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The Seven Sins of Degaussing

Degaussing a hard drive is a procedure that utilizes a machine to produce strong electromagnetic fields that destroy magnetic data on a disk. While many are initially impressed with the speed of this process, there are serious disadvantages to degaussing.

1. Process Verification

There is simply no way to guarantee that a particular degaussing machine is powerful enough to destroy all of the data on every hard drive. It is not possible to create a sector by sector verification of the process. As degaussing destroys other components of the hard drive, it is not possible to view the drive for even a cursory inspection.

2. Production of Log Files

Degaussing will not produce a log file which is becoming more and more important to demonstrate required compliance with SOX, HIPAA, GLB, FACTA and many other Acts and Directives. In contrast, data wiping produces very detailed log file reports, containing such information as:

- Drive Identification Number
- Machine Information
- Erasure Method utilized
- Date of Erasure
- Name of Technician
- Results/Errors related to wipe
- and other customized parsed data

3. Chain of Custody

Degaussing machines are expensive and much care must be taken to ensure that other magnetic assets are not damaged as the result of unintended exposure to strong electromagnetic fields. Due to these issues, many companies often turn to third party vendors to perform the task of destroying data on hard drives. This can create problems related to the *chain of custody* of privileged and sensitive data and records. When degaussing is outsourced, the drives are collected and stored prior to shipment. This makes *you* liable if the storage area is not secure. Furthermore, you are facilitating the exposure of your data to unknown persons. There is no better way to secure your data than to destroy it prior to leaving the secure perimeter of your enterprise.

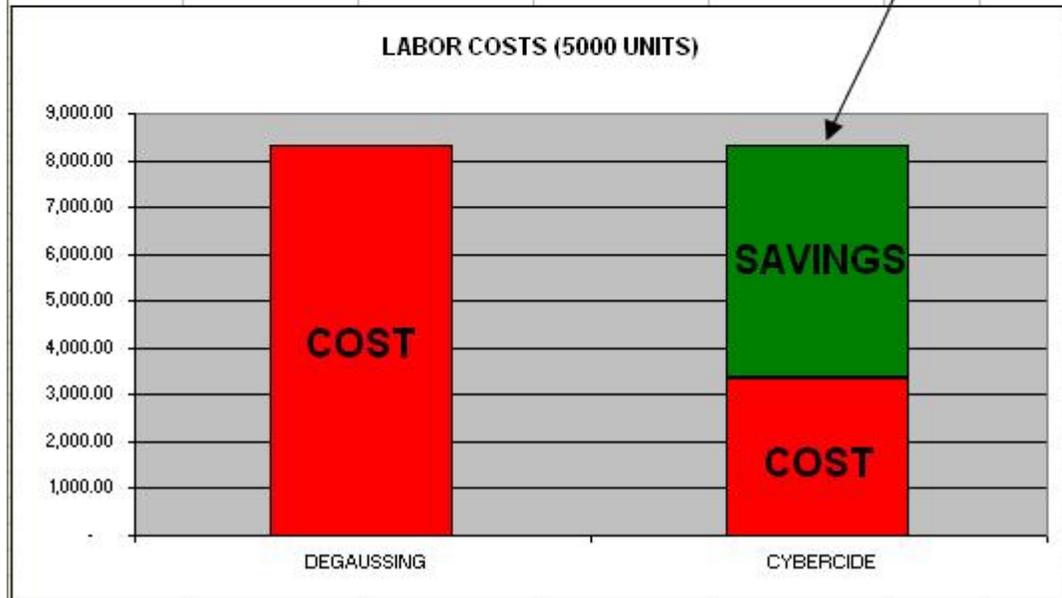
4. Labor Cost

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While many are initially impressed with what appears to be a fixed cost for data destruction (in other words a one time purchase of a degaussing machine), the facts easily demonstrate the actual cost is variable and expensive. By taking a close look at associated labor cost this becomes readily apparent:

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
HOURLY RATE	\$ 20.00					
MINUTE RATE	\$ 0.33					
DEGAUSSING PROCESS		CYBERCIDE PROCESS				
TASK	TIME (MINS)	TASK	TIME (MINS)			
Open computer	1	Insert CD	1			
Remove drive	1	Initiate cyberCide	1			
Initiate degaussing	1					
Re-Install drive	1					
Close computer	1					
TOTAL	5	TOTAL	2			
LABOR COSTS						
UNITS	DEGAUSSING	CYBERCIDE	SAVINGS			
100	166.67	66.67	\$ 100.00			
250	416.67	166.67	\$ 250.00			
500	833.33	333.33	\$ 500.00			
750	1,250.00	500.00	\$ 750.00			
1000	1,666.67	666.67	\$ 1,000.00			
2500	4,166.67	1,666.67	\$ 2,500.00			
5000	8,333.33	3,333.33	\$ 5,000.00			
7500	12,500.00	5,000.00	\$ 7,500.00			
10000	16,666.67	6,666.67	\$ 10,000.00			
12500	20,833.33	8,333.33	\$ 12,500.00			
15000	25,000.00	10,000.00	\$ 15,000.00			
17500	29,166.67	11,666.67	\$ 17,500.00			
20000	33,333.33	13,333.33	\$ 20,000.00			



It is important to remember that there is a cost associated with opening the computer, removing the hard drive, removing the hard drive housing (if applicable), reassembling the computer, placing the drive in a degaussing machine, removing the drive from the degaussing machine and then finally creating, manually, some type of report.

5. Inoperable Computers

As opposed to data wiping, degaussing a hard drive renders the computer obsolete. These valuable assets cannot be sold or redeployed to other departments.

6. Community Commitment

Many companies work hard to benefit their communities and become good corporate citizens. The donation of computers to schools, training centers, inner-city programs and those less fortunate is a welcome and important contribution. While data wiping facilitates the availability of assets for redistribution, degaussing totally removes this option.

7. Execution Over a Network

Data wiping can be deployed over a network to target specific machines, offering centralized management, execution and the capture of detailed and auditable log files in a central repository.