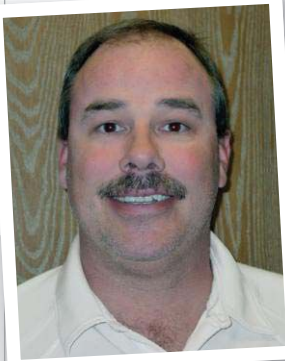


MYBIGGESTMISTAKE

LESSONS LEARNED THE HARD WAY » BY CASEY PAYTON



One exec got a hard lesson when his computer crashed.



Brian Golembiewski

COMPANY NAME: Paramount Landscape & Maintenance

COMPANY HEADQUARTERS: Tempe, Ariz.

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: 55

SERVICE BREAKDOWN: 85% maintenance; 15% tree trimming and lawn care

CLIENT BREAKDOWN: 100% commercial

2011 REVENUE: \$2.6 million

ALTHOUGH IT WAS 14 years ago, Brian Golembiewski says he'll never forget the day his computer crashed. The data he lost affected almost every area of his business. Not backing up his files remains his biggest mistake in business to date, and it forever changed the way he views technology. Today, he's kept up with every possible advance in backup abilities to ensure all of his work is properly saved.

"It was the worst feeling," says Golembiewski, president of Paramount Landscape & Maintenance, in Tempe, Ariz., recalling the day his computer crashed. "I can remember it vividly. It was almost like being burglarized. I was left with nothing. It was just such an empty feeling and I didn't even know what to do next."

Not only did Golembiewski lose important documents, client information and other paperwork, he also lost all of his financial data. He says the biggest impact was how it affected accounts receivable. Golembiewski literally didn't know which clients owed him money or how much they owed.

"The only thing I could do was wait for checks to show up and create dummy invoices to receive them," he says. "If someone paid me, they paid me. But if they didn't, they

got away with it, because I had no idea what the status was on any of my accounts."

The computer crash caused countless problems for Golembiewski that year, including making taxes incredibly difficult to complete. And all of the hassle caused quite a bit of lost time. But the one good thing that came from it was he learned the importance of backing up his work. Fortunately, he was only four years into the business.

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Going forward, Golembiewski spent every night backing up his work from the day. Of course, in 1998, the technology was somewhat limited. Golembiewski used zip disks to backup his work, and to be extra cautious, he rotated them so that he had several discs going at once. "That way if I ever lost a disc, I had another one, and I'd only lost a couple days' worth of data since I was always rotating them," he remembers.

Today, the technology has come so far that back-

ing up computer data is much easier. Golembiewski uses online backup service Carbonite, one of many programs available. Golembiewski likes the idea of having his information backed up on the Internet.

"If you use a backup drive or another local source you still have the potential of losing data in something like a fire or a flood," he says. "A computer crash isn't the only way to lose data. It could be stolen or damaged, too. That's why I've preferred backing up online."

In terms of investment, Golembiewski says it's not unreasonable for the value of the service being provided. He pays \$750 per year and is backing up nine computers that are all linked to one server. And he says it's easy. "It's really as simple as subscribing to a service like Carbonite, or one of the others out there," Golembiewski says. "In 1998 it was much more cumbersome. It took a half hour each night to save everything. But nowadays it's automatic. It makes it practically fool-proof and really doesn't give anyone any excuse not to be doing it."

The bottom line, says Golembiewski, is to do it. "Computers will crash," he says. "That's just what happens. If you're not taking the time or making the investment in a backup, you might wind up being in a pretty tough spot."

Payton is a freelance writer with seven years of experience covering the landscape market.