



Ontrack® Data Recovery

Kroll Ontrack Retrieves Lost Images for Brisbane Photographer

“There’s no warning for equipment failure and you never anticipate losing your clients’ files.”

Damien Bredberg is one of Australia’s most sought after professional photographers. A specialist in commercial and advertising photography, he has been producing international award winning images for over a decade.

With the support of his team and a dedicated producer Bredberg offers his clients an end-to-end service - from concept to photography production and retouching. On completion of each project his clients are provided with a portfolio of the final high quality images. Bredberg then archives all material associated with the project on one of three external hard drives and creates backups for extra safety. There, the images remain in case a client ever loses their files and requires a new set of the material.

It’s a basic but sound archival and backup process that relies on frequency of backups and on the dependability of hard drives. Unfortunately, twice within the past four years, Bredberg has discovered just how fallible both of these elements can be.

“The first time was a couple of years ago when I was using a relatively new external drive,” Bredberg explains. “All the images on it had already been given to clients but in this particular case, I hadn’t yet backed up every single file for my own records. When the drive started to fail I was faced with the loss of a number of client images.”

Although the projects had been completed and clients were already in possession of the photos, Bredberg knew it was imperative he obtain new copies of the images if at all possible. After all, maintaining the images is part of the service his clients have come to expect. At the same time, he was unwilling to approach clients to ask them to provide copies of the missing files. “It would have been too unprofessional,” he admits. The only alternative was to try to retrieve the files from the drive.

Bredberg had seen other colleagues recover from similar situations with the help of Kroll Ontrack, "I'd always been told that Kroll Ontrack is very good at what they do and that the sooner Kroll gets the drive, the better the success of recouping the files. So as soon as I realised the drive was failing I stopped using it and sent it straight to Kroll Ontrack," he says.

It took just over a week for Kroll Ontrack to recover all files on the drive. Appreciating his luck and Kroll Ontrack's skill, Bredberg approached his archive and backup routine with renewed vigour, but in mid-2011, in almost exactly the same circumstances, another drive failed.

"It was very silly of me," Bredberg says. "This time it took around two weeks for Kroll Ontrack to retrieve the files. Throughout that time I was in a state of suspense. It wasn't so much that I needed the images but for someone who likes to be in control and doesn't like surprises, it was uncomfortable not knowing whether everything could be saved. In the end, Kroll Ontrack did manage to get it all back for me."

"As far as I'm concerned my files are worth more than Kroll Ontrack charged," he says. "If I had to go and recreate those files it would have cost me a lot more. Aside from this, for professionalism and indemnity reasons, I would have had to recover the files despite the cost. It's what clients pay me for and it's my responsibility to look after the files."

Since then Bredberg has instituted a more rigorous discipline around his company's backup processes. He still uses multiple drives but ensures that each backup is saved twice, trying to avoid the potential for a single point of failure. He's also investigating professional backup solutions such as mirror drives that replicate all data on a continuous basis.

Asked whether he feels he learned anything from the two hard drive failures, Bredberg smiles. "I didn't learn much from the first time, other than gaining security from the knowledge that there are companies out there like Kroll Ontrack who do a fantastic job. The second time around I also learned that you can't put your trust in your system. There's no warning for equipment failure and you never anticipate losing your clients' files."



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1800 872 259

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What to do:

» Files deleted by mistake:

From a data perspective, pressing the Delete key does not mean the data is gone. Turn off the machine immediately using the power button. Do not use the shutdown feature or any other computer function; this may overwrite the data.

» Water damage:

Keep the drive in its wet state and send it in for recovery. This will maximise the chances of recovery success because drying a drive adheres the liquid to the drive. Recovering data when there is physical damage to media must be done in a professional clean room.

» Unusual mechanical noises:

Turn off the system immediately and get assistance. Do not run volume repair or defragmenter utilities.

» Server crash:

Never restore data to the server that has lost the data; always restore to a separate server or location

» RAID failure:

Never replace the failed drive with a drive that was part of a previous RAID system. Always zero out the replacement drive before using it. Label the drives with their position in a RAID array. If the file system is unmountable or the data is inaccessible after power is restored, do not run volume repair utilities.