

System recovery strategy v1.0

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What would you do if your computer decided not to restart? Few days ago my main HD decided not to restart, just when I was working on my new showreel.

I normally have a pretty good "System recovery strategy" but since last time I reinstalled my system was 2 or 3 years ago, I wasn't too sure if I had a backup. Luckily I had, so it was really easy to get back to a working desktop.

In the light of that, I have decided to share with you what is my "System recovery strategy", maybe you will find something useful here. This will be a temp version until I have time to go back into it so for the time being I will call this post "system recovery strategy v1.0"

The idea is to create a very light snapshot of your system, an "Image", that you will be able to restore in case of emergency. Restoring such an image takes between 5 and 10 minutes depending on the size of your "Image" and the speed of your hard drive. Compared to the time it would take you to do a full reinstall of Windows, Windows update, software install, system customization, you can easily understand the benefits.

Also it is a good idea to restore that image on a separate backup HD. This way, whatever happens to your main HD, you always have a bootable backup HD.

I have been using computers since 1995 and have developed a strategy that might appear a bit outdated to you but works very well for me. Bear in mind that I only use Windows XP so I have no idea how this could translate with Vista.

To make that image as light as possible, here are the steps I usually follow:

- Delete all temp files I can find in the XP directory especially the temporary XP update files
- Move the pagefile.sys and hibernate.sys to the D drive

Step 1 and 2 can be swapped

1. Install windows 98 just to get the Dos boot
2. Partition magic. Partition your hard drive.
 - a. C is the boot, 5gb could be enough but I usually go for 10Gb for WinXP
 - b. Format the C drive in Fat32 and the D drive in Fat32 or NTFS, ideally NTFS so you can handle huge files in one chunk (no 2gb limit)
 - c. Place the Paging and hibernate file on the D drive
 - d. Move the User folder to the D drive** (I use d:\users\olive\My Documents)
 - e. Do all the system/antivirus updates
 - f. Software are normally installed on the D drive (be aware that Maya is not too keen with that but I prefer it this way)
3. Drive image / Ghost. Create an image of your system
4. Testing time. Test that image on a separate HD. You could use an old 20gb HD, if successful, this is going to be your backup bootable HD