carbon Copy Cloner and keep it up to date with SuperDuper, which is cleverly programmed to enable you to use your Time Machine disk for this purpose. Back up your *Time Machine* disk with SuperDuper.

Keep a set of up-to-date backups offsite either at home, or if you work from home, at another location. If your studio gets burgled or burns down you'll find this to be the cheapest and best business insurance you've ever had.

Use CrashPlan to keep your vital business documents such as email, contacts and financial data backed up offsite. It's better and cheaper than commercial offsite backup services.

Get a MobileMe account. The calendar &



contacts sync, iDisk and web applications give you access to all of your important business data from any computer anywhere.

When on location, leave your studio Mac running and awake with your picture archive disks attached, backups removed. Use Back To My Mac or LogMeIn screen sharing to remote control it and iGet, ShareTool or ExpanDrive along with Lighthouse or manual router port-forwarding for file transfer.

MAINTENANCE

Remove dust from inside your Mac & drive enclosures once a month with a vacuum cleaner dusting attachment set to low power. Accumulations of dust can clog up cooling vents leading to increased temperatures, instability and shorter component life. There are many stories of unreliable, crashy Macs becoming useable again after a good cleanout.

If you're still on Tiger, run Applejack monthly.

If you're running Leopard, run Apple Disk Utility and then DiskWarrior monthly.

After any kind of crash or strange behaviour, carry out a Safe Boot.

Keep a copy of my three-part Location Survival Guide with you (find it in Image issues 385-387), and the bits and pieces recommended therein.

Next month: The List, updated.

PDFs of this and all my other IMAGE articles are available to download at www.thedigitalplumber.co.uk, each with live weblinks for your browsing pleasure. Go and get 'em.

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