Choosing the Right Microsoft 365 Backup and Recovery Solution

Make sure you get all the features you need.

Microsoft 365 is in the Cloud—Do I Really Need to Back it Up?

As organizations adapt IT infrastructure to address the changes in how we work, Microsoft 365 has become the go-to cloud productivity and collaboration tool. That means it's also the main repository of emails, documents, meetings, conversations, project plans, and more.

But what if You Lost that Data—Even a Small Portion of it?

Some folks disagree that SaaS backups are needed. They point to the Recycle Bin and multiple synchronous copies of the data automatically stored in multiple locations. Although this approach might seem good in theory, in practice, the Recycle Bin provides insufficient data protection; and if data becomes corrupted, synchronization simply creates more copies of corrupted data.
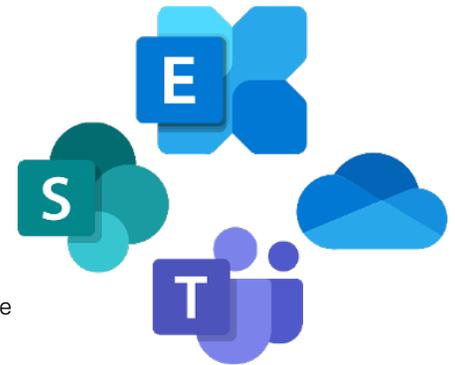
Microsoft 365's native capabilities for data protection include:

- Version history for each file
- Retention of deleted items to protect against accidental or malicious deletions (the Recycle Bin)
- Litigation holds or retention policies to help prevent unwanted data destruction

These are good features, but the built-in capabilities aren't sufficient for organizations that need and expect an enterprise-grade backup and recovery toolset.

Microsoft 365 Native Data Protection

The challenges

Enterprise IT leaders are cautious about ensuring their users' data is protected. Many won't make a new service available to users until they have a reliable backup and recovery solution in place. Because the native recovery options in Microsoft 365 have limitations, we suggest a similar approach.

Here are some of the known challenges with relying only on Microsoft 365's native data protection

Recovery of deleted items

Microsoft 365 holds deleted files in the Recycle Bin and purge folders for a set period of time. But a bad deletion—accidental or malicious—could go unnoticed past the prescribed expiry date. If items expire from the Recycle Bin and purge folders, there is no backup copy available. That isn't the only concern with recovery in Microsoft 365.

How to select the right Microsoft 365 backup solution … and why you need to have one in the first place:

- Users have full access to Recycle Bins and can accidentally (or maliciously) delete data permanently, with no option for recovery

- Bad actors are writing malware targeting Microsoft 365, gaining access to these Recycle Bins by taking advantage of the Microsoft 365 APIs

- Recovering files from the Recycle Bin can work for a small number of items, but bulk recovery scenarios prove almost unusable; for example, you cannot recover to an alternate location for export or for inactive user accounts

Litigation holds or retention policies

Within Microsoft 365, items marked for a litigation hold or with a retention policy applied generate hidden copies that are retained, but the recovery process isn't easy or user-friendly once the original file is deleted.

The deleted items recovery, litigation hold, and retention policies weren't meant to be used in place of a segregated, full-coverage backup solution. Many organizations want to use these features for their intended purpose, but when they're hijacked for a data protection workaround, it nullifies the usefulness of what they were developed to do.

Having a segregated backup of your Microsoft 365 data radically minimizes data loss and frees up the built-in features to be used more effectively. But how do you go about choosing the right backup solution for your organization?

Three Critical Features You Need in a Microsoft 365 Backup and Archive Solution

Not all backup solutions are created equal, so it's important to identify what you actually need before you start the conversation. At a minimum, you'll want full-coverage backups with flexible recovery options, plus a high level of performance and scalability, so the solution grows with your organization. Beyond that, there are other advanced features to consider that will enhance your ability to protect, recover, archive, and even manage your organization's Microsoft 365 data.

1. Full Coverage

When a backup solution only protects mailboxes, but your organization relies heavily on Microsoft Teams for internal communications, that solution isn't going to meet your needs. There are many offerings that only protect mailboxes, and some have expanded to protect OneDrive for Business as well.

A full-coverage backup solution should be able to target specific mailboxes or site collections with unique policies. Alternatively, it should be able to cover all mailboxes, OneDrive for Business site collections, SharePoint, and Teams with a default policy.

When covering all targets with a default policy, the solution should auto-enroll new users when they're added to your organization so new mailboxes, OneDrive for Business, SharePoint, and Teams are automatically included in the scope of protection.

If you're looking for a complete Microsoft 365 backup solution, you want something that can handle it all:

Exchange Online	SharePoint Online	OneDrive for Business	Teams
- Users	- Users	- Users	- Users
- Mailboxes	- Sites	- Sites	- Teams
- Folders	- Collections	- Collections	- Channels
- Messages	- Folders	- Folders	- Messages
- Attachments	- Files	- Files	- Meeting recordings
- Metadata	- Permissions	- Permissions	- Attachments
	- Metadata	- Metadata	- Permissions
			- Metadata

2. Flexible Recovery

When your Microsoft 365 backup solution gives you flexible recovery options, you'll have the ability to easily address unanticipated or unconventional recovery requirements. Being able to do so can be particularly important when managing data through changing roles, staff turnover, mergers and acquisitions, and other organizational changes.

Ensuring you have flexible recovery options in your backup solution will give you peace of mind that you'll be able to provide efficient and effective recovery support for your organization.

Examples of flexible recovery options:

- **Restore items, folders, mailboxes, or sites with multi-level recovery**—Get your data back, no matter what.

- **Reinstate multiple mailboxes in a single operation**—Resolve large-scale data loss affecting multiple users.

- **Recover data to a preferred location, including cross-tenant recovery/migration (and on-premises Exchange and SharePoint)**—Gain flexibility for users who need access to the data, have changed roles, or don't have access to the original location of the data, such as a tenant-to-tenant migration following a merger or acquisition, or as part of an exit plan from the cloud.

- **Apply filters to your recovery**—For example, recover an entire mailbox except for its contacts, or recover an entire dataset of OneDrive sites within a specific date range.

- **Maybe you don't need to recover**—Access Microsoft 365 accounts when employees leave, or in the case of audits, without having to maintain an active license.

3. Performance And Scalability

You're already managing increasingly large volumes of data. The cloud makes this process easier and more cost-effective as long as it can accommodate the level of performance and scalability your organization needs as it grows. You need a solution that will allow you to manage your volume of data today, tomorrow, and in the years to come.

When it comes to choosing based on performance and scalability, your Microsoft 365 backup solution needs to be able to:

- Scale to petabytes of data and billions of objects

- Capture data at multiple terabytes per hour

- Augment incremental backups with continuous data protection

- Run incremental backups with high frequency, reducing your recovery point objective (RPO)—minimizing the amount of data you could potentially lose

- Have that same performance for data recovery, reducing your recovery time objective (RTO)—minimizing the amount of time until you recover your data

Making the shift from on-premises storage to the cloud is an investment that needs to be sustainable and usable. That's why it's essential for your chosen data protection solution to be able to handle all your needs as they grow or change.

Additional Advanced Features

Finding a Microsoft 365 backup solution that gives you full coverage, flexible recovery, and a high level of performance and scalability will give your organization a strong security posture. These additional features will enhance your ability to protect and recover the right data at the right time.

Continuous data protection

A Microsoft 365 backup solution that provides continuous data protection (CDP) will actively monitor your data and automatically capture modifications in a near-real-time manner. Unlike normal incremental scans or snapshots, which happen at scheduled intervals, CDP is always running to capture any changes as they occur.

Features such as CDP are useful for augmenting your Microsoft 365 backup strategy by applying it to high-priority site collections and/ or users to ensure the continuity and integrity of mission-critical data.

Archive storage for former employees' data

Today's workers are increasingly transient, which leaves IT dealing with a data challenge when it comes to archiving inactive Microsoft 365 user accounts' data. The ability to do so has become particularly important with the emergence of compliance regulations such as the European Union's (EU's) General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA).

Finding a backup solution that provides automatic archiving of Microsoft 365 mailboxes, OneDrive and SharePoint data, and Teams means you can avoid unnecessary licensing costs when someone leaves your organization.

Plus, with a backup solution that offers flexibility around long-term retention, you can restore user data in the future.

Enterprise-grade security

It's not enough to simply protect your data from loss due to mistakes or software crashes. Today, you also need to protect your data from being stolen, maliciously deleted, or modified.

To protect your data from being stolen or even viewed by anyone, you need a Microsoft 365 backup solution that offers end-to-end data encryption. This approach means any data in transit is encrypted and your backup data is encrypted when it is stored.

To protect your data against unwanted deletion and modification, you need a Microsoft 365 backup and archive solution that uses immutable storage for your data, such as some form of write once, read many (WORM) storage.

Choose the Right Microsoft 365 Backup Solution for Your Organization

Knowing what's possible and the benefits for your organization can make all the difference when evaluating solutions that allow you to protect and recover your Microsoft 365 data.

Veritas Alta™ SaaS Protection

Veritas Alta SaaS Protection easily meets all of the requirements listed above, and provides these additional benefits:

- **Support for additional SaaS applications**—Microsoft 365 might not be the only SaaS application your organization uses. For example, you might also use Salesforce. Veritas Alta SaaS Protection provides backup and recovery for multiple SaaS applications—all through the same single unified management console. There is no need for separate point solutions.

- **Avoid SharePoint Online storage overage charges**—Microsoft SharePoint Online includes a limited amount of storage for your data. Microsoft is happy to allow you to exceed your limit—for an additional cost. These extra costs are called overages. Veritas Alta SaaS Protection's active archiving features allow you to relocate your less-used data to less expensive storage, freeing up space in SharePoint. It does this while allowing your users to easily access the archived data in the same SharePoint interface they're already accustomed to.

- **Reclaim licenses and storage from employee turnover**—When an employee leaves, you still want to retain that data because of its usefulness, and for compliance reasons. You could do this by maintaining a user license for that unused account, but Veritas Alta SaaS Protection's archiving allows you to easily automate the process of retaining that data and providing continued access to it, while allowing you to recycle the user's Microsoft 365 license.

- **Simplify migration from Office 365 to Microsoft 365**—If you're currently running Office 365 on-premises and are looking to migrate to the SaaS equivalent—Microsoft 365—Veritas Alta SaaS Protection can simplify and automate that migration process for you.

- **Ransomware resiliency**—The threat of ransomware is always present, and the criminals who use it have started to target Microsoft 365 and other SaaS application data. With Veritas Alta SaaS Protection, all of your backup data is stored on immutable storage, making your backups immune to ransomware. In the event of a successful ransomware attack, Veritas Alta SaaS Protection allows you to recover clean copies of your data from before the attack with low RPO and RTO, minimizing lost productivity.

Veritas Alta SaaS Protection is the industry-leading backup and recovery solution for SaaS applications such as Microsoft 365. Contact Veritas today for a demo or to speak with an expert.

About Veritas

Veritas Technologies is a leader in multi-cloud data management. Over 80,000 customers—including 95 percent of the Fortune 100—rely on Veritas to help ensure the protection, recoverability, and compliance of their data. Veritas has a reputation for reliability at scale, which delivers the resilience its customers need against the disruptions threatened by cyberattacks, like ransomware. No other vendor is able to match the ability of Veritas to execute, with support for 800+ data sources, 100+ operating systems, 1,400+ storage targets, and 60+ clouds through a single, unified approach. Powered by Cloud Scale Technology, Veritas is delivering today on its strategy for Autonomous Data Management that reduces operational overhead while delivering greater value. Learn more at www.veritas.com. Follow us on Twitter at @veritastechllc.

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V1912 05/23