

BitTorrent Now Improving Online Privacy and Data Security

May 9, 2013 - Over the years, we've published a number of articles on the problems of file sharing. Every single one of those articles pointed out that traditional file sharing software reduced your privacy, increased your chances of being victimized by hackers and ID thieves, and left you open to being sued for copyright violations. But times are changing. BitTorrent has released a new software package that can actually help you improve your privacy and which serves a real purpose for both businesses and individuals. Best of all, it's free.

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With the proliferation of smart phones and computers, it is quite common for people to have multiple computers. In fact, most people probably have at least one computer at home and one at their office. Additionally, they may have a smart phone, a travel computer, tablet that they use to take notes, etc. You get the idea. With all of those computers, there is a real need to make sure that whichever computing device that you are using has access to all of your critical files. That means that you need a means to sync all of these devices up.

Data synchronization has become a booming industry. There are companies that produce a number of free and paid software packages specifically for this purpose. Products such as GoToMyPC, DropBox and Google Drive - just a small sampling of the products available - all play a role in this, but all have some real issues.

For instance, if you use GoToMyPC you have to make sure that the distant computer you are trying to access is actually turned on and has an internet connection. If you don't have a strong password, this could also leave you open to hacking. On top of this, you have to purchase the software.

Google Drive and DropBox require you place the files that you want access to on their computer systems (services like these are commonly referred to as cloud computing). That means lower data security and the files can actually be turned over to the government or be accessed for a law suit with a simple subpoena; no search warrant or court order necessary. These products also have limits on how much data you can store on them. Enter a new product offering called BitTorrent Sync.

BitTorrent Sync is a new offering from BitTorrent and it is totally free. The software appears to provide strong encryption of data and offers a wide variety of settings to enhance data security. Files can be shared in one direction (meaning that you can have a master computer that updates all of your other devices) only or you can do reciprocal sharing (meaning that regardless of which computer you are using, if you update a file it will then be shared with all of your other devices). And once a file is shared, it is actually stored on the device you are using. That means even if you don't have access to the internet, you will have access to your files.

BitTorrent Sync allows you to designate which files or folders on your computer are shared, and the set different security settings for each file or folder. Because the files are shared on your own computers, there is no limit to the amount of data you can store or share other than the actual size of your computer storage. And since you are in physical possession of all of the computers on which your data is stored, the government actually needs a search warrant if they want to look at that data. That is, they need a search warrant unless you are crossing a US border. But the software may even be able to help you there.

Current US law allows DHS agents to search and seize computing devices when a US border is being crossed. But if you use BitTorrent Sync, you can probably sync your data with another device before you ever get to the border and then wipe the device you are traveling with clean with a program specifically designed to erase and encrypt your data.

BitTorrent Sync currently runs on systems running Windows, Linux and Mac OSX. It does not work on Android or IOS yet, but they claim to be close to having these platforms working. The program is available for download [here](#).

by Jim Malmberg

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