

THE
ZOMBIE
SURVIVAL GUIDE

Protecting Both Your
Brains and Your Data



Unitrends™



The Undead: Myths and Realities

Everyone knows that zombies, the undead, eat brains. Fewer people know that zombies are every bit as hungry for data. Of course, it's one thing to have an animated corpse attempting to gnaw on your grey matter — everyone is pretty much used to that. It's an entirely different kettle of fish to have a zombie attempting to eat your servers. It gives a new meaning to the term "Red Hat Linux."

Of course, there are those fanatical Linux administrators who would love to see a zombie make a data tartare out of a Windows 2008 server — and there are those Mac OS X administrators who would like to see an entire legion of zombies chow down upon the row after row of Windows PCs that they'd like to see replaced with MacBooks. VMware people would love to see not only Hyper-V servers torn asunder by the undead but there's even the internecine struggle between the ESXi and ESX crowds. And the NASs and SANs — it just goes on forever.

The key here to remember is that zombies are not exactly epicureans - when they get through eating the data on some hated system they're going to sprint over to your favorite system and begin eating it as well. Remember — zombies, the undead, whatever you call them — are bad. Not Michael Jackson bad — but really, really bad.

One other note. Despite the Michael Jackson "Bad" reference above, note that zombies don't spend a lot of time dancing. Nor do they slowly lumber about giving you the chance for a quick backup of your data before they begin shredding it. Zombies are fast. Zombies are serious about eating your data. And zombies are ravenously hungry — seven days a week, fifty-two weeks a year, twenty-four and a half hours a day.



Allies of the Undead

Zombies are pretty easy to spot. Bloodless complexion, contorted limbs, open sores on their faces, missing body parts — you can easily recognize the undead when compared to your average blind date. And the constant moaning and grunting tends to separate the undead from the living quickly as well.

But you need to beware of the allies of the undead who will help them eat your data without a scintilla of concern. Beware of bad support people.

We've all seen the pictures of the happy, pretty, smiling support representatives that all of the information technology vendors put on their web sites. Don't be fooled. These pictures mask frustrated, angry zombie wanna-bes.

Don't believe me? Call the support lines of most vendors. First, they're going to try to lull you to sleep as you wait hour-after-hour to speak to a human being. Then, all too often, they'll speak in heavily-accented English and deny knowing anything at all about the product you purchased. When you back them into a corner, they'll explain to you that it's another vendor's fault — not theirs.

This is all a ruse. Bad support people are working to distract you from the armies of the undead coming to eat your data. The worst will actually make you want to shave your head and paint a bullseye on it so that the zombie overlord will pick your brain to eat first — all so that you won't ever again have to deal with the support person with whom you're currently having to work.



Weapons and Combat Techniques

Axes, swords, chainsaws, pistols, rifles, shotguns, machine guns — all of these classic weapons are useful in a zombie apocalypse. But all too often, the typical IT administrator accidentally leaves their chainsaw at home. What's the best weapon typically found in the IT lab against the undead?

After decades of rigorous study, we've found that tape is a highly effective weapon against zombies. While zombies love data, zombies absolutely hate tape. In terms of food, tape is to zombies what broccoli is to humans — something that while theoretically edible should be avoided at all costs.

There are many theories on why zombies love data but hate tape - the most compelling of which is the reason that tape makes such an attractive weapon for the IT engineer — the fact that the data on the tape has been transmogrified into something “else” — which makes it both taste bad to zombies and makes it an incredibly difficult medium from which to recover data.



On the Defense

Playing defense against zombies is pretty difficult. You have a brain. They want to eat your brain. If you're in IT, your brain is probably bigger than normal. The undead are Atkins kind of folks — there are no portion sizes large enough to satisfy their craving for your protein-rich grey matter. In other words, bigger is better.

If you were a six-sigma quality black belt, you'd carefully note that the root cause problem here is your big brain. You would then conclude, using forms of mathematics so abstract as to be for all intents and purposes written in a secret language that only the aliens that landed at Roswell used, that you need to get rid of your brain — or at least reduce it significantly. Now — while that might qualify you to be a six-sigma quality black belt, it would be tough to tie your shoes in the morning; thus, we don't advocate brain elimination or reduction as a mechanism for defending yourself against zombies.

Zombies not only like bigger brains, but they like bigger data. The answer here is to deduplicate your data. Just be careful — some vendors will make you pay so much for deduplication that you'll find yourself unable to live in the undead world that exists after the zombie apocalypse (for more on this, see the last chapter — appropriately named “Living in an Undead World”).



On the Run

As was mentioned in the opening section, “The Undead: Myths and Realities,” zombies are fast. Really fast. To make this clear: zombies are faster than you are. In a race between you and a zombie, you are a three-toed sloth on sedatives. The zombie is a nervous Usain Bolt after way too many shots of espresso.

So how do you survive? Here’s the trick. You do not have to be faster than the zombies. You only have to be faster than the other IT people (and six sigma black belts in quality — see the previous section).

Many IT people revel in complexity. Take the way that they’re doing backup. They buy a backup server, some backup storage, some backup software, some archiving software, some disaster recovery software, some more hardware, and then spend all of their time trying to integrate, manage, and then monitor it. They’re so focused on backup that they’re going to serve as your early-warning system — their screams will give you the head-start you need.

The best way to survive is to KISS. No — we’re not advocating a physical relationship with a zombie. That’s not only gross but it’s pretty suicidal as well. Instead, keep it simple. Let the other IT engineers carry around all that extra stuff — use all-in-one appliances and thus carry the lightest load.



On the Attack

We've already noted that zombies, despite their lethargic reputation, are fast. Zombies are also clever. And adaptable. Come to think of it, they're all the things that the typical IT vendor is not.

In order to attack zombies, you have to realize that this adaptability means that zombies learn from past attacks — so simply repeating the same chainsaw-wielding, hockey face mask-wearing approach is only going to get you so far.

Zombies don't believe that the best defense is a good offense. Zombies just believe in eating brains and data. So, if you're going to successfully attack zombies, you're going to have to learn to think like a zombie.

In order to successfully attack zombies, you have to first make sure your data is protected. And in doing this, you're going to have to be flexible. For example, to protect your data from the undead, you want to look for a solution that offers flexible options for backup. Don't get locked into backup that supports only Windows, or only VMware, or whatever — find a backup strategy that is flexible so that you can attack from multiple vantage points.

You also need that flexibility when it comes to disaster recovery. Try to find someone offering D2D2x (Dead-to-Dead-to- ... wait, I mean Disk-to-Disk-to-Any.) That way you can flexibly handle protecting your data to disk, tape, SAN, or NAS.

Once you've got that taken care of, you're ready to go full-bore on the attack. Keep those tapes handy.



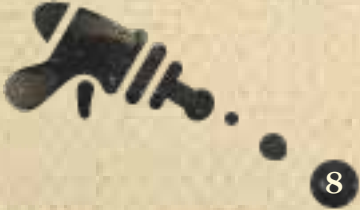
Living in an Undead World

At the end of it all, if you survive the zombie apocalypse, you're going to be living in an undead world. **Zombie overlords are going to rule the world. There's not much you can do about this other than survive in this bleak, cold, desolate, hellish place.**

But you'll find that there are a few other survivors here and there. And what these survivors are going to have in common is that they still accept cash. Yep — the capitalistic system ends up ruling the last dregs of humanity. **Karl Marx was wrong; Adam Smith wins. Of course, both don't care about anything in this new world other than finding more brains and data to eat.**

An aside. If you run into Marx, be very, very careful. He's going to be in a bad mood. Not only because capitalism won, but because he once said, **"Capital is dead labor, which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labor, and lives the more, the more labor it sucks."** **Zombies don't like vampires very much — and all of them know that Marx was not only a socialist but a big fan of Dracula as well.**

Back on point. In the world of the undead, cash is king. So as an IT professional, you want to make sure you have some cash to spend on the latest Apple gadget (yes, they survive, too). So be careful of vendors with their hands always in your pocket. In terms of protecting your data, look for flexible, no limits licensing policies and the most bang for your buck in terms of backup storage.



About Unitrends

Unitrends offers a family of affordable, all-in-one, on-premise backup appliances that support virtual and physical system backup and disaster recovery via disk-based archiving as well as electronic vaulting to private- and public-clouds. Unitrends is customer-obsessed, not technology-obsessed, and is focused on enabling its customers to focus on their business rather than on backup.

For more information, please visit www.unitrends.com or email us at sales@unitrends.com.

Unitrends™

7 Technology Circle, Suite 100
Columbia, SC 29203

Phone: [866.359.5411](tel:866.359.5411)
E-Mail: sales@unitrends.com
URL: www.unitrends.com

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