

Sponsored by:

NETWORKWORLD

This story appeared on Network World at
<http://www.networkworld.com/news/2008/081108-linkup-failure.html>

Loss of customer data spurs closure of online storage service 'The Linkup'

Nirvanix denies responsibility, says its own customers' data remains safe
By [Jon Brodtkin](#), Network World, 08/11/2008

Can you trust your data to the [cloud](#)? For users of an online storage service called The Linkup, formerly known as MediaMax, the answer turned out to be a resounding "no." Sponsored by:

The Linkup shut down on Aug. 8 after losing access to unspecified amounts of customer data. [The Linkup Web site](#) has a message saying the service is no longer available and urges visitors to try out another storage site called Box.net. The Linkup had about 20,000 paying subscribers, according to a story on [Demo.com](#).

"I was traveling throughout North and South America ... and used [the service] to back up copies of documents in case of emergency," a user named Jacob Sherman tells *Network World* in an e-mail. "I just want my data."

The Linkup CEO Steve Iverson says at least 55% of the data was safe. How much of the remaining 45% was saved is not clear, he says.

Related Content

"We know there was definitely a lot of customer problems, and when we looked at some individual accounts, some people didn't have any files, and some people had all their files," Iverson says in a phone interview.

Enterprise IT shops that subscribe to or are considering a [cloud storage service](#) might be most intrigued by

one factor in The Linkup's meltdown: the company's relationship with [Nirvanix](#), a cloud start-up offering online storage services to business customers.

Nirvanix and MediaMax/The Linkup [trace their origins](#) to Streamload, an online storage company targeted at consumers that was founded in 1998 and then split in two in July 2007, resulting in the formation of business-focused Nirvanix and consumer-focused MediaMax, both based in San Diego. (MediaMax changed its name to the Linkup earlier this year).

Commenters in the blogosphere blamed The Linkup storage problems on Nirvanix, spurring the company to issue a lengthy [rebuttal on its blog](#) two weeks ago, with a detailed explanation of storage procedures which Nirvanix says would prevent any loss of data.

According to Nirvanix, MediaMax contracted with [Savvis](#) in July 2007 to host its application and database and contracted with Nirvanix to host "old Streamload/MediaMax servers and storage systems."

"MediaMax's intent was to migrate users and files from the MediaMax application and old Streamload/MediaMax storage system into the new TLU [The Linkup] application and the new Nirvanix Storage Delivery Network," Nirvanix writes. "However, as documented on the TLU blog on their impending closure, this migration was only partly possible and only a portion of the files were transferred."

According to Nirvanix, MediaMax has previously said in its blog that the company's storage problems began in June 2007 -- before Nirvanix was incorporated. The Nirvanix Storage Delivery Network itself was not launched until October 2007, Nirvanix says.

There is now only one post left on The Linkup blog -- a message dated July 9, 2008, explaining that the service would close on Aug. 8 and all customer information and files would be deleted. Users were urged to download their files before that date.

"It was not possible to satisfactorily complete the move of files from MediaMax to The Linkup as we had expected, and as a result cannot offer a service that meets your expectations and our business requirements," The Linkup blog states. "This is a very disappointing outcome for us, and we know it has been a frustrating experience for many of our customers."

The Linkup updated the post two days later with the following statements:

1. The only files that are available for download are the files that are currently in your The Linkup account.
2. Nirvanix cannot provide access to any additional data or assist with accessing your files. Please do not contact them."

Related Content

The Linkup blog does not say how much data is inaccessible.

Iverson says he is not aware of any efforts to recover the inaccessible data. Nirvanix was managing The Linkup's servers and storage, which were separate from the new Storage Delivery Network platform on which Nirvanix stores data from its own customers, Iverson says.

"We were paying them a pretty significant amount of money [to manage the servers and storage]," Iverson says. "I think it's a horrible outcome. It's a worst-case scenario, for really everybody involved."

Nirvanix, on its blog, says that the files Linkup customers can no longer access -- the ones that were not

transferred to The Linkup application as intended -- are not exactly lost. They "remain secure in the old Streamload/MediaMax storage system."

However, Nirvanix says it can't access these files because that would require "the MediaMax application and database front-end which Nirvanix has no access to. Ownership of the MediaMax application front-end and user data belongs solely to MediaMax, Inc."

Iverson says he doesn't agree with Nirvanix's assessment on this point. But he said it would be difficult for him to uncover all the reasons for the system's failure because Nirvanix was the one managing the hardware.

"Over the last year or so there were a number of problems that contributed to not being able to successfully migrate [data] to The Linkup," Iverson says.

Nirvanix says it has not deleted any customer data, and promises that its Storage Delivery Network is immune to the problem that plagued The Linkup. At The Linkup, a "system administrator ran a script that misidentified active account data and disassociated physical files from their owners," Nirvanix says. "This led to files being marked offline in the old Streamload/MediaMax file system when they shouldn't have been." Iverson, meanwhile, claims it was a Nirvanix engineer who caused the data loss.

Nirvanix says it prevents any similar problems in its own Storage Delivery Network by making the system fully redundant.

"This means that all files, and pointers to those files, are replicated within the system," Nirvanix says.

"Furthermore, a series 'checks-and-balances' has been installed natively within the [Nirvanix] framework. If a customer deletes a reference to a file, the system logs the removal of the reference, and leaves the physical file associated intact. After three days, the pointer to the physical file is logged [with a time stamp] and the pointer to that file is removed. Finally, after eight days of the original removal of the customer's reference, the file is deleted off of Nirvanix storage. At any point during this eight-day process, the file can be fully recovered."

Nirvanix's network also contains multiple servers at each site running integrity checks against all files. "Any file which shows even the smallest problem is marked offline and recovered immediately from one of our redundant copies," Nirvanix says.

Nirvanix was featured at *NetworkWorld's* [DEMO 08 conference](#) and tabbed by *Network World* as one of 10 storage "[companies to watch](#)" this month.

All contents copyright 1995-2009 Network World, Inc. <http://www.networkworld.com>