

Altaro VM Backup - Unlimited Plus Edition



PRODUCT REVIEW

Data backup has had a chequered past and has often been an afterthought. It is now a critical component of IT operations, digital transformation, security and compliance, with a definitive role and lifecycle. This is embraced and enabled by Altaro VM Backup version 7.6, available in four versions. Here we review the fully featured, Unlimited Plus edition.

We downloaded the installer (less than 150MB) ran install, and were quickly presented with a guided three-step set-up, which dealt with licensing, specifying a backup location and our backup targets. Using the default settings we had a credible configuration in less than fifteen minutes. Complexity of storage estate will naturally increase this, but it's very intuitive to get things working and advanced options can be considered using familiarity, understanding and evolving requirements.

Five backup locations are offered: Physical Drive, Network Path (LAN), Cloud (Azure), Altaro Offsite Server and Drive rotation. How these are used depends on an organisation's policy and compliance, but each can be granularly adjusted to suit. The flexibility offered allows a Disaster Recovery (DR) site to be established.

Using the sidebar we explored Advanced Settings. Application Consistent Backup (ACB), enabled by default, will truncate transaction logs and ensure the VM is aware a backup has been taken. A new feature in this version, Continuous

Data Protection (CDP) can backup as frequently as every five minutes. It's a feature to use with caution, and ACB cycles will mostly be less frequent. It's worth understanding the connections, because if a backup doesn't complete in five minutes it will immediately start the next one, effectively reducing frequency.

Backup Health Monitor runs in the background, except when CDP is enabled. It ensures that backups are viable and that any bad blocks are self-healed. Storage capacity is always an issue with backup, and Altaro manage this using standard and custom Backup Policy options. This is complemented by GFS (Grandfather, Father, Son) Archiving, also new to 7.6, forming an essential part of backup operations.

Managing by exception is aided with optional failure notifications by email and 7.6 Deduplication ensures that data is stored only once. Change Block Tracking allows fast backup by reducing scanning and incrementally backing up. Volume Snapshot Service (VSS) can be disabled for non-Microsoft sources. All remote backups are encrypted by default and cannot be turned off, as they can for local backups.

Like all Altaro functions Restore is highly intuitive, and with a target and location selected it simply gets on with it, while the Dashboard keeps you briefed. There is an option to undertake a test restore and even to restore a complete VM instance: in this case there is an option to disable the network to

avoid IP conflict. It is possible to restore a single file, email or complete Virtual Disk.

Verification and Sandbox Restores can be scheduled and boot from backup is especially important when facing a Ransomware attack. If, for example, you were running CDP and had an idea when a compromise took place, you could select an appropriate restore point, boot, and safely run.

Reports provide Dashboard insight to all operations. The ingenious Get Help feature provides Telephone, Email and Chat support and can generate error reports and even provide remote support.

It's quite possible that some smaller organisations may not understand what they should backup, in which case the default steps will quickly get them to a secure, defensible backup status. From here, experience and backup experiments, combined with easy creation can produce an extremely tailored, highly effective data backup and disaster recovery solution.

With Altaro, VM backup and DR is assured and no longer a worry or a chore. **NC**

Product: Altaro VM Backup Unlimited Plus Edition

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