

Extrait de PC-Magazine online “... ShadowProtect 4.0, our Editors' Choice.”

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ShadowProtect Desktop 4.0

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Ratings : Editor ●●●●● Very Good

by Edward Mendelson

« You've heard it before, but it's still true: if you don't back up your system, you have only yourself to blame when bad hardware or viruses makes your disk unbootable or unreadable. Sure, online backup has its place: check out our Easy Online Backup story for some great choices. But the best, most secure backup software is a drive-imaging program that makes a backup of your whole disk. A drive image lets you either restore the whole system to the working version you were using yesterday or restore old versions of your files by copying them from the backed-up images of your disks. For years, StorageCraft's ShadowProtect Desktop has been PC Magazine Editors' Choice for drive imaging, and version 4.0 upholds the tradition. ShadowProtect Desktop 4.0 features unchanged core features as well as new features that make it easier and faster to get your system up and running from a backup even after a complete hardware breakdown makes your original hardware unusable.

ShadowProtect Desktop doesn't offer features that you can't find elsewhere, but it performs those features more smoothly, reliably, quickly, and easily than any rival software—see the end of this review for quick comparisons. Like previous versions, 4.0 excels at making, restoring, and exploring images of one or more partitions on your hard disk. Like previous versions, it also includes a Hardware Independent Restore feature that lets you restore a backed-up image of a Windows system to completely different computer hardware. This is something you normally can't do simply by copying a system from one computer to another, because Windows often won't boot if it doesn't find the hardware on which it was originally installed. I've used ShadowProtect Desktop's Hardware Independent Restore feature many times to transfer my Windows system from one computer to another. Each time, it saved me many hours that I would otherwise have wasted installing a fresh copy of Windows and all my applications on the new system.



Booting Up A Virtual Backup

ShadowProtect's new version adds a feature called Virtual Boot that lets you run a backed-up system as a "virtual machine" in Oracle's free emulation software, VirtualBox. This feature is different from the familiar feature that lets you copy files from a backed-up image in that you can actually boot and run the backed-up system and run software that was included in it. You can use Virtual Boot to test new software on a "virtual" image of your current system before installing the new software on your actual system. Or, if a computer on your network goes down, you can run an image of it in Virtual Boot and gain access to the "virtual" copy of the computer while you restore the actual system to real hardware.

[...]

How to Back Up Locally

The one step you need to take before you start using ShadowProtect Desktop—or any drive imaging program—to back up your system is to burn an emergency CD that lets you start up an otherwise unbootable system and restore your hard drive from a backed-up image. The ShadowProtect emergency disk is packed with up-to-date hardware drivers and other utilities that make it smooth and effortless to use. It even provides two different environments, one based on Windows Server 2003, the other based on Windows 7. You can choose the one that's closest to the system you're going to manage or restore. Use the Server 2003 environment for Windows XP and Server 2003 systems; use the Windows 7 environment for Vista, Server 2008, and Windows 7 systems.

ShadowProtect Desktop is designed mostly for IT professionals, but its wizard interface makes it easy enough for everyone except complete beginners. Here's how I use it to make regular backups of my desktop and laptop machines. In the two-pane interface, I click on Backup in the list of Tasks, and follow the prompts in the Backup wizard to set up a backup schedule that makes a full backup of my system once a week, and smaller "incremental" backups daily. Incremental backups include only files that are new or changed since the preceding backup. »

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ShadowProtect Desktop isn't a product for everybody—casual users who are happy keeping their data in the cloud probably shouldn't bother with it. But if your data and your system are of critical importance to you, you're simply being reckless to operate without a local back up—preferably a complete drive image. And for drive-imaging software, there's simple nothing better than **ShadowProtect 4.0, our Editors' Choice.**