

NATIONAL POST

Data Protection For Your Company

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Technology is a dark and mysterious art for many small businesses trying to manage sales, customer service, and strategic direction. Yet, mismanagement of the tools we increasingly rely on can lead to disaster. Cases of laptops with sensitive, unencrypted data being stolen or mislaid, for example, are not uncommon.

No Panic Computing (NPC) proposes managing the technology for you (or at least, the notebook PC part of it). The company will lease you an HP notebook for three years, looking after it for you so you don't have to worry about data protection, hardware failure or unreliable software.

The deal costs \$130 a month, amounting to \$4,680 for 36 months. From a hardware perspective that's pretty steep: Buying the equivalent notebook outright would cost somewhere around \$1,800. On the other hand, you get a whole lot more than hardware (which, incidentally, the company will replace if it goes kaput or is accidentally dropped).

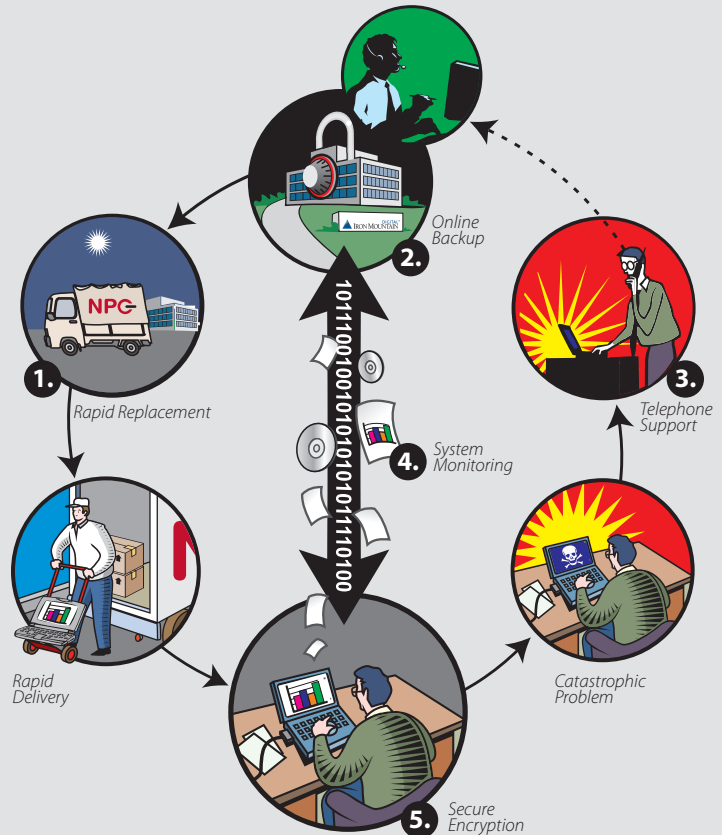
NPC also installs the relevant software (either Vista or Windows XP), and encrypts the whole drive for security purposes. The laptop automatically synchronizes any data stored on it to an encrypted online backup system, so if you lose your data, you can recover it quickly. Software patches are managed automatically by the company, which also bundles security software linked to its own 24-hour support centre.

The support centre is the fun part. Not only can you call to have your PC replaced or any software problems dealt with immediately, but they also remotely monitor your PC for problems.

Larry Keating, founder of NPC, says support staff noticed when one customer tried entering the wrong password a suspiciously high number of times and called to ask him if he needed help, only to find he had not been accessing the machine. The call alerted him to the fact it had been stolen. If that happens, NPC can delete the data on the machine remotely, and even roughly figure out where it is when it the thief connects to the Internet.

An all-in-one solution like this can help prevent a myriad of problems and save your neck the next time your laptop fails the night before an important presentation. You might pay more than you would for a PC off the shelf, but how much is your peace of mind worth?

Delivering a PC with peace of mind. Danny Bradbury reviews a new service firm, No Panic Computing



1. RAPID REPLACEMENT

If your laptop dies for any reason, the company will replace it quickly. It has trucked new PCs to customers overnight in emergency situations. (Loss or theft warranty is optional).

2. ONLINE BACKUP

The PC is configured to automatically backup data in the background whenever it is connected to the internet, storing multiple versions. This enables users who have lost their data to retrieve files either on the notebook, or on a temporary PC if a new one is being delivered.

3. TELEPHONE SUPPORT

The service tries to maintain the reliability of your system by managing software patches and configurations remotely. If there is a problem with any part of the system, there is one number to call. Support staff can remotely log into a notebook and fix problems online.

4. SYSTEM MONITORING

Monitoring staff look for suspicious activities or problems with your computer while it is connected to the internet. For example, one client unknowingly connected a USB key infected with a virus. NPC noticed it, and called to help remedy the problem.

5. SECURE ENCRYPTION

All data stored on the laptop is automatically encrypted, so even if it is stolen, thieves will be unable to read your sensitive files.