



FORGET COMPUTERS™

# Digital Asset Management: Backup. Archive. Retrieve.

## Where does the savings come from?

### Repurposing

Typically, creative workgroups reuse design elements from project to project. But if you can't find previously created elements, you have to start from scratch, which means extra time and cost.

### Labor reduction

Designers and artists can spend less time locating assets for others and more time working on current projects. The research firm GISTICS (gistics.com) estimates that 30 percent of digital asset expenditures for print, web or other media are either lost or duplicated.

### Increased project turnaround

When employees can take advantage of work performed on prior projects, the turnaround time of projects is reduced dramatically.

### Increased revenue per employee

With decreased project turnaround time, employees can complete more projects in less time, thus increasing revenue.

### Workflow efficiency

Digital asset management enforces a consistent workflow. Organizations spend less time reinventing.

Data above adapted from *Extensis Portfolio 5.0 Evaluation Guide*

**TIP** Keep users informed. Everyone should know what gets backed up and what doesn't.

## Why is digital asset management important to you?

It's important because it saves you money. (See sidebar.) Creative professionals today create thousands of digital documents each year. These documents include finished projects and pieces that never made it past a client's approval. Yet how many of your employees know what work came before them and where to find it? Or how many hours have your veteran employees wasted searching for a particular project?

Every document your office has ever created is a part of your company's digital assets. Yet these documents are only assets if they can be easily retrieved, used and reused. And the only way to do this is to have systems in place: a backup system, an archive system and a retrieval system. Although each system is unique they all work together to help manage and maintain your digital assets.

## The backup system

The backup system is required for short-term storage in case of an emergency — fire, theft, accidental deletion or simply the need to revert to a previously saved version of a file. Here we compare the *perfect* backup system to a *realistic* backup system. We urge every office to meet or exceed the expectations of a realistic backup system.

In the perfect backup system every file in the office is backed up each night. In reality this is often not practical because there is simply too much data to backup. In a realistic backup system only critical files are backed up. Critical files are those files that you could never replace if your computer were damaged. Critical files often include active work files and emails.

In the perfect backup system offices have a month's worth of data backed up at all times. In addition, half of this data is kept off-site in case of fire or theft. Keeping data off-site is difficult for small offices. And some offices feel comfortable with only a week's worth of data. A realistic backup system stores at least two weeks worth of data on-site in a fireproof safe. There are companies (backjack.com) who offer Internet backup that addresses the issue of off-site storage. However, Internet backup is not fast enough nor is it value-priced for design offices that require gigabytes of data moved each night. If you require a small amount of data to be backed up, you may consider it.



### The archive system

The archive system is required for long-term storage. Even if you kept all your files on your local hard drive you would still want an archival copy of finished jobs. Hard drives are not archival. And neither are tapes. Some offices view the backup system and the archive system as one-in-the-same. These offices back up and archive to tape. This is not recommended. Magnetic media, such as hard drives and tape drives, are presumed to maintain their data for a maximum of only five years. The magnetism simply fades away over time. Conversely, the life span of optical media, such as CD and DVD, are counted in tens of years. (Pioneer specifies a 100-year life expectancy of recorded DVD-R.) In addition to being archival, optical media is much faster than tape when it's time to retrieve data. Currently CD-R disks are the most common archival medium. However CDs can only hold 650MB of data. A newer and bigger solution is DVD-R or DVD-RAM. A good archive system may use a combination of CDs and DVDs. And, once again, in case of fire, theft or other unforeseen damage, it's best to keep a copy of your archive in a separate location from the original.

**TIP** The Backup is *short-term* storage. The Archive is *long-term* storage. Be sure your archive uses archival media.

**TIP** Make archiving part of your workflow.

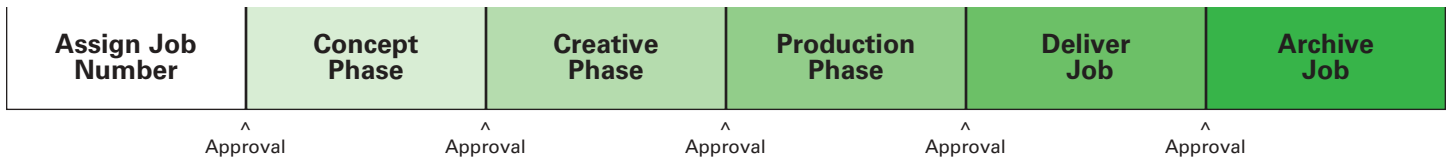
Although a backup system and an archive system are two separate tasks, backing up relies heavily on the archive system. If files are not archived then more and more data must be backed up and eventually there will be too much data for the backup system. Archiving is a way to keep the backup functioning and a way to store finished jobs. An issue we see in most design offices regarding archiving is that it's not part of the process so it's not done consistently or at all. In some offices we see archiving put off until the end of the year at which time it is a very formidable task. The solution is to make archiving part of your workflow and archive as soon as a job is complete, once a week or at the very least once a month.

### Office workflow

Workflow is simply the process or path by which jobs flow through your office. In an ideal workflow, jobs do not start until they are assigned a job number. And they are not complete until they are archived. Each phase of the workflow

requires approval to move to the next phase. It sounds simple. However technology allows us to move from job number straight to production. Because of this the process is often ignored. Why are we even talking about workflow? The

point is, in order to use technology effectively you must make it part of your workflow. And everyone must know what the workflow is. We recommend you visualize even the simplest workflow and share it with everyone involved.



Another issue we see in design offices is that of organization. When jobs are archived, too much time is spent "organizing" the archive. For example, most offices archive their jobs to CD. And they do so by organizing these CDs by client name or job number. This is a very time consuming process because jobs are rarely completed sequentially and one client may require five CDs while another only needs a small part of one. Trying to organize this way is like putting together a jigsaw puzzle. It sounds like a very organized way to archive and admittedly this method does work well with pencil and paper retrieval systems. However, you're using computers not pencil and paper (right?). Computers can take any number of jobs in any order and reorganize them in numerous ways. So don't worry about organizing the archive ... just archive it! OK, some organization is required but it makes the most sense to talk about this organization in the context of the retrieval system.

**TIP** If changes are made at the printer, ask the printer to send you an archival (CD or DVD) copy of the finished job.

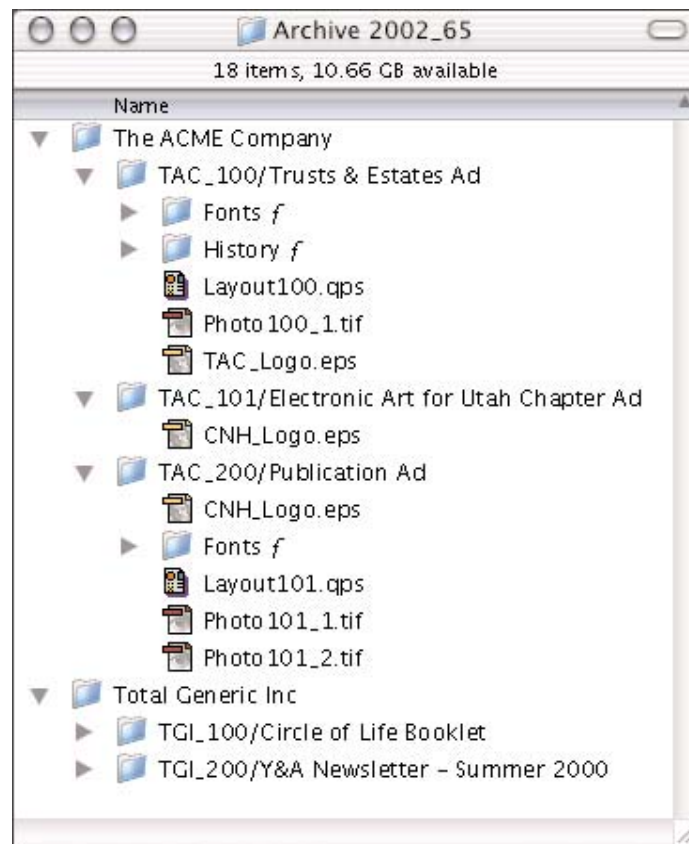


### The Retrieval System

The retrieval system is required for finding the items you need from within the massive amount of data you have archived. The retrieval system actually starts with the completion of the archive system.

Each individual archive (CD or DVD) is given a unique name (a simple naming system is to number each archive with the year and a number such as 2002\_01, 2002\_02, 2002\_03). These archives are then dumped into a digital asset management application. These applications build previews of every file and, using your file and folder names, automatically create keywords for detailed searching of your archive. This part is very important so we'll say it again ... these programs automatically create keywords using your file and folder names. Because of this it's best to create a system for naming your files and folders. An example system may look like this:

### Sample File Naming System



In this example, we've created a folder for each client, *The ACME Company* (TAC) and *Total Generic, Inc* (TGI). Each client folder contains job folders made up of a three-letter client code, a number and the name of the job. Within these folders are the pieces required to deliver the job. Notice that fonts are included in the archive. This makes retrieving an old job with a rarely used font that much easier. Within one job we even have a folder titled "History" to store all the files we created that led up to the finished job.

**TIP** Create a file naming system. Educate your users on how to use it. Enforce it.



Years later when searching for a particular job we will only need to perform a search for “ACME,” “TAC” or “Ad” using our retrieval system to find all the files listed under The ACME Company. We could also perform a search for “layout” and find the three files “Layout100.qps,” “Layout101.qps” and “Layout200.qps.” As you can see, there are many ways to find files. I’m sure your naming system will differ from ours, but when creating your company’s naming system remember that digital asset management programs automatically create keywords using your file and folder names. And once jobs are completed and archived, any combination of file and folder names can be used to find a specific job.

### Conclusion

Imagine typing the name of your favorite client and instantly having access to a preview of every file associated with that client. Now imagine instantly sharing that information not only with everyone in your office but also with your client. Add to that the ability to instantly retrieve the production-ready versions of the files you need. It’s possible and it’s the reward for building and maintaining a structured backup, archive and retrieval system.

It’s important to note that a digital asset management system will work only if it’s performed systematically and consistently as part of your office workflow. So remember:

- 1) Develop and enforce a naming system for all of your jobs, files and archives.
- 2) Don’t try to alphabetize the archive ... just archive it!
- 3) A job is not closed until it has been archived.
- 4) Keep two copies of your backup and archive in two separate locations and/or in a fireproof safe.

Improve your company’s efficiency and profitability. Invest in a digital asset management system. Contact Forget Computers today to help you get started.

### Forget Computers Ltd

Digital solutions for creative professionals.

Visit us online at [forgetcomputers.com](http://forgetcomputers.com). Send a message to [info@forgetcomputers.com](mailto:info@forgetcomputers.com). Or call us at 312 217.0734 for more information.

Forget Computers. Get Creative.



Apple Consultants  
Network



# Digital Asset Management: Media Compared

## Choose your media wisely: tapes, optical or hard drives?

When purchasing storage media it's best to compare the cost per gigabyte. [See chart.] Tapes have long been the default media for backups. This is due largely to their capacity, price per gigabyte and the ease with which they can be rotated for off-site storage. However, hard drives have recently become both very large and very affordable. Plus, with the adoption of FireWire, hard drives can now be rotated and taken off-site almost as conveniently as tapes. Hard drives can now be considered as an add-on to existing tape backup systems or as a replacement for tape backup drives in small offices. Hard drives and tapes drives should never be used for archiving.

Media	Transfer Speed	Storage Size	Price Per GB*	Startup Cost**	Initial Price Per GB**
<b>Tape (Short-term/Backup)</b>					
DLT	11 MB/s	110 GB	\$1.44	\$4999 + 477	\$16.59
	3	40	1.85	1499 + 222	14.34
AIT	12	100	1.39	4299 + 417	15.72
	6	50	1.78	2999 + 267	21.77
	4	35	2.26	1299 + 237	14.63
DDS †	1.2	20	1.20	1049 + 72	18.68
		12	1.25	789 + 45	23.17
<b>Optical (Long-term/Archive)</b>					
DVD-R	1.38 MB/s	4.7 GB	1.66	499 + 23	37.02
CD-R (32x)	4.8	650 MB	1.54	239 + 3	124.10
CD-RW (10x)	1 ***	650 MB	2.92	239 + 6	125.64
<b>Hard Drive (Active Files/Small Office Backup)</b>					
FireWire	35 MB/s	120 GB	3.33	399 + 0	3.33
		80	3.49	279 + 0	3.49
		60	3.98	239 + 0	3.98
		40	5.48	219 + 0	5.48
		20	9.45	189 + 0	9.45

All data was compiled by Forget Computers, Ltd. from [www.lacie.com](http://www.lacie.com) on March 5, 2002.

\* Price Per GB is based on one piece of media.

\*\* Startup Cost and Initial Price Per GB are based on the price of each drive plus the cost of three pieces of media.

\*\*\* The transfer speed for CD-RW is estimated.

† Due to reliability issues, Forget Computers does not recommend DDS tape drives.

## Forget Computers Ltd

Digital solutions  
for creative professionals.

[forgetcomputers.com](http://forgetcomputers.com)  
[info@forgetcomputers.com](mailto:info@forgetcomputers.com)  
312 217.0734

Forget Computers. Get Creative.