eFolder White Paper:
Dedicated File Backup vs. File Sync Backup: 5 Questions MSPs Should Ask to Determine the Best Backup Solution for Their Clients

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Introduction

One of the most important services that managed service providers have offered their clients is a dedicated file backup solution. Yet as client environments have become more diverse, MSPs have had to reconsider traditional approaches.

Traditional backup systems will certainly hold their place in managed services offerings as a critical resource for companies that need to protect every bit of data on servers and critical workstations. But many companies today, especially those with distributed workforces or many employees working in the field, are better served by the backup functionality offered by business-grade file sync solutions. The key for MSPs is to thoroughly evaluate the needs and desires of their clients and to recommend a backup solution that would best meet these requirements.

This white paper highlights the key differences between a traditional, dedicated file and folder backup and a business-class file sync solution; for the purpose of this white paper, we compare features of eFolder Backup and eFolder Anchor. Through a line of questions, this white paper reveals the technical disparities between both solutions and the environments that each solution is suited for. MSPs who ask themselves the following five questions for their clients will be better equipped to choose backup solutions that meet their clients' objectives.

1. What kinds of files and devices do your clients need to back up?

A business-grade file sync solution backs up files and folders stored in a synced folder. In addition, business-grade file sync lets users back up local directories, such as the Documents, Desktop, Pictures, etc. This functionality is enabled by users simply right-clicking on a local folder and selecting "Back up this folder." However, because file sync is a continuous backup, it is not appropriate for backing up open file types that are generated by server applications. Thus, a file sync solution is great for backing up key productivity files on employees' workstations and laptops.

A dedicated file backup will perform automated backups on a customizable schedule. This scheduled backup, which can be set for multiple times a day, enables the backup of files and folders, as well as server application data (Microsoft Exchange, SQL Server, Oracle, etc.) and open file types. A dedicated file backup is therefore a better alternative for backing up workstations, laptops, servers, and NAS devices.

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- Dedicated file backup is good for backing up workstations, laptops, servers, and NAS devices, especially server application data and open file types.

2. Do your clients need control over when and how backups take place?

A business-grade file sync solution will perform continuous, real-time backups on files and folders that reside in the synced folder. As mentioned earlier, business-grade file sync also allows users to select local directories to back up. File sync services do not, however, back up open file types, such as database files. Thus, business-grade file sync is a good automatic backup solution for clients with productivity files stored in synced folders or in local directories selected for backup.

Dedicated file backup services offers clients granular control over what data is backed up, where it is backed up, and how often it is backed up. Administrators can custom-schedule backups, enabling multiple backups per day, and have these backups sent to the cloud or locally to any accessible direct-attach or network file system. Dedicated file backup solutions provide complete configurability over backup activities.

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3. Do your clients need granular restoration?

A business-grade file sync solution allows users to go into the web interface and download old versions of files and folders, or download files and folders that had previously been deleted. Bulk, point-in-time restores are also possible, which may prove useful if clients are hit by ransomware such as the CryptoLocker worm. Business-grade file sync's granular restoration capabilities help clients recover important productivity files.

A dedicated file backup solution offers multiple restoration options for every type of file. In addition to restoring individual files or folders and restoring data back to a point in time, dedicated file backup solutions can also back up open files. As a result, with dedicated file backup, clients can also granularly search restore all their emails, contacts, and appointments from Exchange. Moreover, with a dedicated file backup solution, users can restore data to a machine different from where the data was originally stored. A dedicated file backup solution allows clients to restore any type of data.

- A business-grade file sync solution allows clients to download files and file revisions from the web, or to perform point-in-time restores.

- A dedicated backup solution provides even more options for granular restoration, and is ideal for clients who want the ability to restore any deleted Exchange data.

4. Do your clients need multiple recovery options?

A business-grade file sync service allows administrators to recover files and file versions through a web interface. Administrators can configure custom or unlimited retention periods for these deleted files and file revisions. Business-grade file sync provides a convenient, web-based recovery option.

A dedicated file backup solution also lets administrators download files and file versions. Users can also recover data by having it shipped on a disk to them. Finally, dedicated backup solutions allow clients to recover and virtualize data in the cloud if necessary. Dedicated file backup provides multiple recovery options for clients.

- Business-grade file sync allows clients to download deleted files or versions of existing files through a web interface, which may be ideal for clients comfortable with working in the cloud to recover files.

- Dedicated backup solutions provide the greatest number of recovery options — recovery through download, recovery through disk shipment, and recovery through virtualization in the cloud.

5. Do your clients need advanced alerting, reporting, and monitoring capabilities?

A business-grade file sync solution lets users visit the web interface of the sync service and click a "Backups" tab to view which directories are being backed up and how much space each directory's backup takes up. However, administrators do not receive any kind of alerts or notifications related to backup activities. As a result, business-grade file sync services provide limited capabilities for administrators looking to closely monitor their backup activities.

A dedicated file backup solution allows administrators to monitor exactly when backups take place, what data is backed up, and where data is backed up. Administrators also have the option to receive alerts when backups are successfully completed or if any errors occur. This type of rich reporting can help clients who need to meet legal or regulatory requirements for backup logging and monitoring.

- Business-grade file sync services provide limited visibility into backup activities.

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Conclusion

Small- and medium-sized businesses have no shortage of options when it comes to backing up their data, and many organizations use price as the main determining factor for which service they choose. Every MSP knows, though, that providing a backup solution to their clients is less about competing on price and more about evaluating their clients' needs and providing a solution that meets these requirements.

Both business-grade backup and dedicated backup services allow clients to back up their data, but MSPs who partner with eFolder should understand the differences between both products. eFolder Anchor is first and foremost a file sync product that makes it easy for workers to access their data from wherever they are; it can also back up productivity files. eFolder Backup is a robust, end-to-end file backup solution that backs up every single piece of data on a machine, including productivity files, open databases, and system files and applications.

MSPs who review the above questions and reflect on their clients' needs will not only be able to recommend a product that works best for their clients, but are also better equipped to support the features offered by eFolder Backup and Anchor. MSPs may even choose to offer their clients both eFolder Backup and Anchor, depending on their clients' requirements. Ultimately, knowing the answers to these questions can help bolster the MSP-client relationship and help MSPs find new business opportunities.

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Corporate Headquarters
2340 Perimeter Park Drive, Suite 100, Atlanta, GA 30341 ▪ **678-888-0700** ▪ **www.efolder.net**