

Getting Started

Local-first software

Owning your work

Based on the 2019 Ink & Switch essay by Martin Kleppmann, Adam Wiggins, Peter van Hardenberg, and Mark McGranaghan.

Original article: <https://www.inkandswitch.com/essay/local-first>

Your work may outlast the service that helped you create it. Servers can help you sync and collaborate. But if access to your work depends on one provider, an outage, shutdown, or new fee can put it out of reach. Local-first software keeps a usable copy on your device, so you can keep reading and editing without that service.

Local-first separates access from sync. Devices may exchange changes later; a failed connection does not prevent work on the copy already at hand.

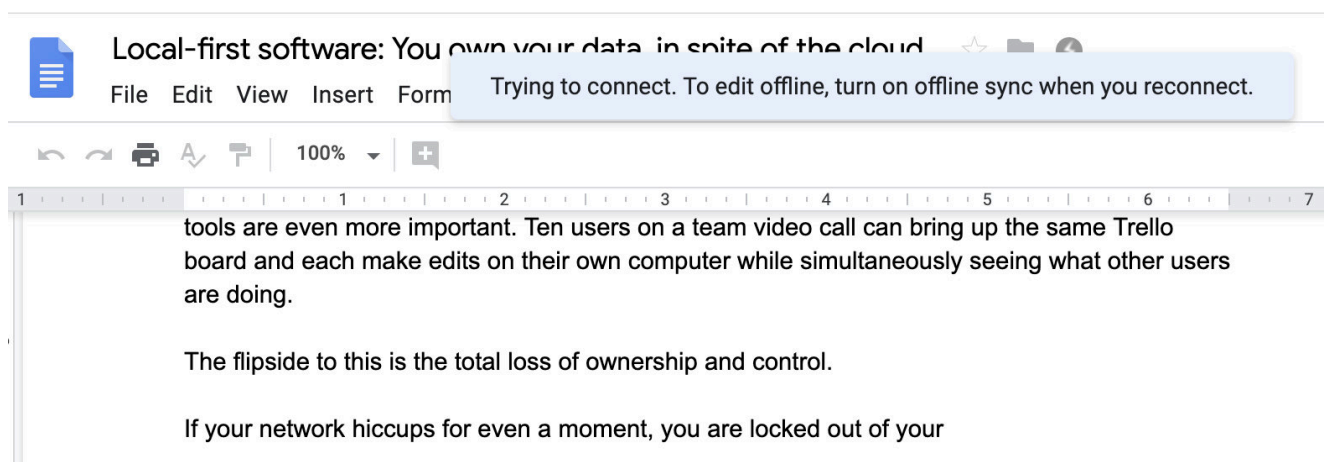
Google Docs offline warning shown in the 2019 Ink & Switch essay.

Sealed

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Google Docs offline warning shown in the 2019 Ink & Switch essay.

1570 x 544 px image/png



Google Docs offline warning shown in the 2019 Ink & Switch essay.

Seven ideas

1. Own your work. Keep a working copy of your data on your device, with a way to copy and move it.
2. Keep access offline. A lost connection should not prevent you from reading or changing work already on your device.
3. Use more than one device. Share changes when a connection returns, while each device keeps a usable copy.
4. Collaborate. People should be able to contribute separately or together and merge changes without losing work.
5. Preserve work over time. Keep backups and use formats and software that remain readable beyond the service that supplied them.
6. Protect private data. Store and share it deliberately; local storage alone does not guarantee security.
7. Work without waiting. Local reads and writes avoid a network round trip for each action.

These ideas are goals for software, not a claim that every local-first app offers all seven.

Keeping work readable

Local copies can help work survive a service shutdown. A device can still fail, and a format can become unreadable. Backups and readable formats matter as much as where the data is stored.

Cuneiform script on a clay tablet, ca. 3000 BCE.

600 x 460 px image/jpeg



Cuneiform script on a clay tablet, ca. 3000 BCE. Image from Wikimedia Commons, reproduced in the 2019 Ink & Switch essay.

VERIFICATION

Manifest identity

These hashes identify the exact manifest.json bytes in this package. They do not establish authorship or publication time.

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