SoftThinks Backup And Recovery 3.0

Premium Edition

User guide

softthinks™

TECHNOLOGIES

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Welcome to the SoftThinks Backup And Recovery (SBAR) 3.0 Premium Edition User Guide!

SBAR is a safe, simple and reliable backup and recovery solution that can protect your system (OS, applications, drivers, settings) and data (music, photos, videos, documents and other important files) from data loss.

The document will provide a quick way to create your Factory Recovery Media and some quick instructions on how to recover your system back to factory using the Factory Recovery Media you create in the event it is needed.

WARNING: This product, being scalable and customizable, some features described in this document may not be available in your version of the product and the screenshots may not exactly match your workflow. Also, some customizations of your product version may not be described in this document.

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Glossary

Definitions, Acronyms and Abbreviations used in this user guide

Term	Explanation
CPD	**C**ontinuous **D**ata **P**rotection or **real-time backup**, refers to backup automatically a copy of every change made on the data protected
Factory Image	First complete system backup made in Factory to restore the system to its Factory state.
FAT	**F**ile **A**llocation **T**able: file System managing files up to 4GB
GPT	**G**UID **P**artition **T**able: standard for the layout of the partition table on a physical hard disk allowing partitions larger than 2.2 TB
Libraries	User-defined collections of folders. By default, your applications store your data in those libraries. You can check their contents in Windows Explorer.
MBR	**M**aster **B**oot **R**ecord
NTFS	**N**ew **T**echnology **F**ile **S**ystem: file system was introduced originally in Windows NT. It has been used in all versions since Windows 2000. NTFS is reliable, fast, and virtually incorruptible and can recognize and format large hard disks
OS	**O**perating **S**ystem
PBR partition	**P**ush **B**utton **R**eset partition: Same as RIP (Cf. below)
RIP	**R**ecovery **I**mage **P**artition: Partition tagged “FACTORY” containing the Factory Image on GPT systems and some MBR systems.
RP	**R**ecovery **P**artition: Partition tagged “RECOVERY” containing the recovery environment, and the Factory Image on some MBR systems.
SBAR	**S**oftThinks **B**ackup **A**nd **R**ecovery
Systray / System Tray	Windows taskbar notification area at the right of the Windows taskbar containing by default the clock and some notifications icons
Taskbar	Windows graphical element present by default at the bottom of the screen and containing from left to right the Start button, the Quick Launch bar, the Taskbar buttons and the notifications area
Toaster	SBAR application displaying an icon in the Windows taskbar notification area to display notifications and interact with the product
UP	**U**ser **P**artition: Partition containing the Operating System
WinPE / WinRE	**Win**dows **P**reinstallation **E**nvironment: lightweight version of Windows used for the deployment of workstations and servers or troubleshooting an operating system while it is offline
WinRE	**Win**dows **R**ecovery **E**nvironment: used primarily to help save or salvage your Windows operating system

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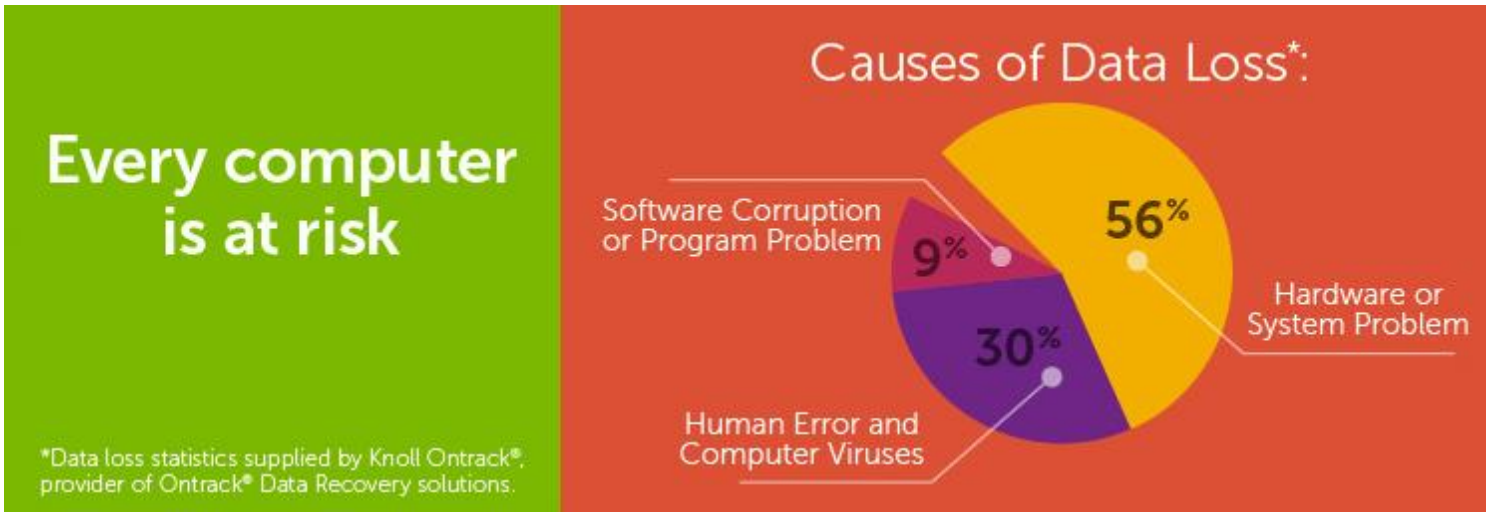
Presentation

SoftThinks Backup and Recovery allows you to restore your system and data in case your device fails.



SoftThinks Backup and Recovery provides the latest recovery technology to SoftThinks consumers with a recovery partition. This protected partition on your device contains a copy all of the factory-installed software and will boot even when Windows does not run. With SoftThinks's factory recovery software you can easily reinstall all of the software that came with your device.

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Opening SoftThinks Backup and Recovery

SofThinks Backup and Recovery is already running and protecting your system and data when you start your device:

- A service is running in the background to perform the tasks scheduled or triggered by some system events. This service (which appears as “SoftThinks Agent Service” / “SftService” process) has no graphical interface, uses few system resources and is launched after all other services to make it as transparent as possible.

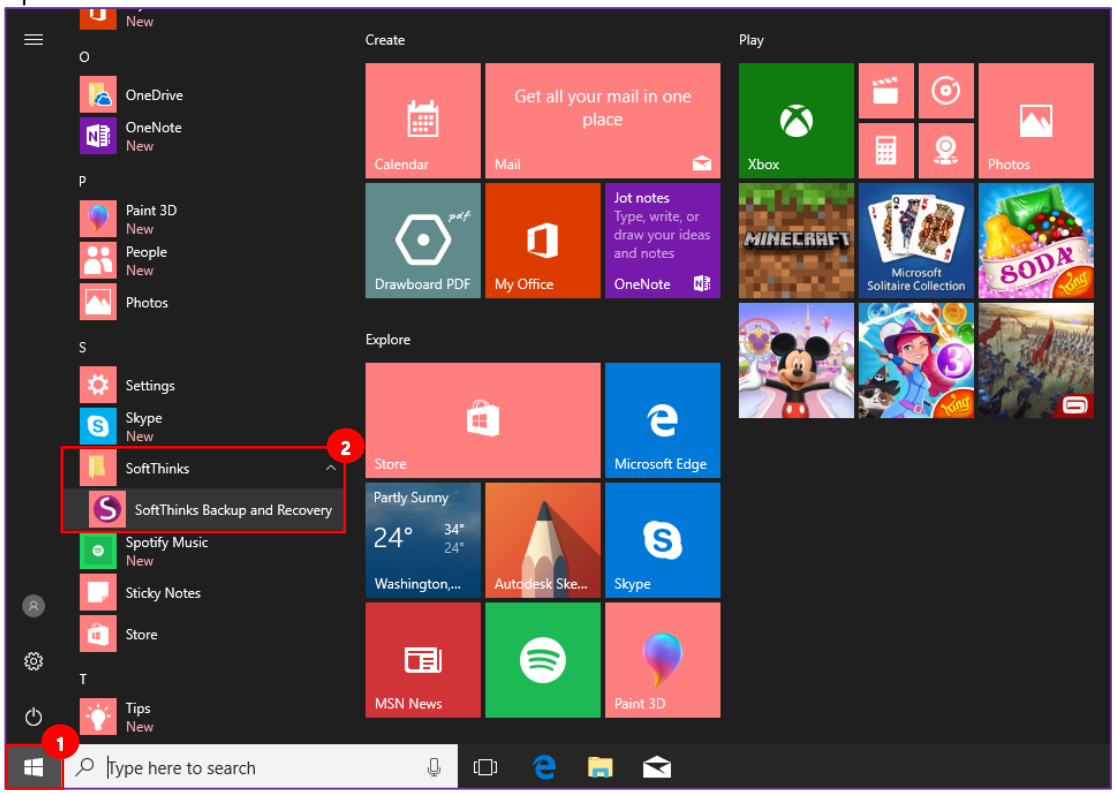
- Five minutes after your system has started (in order to not impact the startup experience), an icon looking like will appear in the notification area (commonly referred to as the « system tray”) of your taskbar. This element which we call “Toaster” will display important notifications and recommendations, and will allow you to interact with the product.

- SofThinks Backup and Recovery is also integrated within Windows Explorer so that you can easily check which files are protected and roll back to a previous version of your data (please see Recovering your data from Windows Explorer). This feature is using the process ”SoftThinks Backup And Recovery Sync” (DBRSync.exe) to optimize its performances.

You have several ways to open the SofThinks Backup and Recovery main user interface:

- From the Start Menu:

1. Click on the Windows icon in the taskbar 1, or press the Windows logo key on your keyboard, to open the Start Menu:



2. Scroll to the “SoftThinks” folder 2 and expand it to click on “SoftThinks Backup and Recovery”

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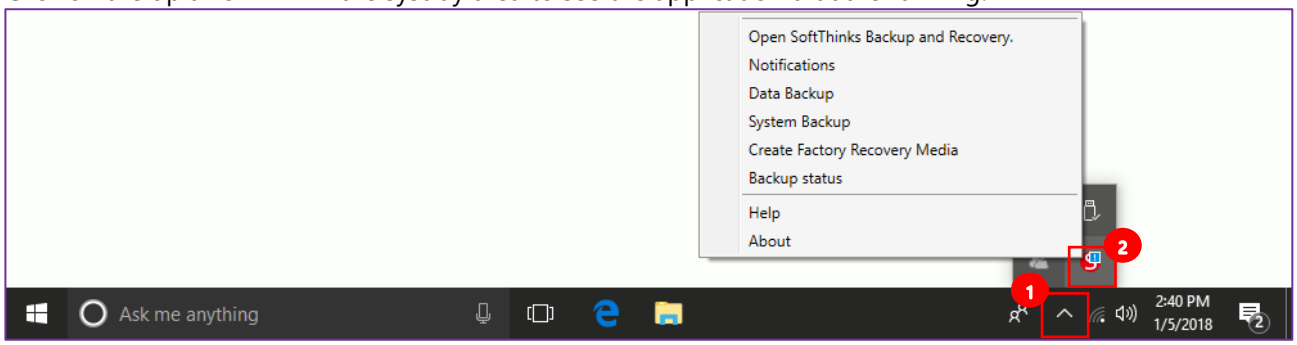
- From the toaster in the taskbar notification area:
    1. Click on the up arrow (1) in the systray area to see the application that are running:



    2. Double click on the icon (2), or right click on it and you can select to features of SBAR Premium Edition

Using either of those methods will display the splash screen below while SoftThinks Backup and Recovery is initializing:

If this is the first time you open the application you will arrive to a dedicated wizard helping you to configure our solution in order to protect your system and data. We will describe this “First Launch Setup” in the next chapter.

Else, you will see the SoftThinks Backup and Recovery main User Interface described in Using SoftThinks Backup and Recovery User Interface.

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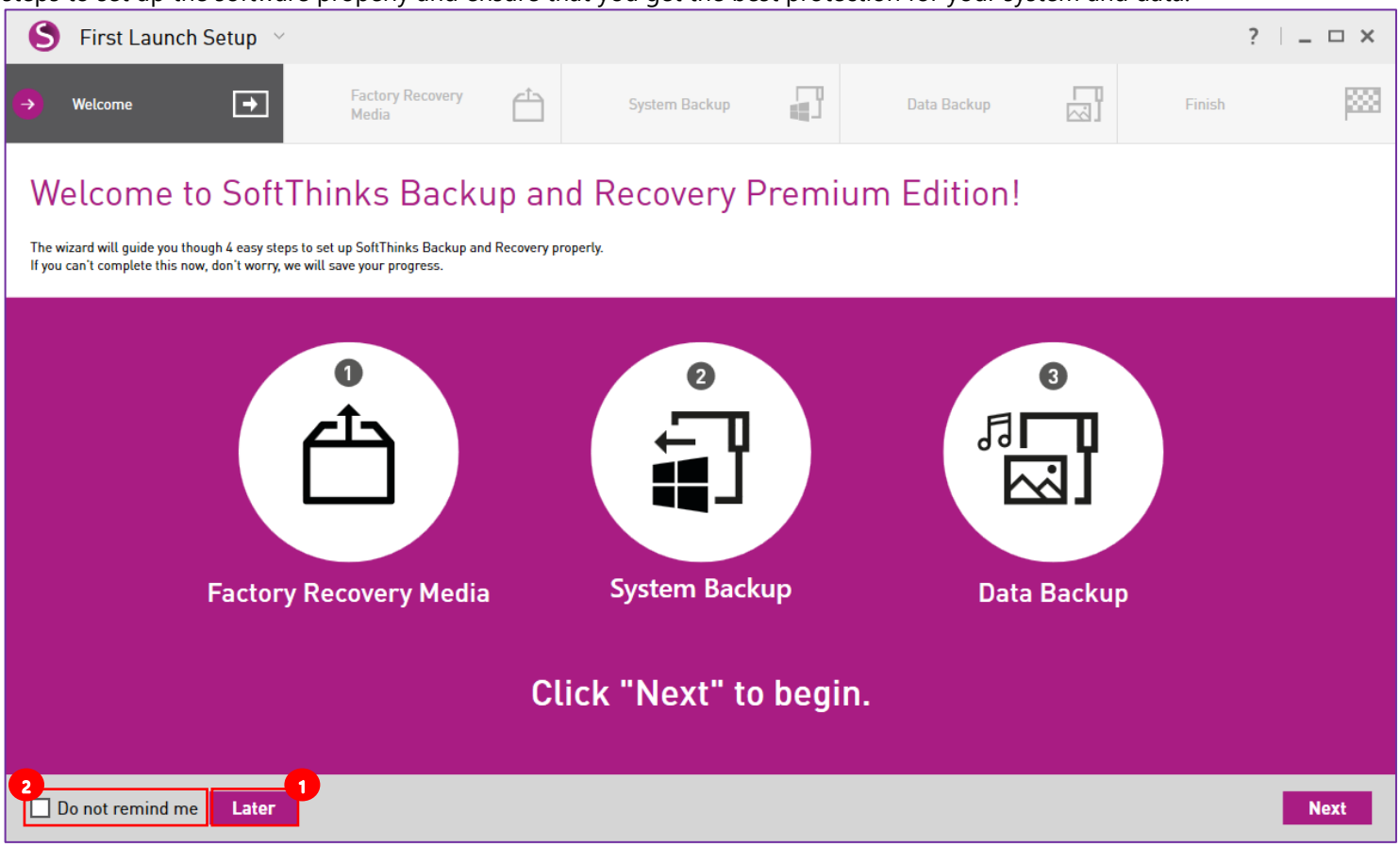
Configuring SoftThinks Backup and Recovery

The first time you will launch SoftThinks Backup and Recovery, the "First Launch Setup" wizard will guide you through the steps to set up the software properly and ensure that you get the best protection for your system and data:



Note: You can decide to set up SoftThinks Backup and Recovery later by clicking on the "Later" button on the bottom left 1. If you leave this wizard without having gone through all steps, it will resume where you left it the next time you will launch it until you complete it or click on "Do not remind me" checkbox in the bottom left corner 2.

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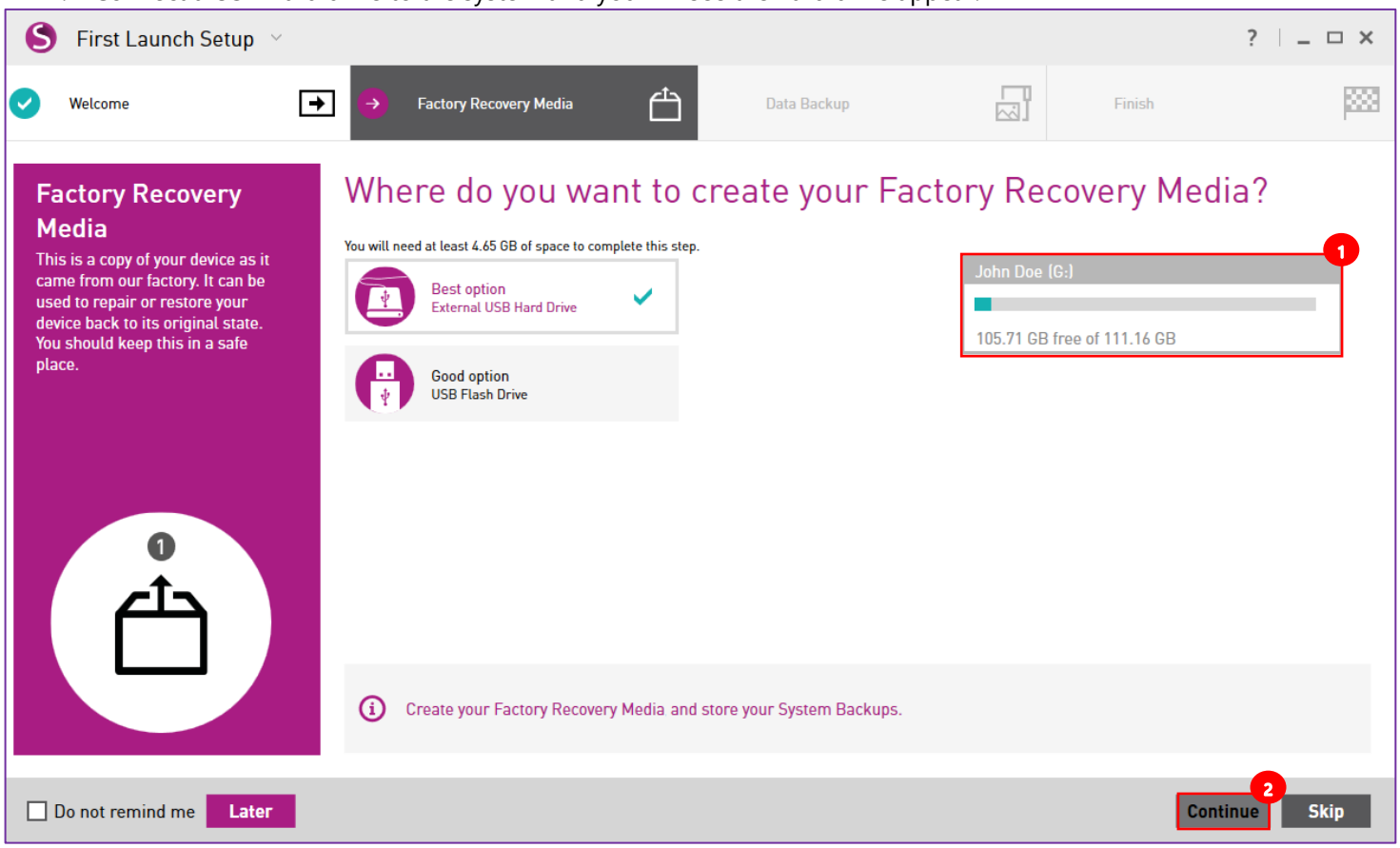
Creating your Factory Recovery Media

The first step will consist in creating your Factory Recovery Media which is a bootable media allowing you to recover your device to its factory state in the case of system failure or if you replace the Hard Drive typically.

By creating these Recovery Discs, you are making a backup of all the software that was installed on your device at the factory. This allows you to reinstall all applications, drivers and the Windows operating system that came with your device. While there is a similar copy of the software in the recovery partition, creating recovery discs provides additional protection for the factory-installed software.

We will describe here the recommended solution using an external USB Hard Drive. Please refer to the dedicated chapter Creating your Factory Recovery Media to obtain more information on the different media usable and their respective process, and why we recommend an external USB drive. Please note that Windows certified USB Flash Drives can behave as USB Hard Drive.

1. Connect a USB Hard drive to the system and you will see the hard drive appear:



Note: Due to technical limitations, some USB Hard Drives cannot be used as Factory Recovery Media, or require a manual preparation before using them. Please ensure that your USB Hard Drive is compliant and prepare it if needed as described in How to ensure that my USB Hard Drive can be used as Recovery Media

2. Click on and highlight the drive, and then click "Continue"

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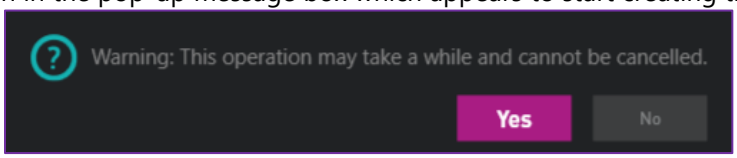
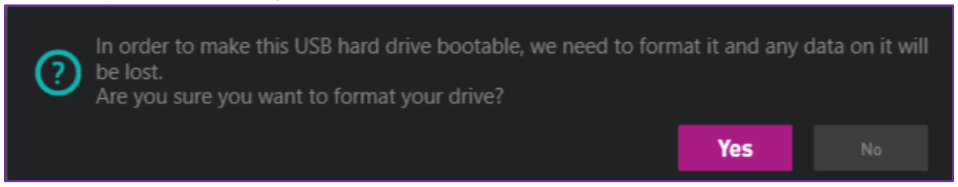
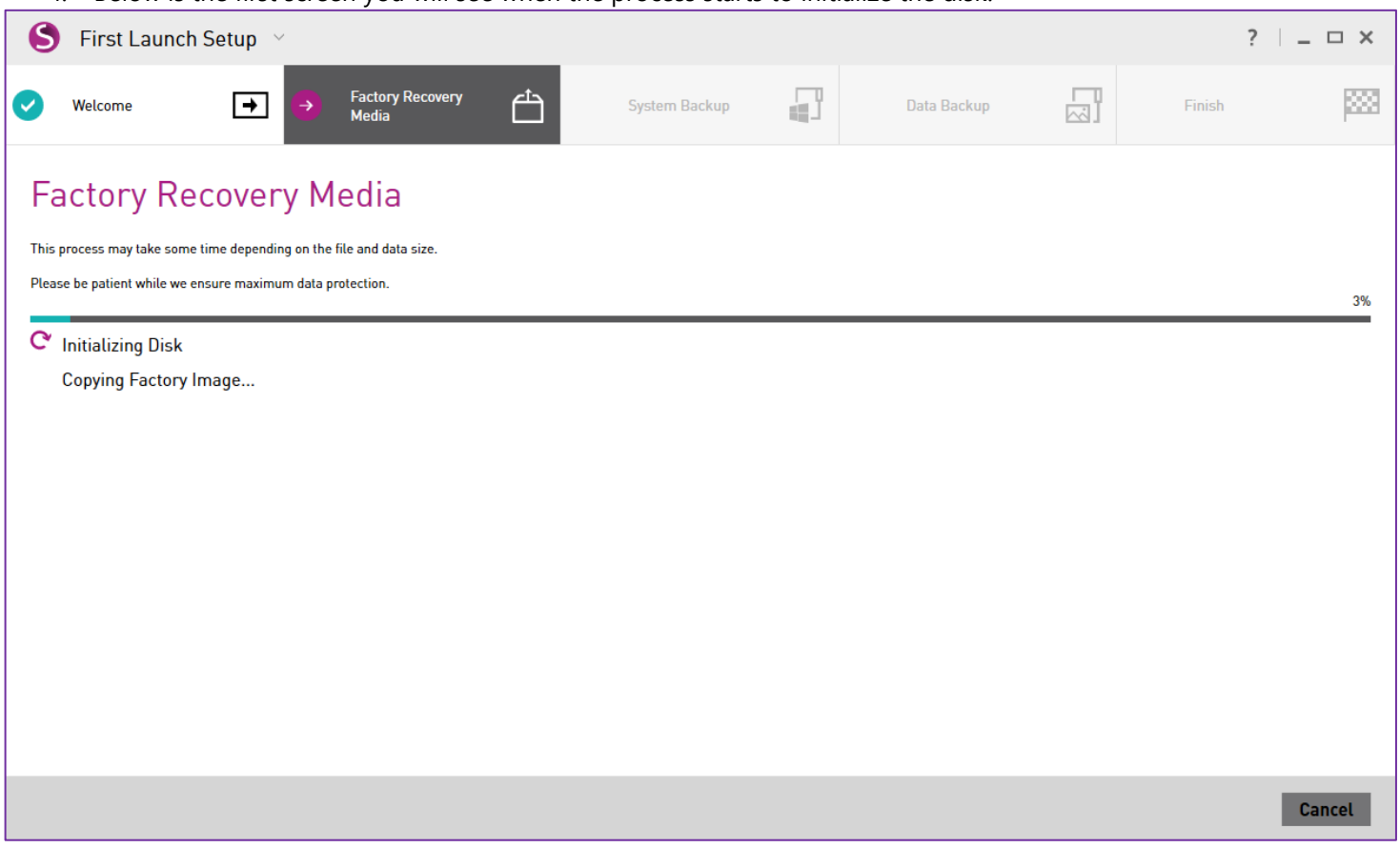
3. Click on the "Yes" button in the pop-up message box which appears to start creating the Recovery Media:



Note: By default, your data will be kept but, in some scenario, due to technical limitations, we will have to erase the disk contents. Don't worry you will be notified and will be able to cancel the process (to allow you to back up your data or try another external USB drive):



4. Below is the first screen you will see when the process starts to initialize the disk:



Note: If an error occurs during this step, please ensure that your USB Hard Drive is compliant with your system (How to ensure that my USB Hard Drive can be used as Recovery Media). You can retry after having cleaned up your recovery media (See Cleaning up your USB Hard Drive Recovery Media). If the issue still persists please use another USB Hard Drive.

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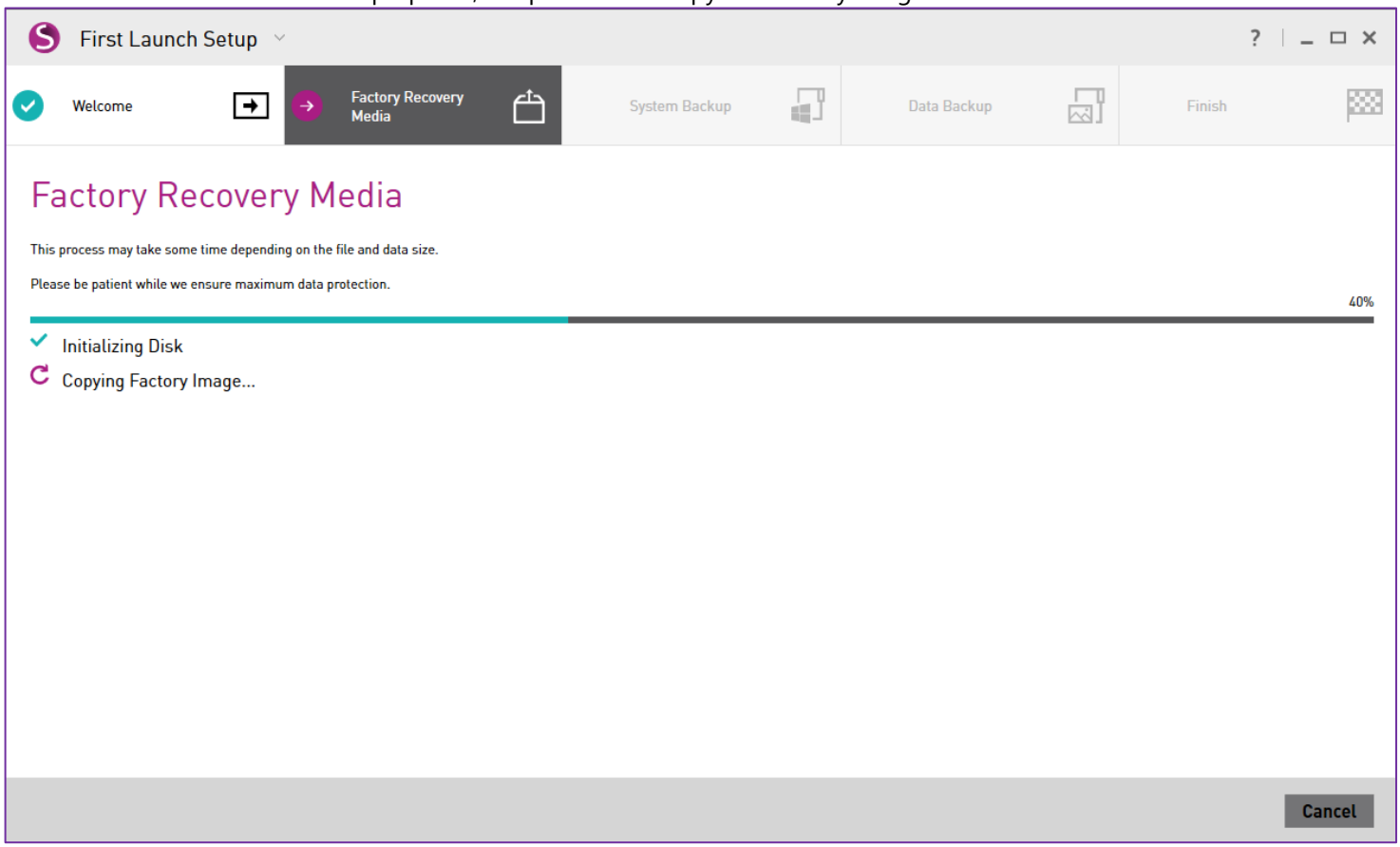
5. Once the drive has been prepared, the process will copy the Factory Image to the USB Hard drive as shown below:



Note: If an error occurs during this step, we recommend you to restart your system and retry after having cleaned up your recovery media (See Cleaning up your USB Hard Drive Recovery Media). and use another USB Hard Drive. If the issue still persists please use another USB Hard Drive.

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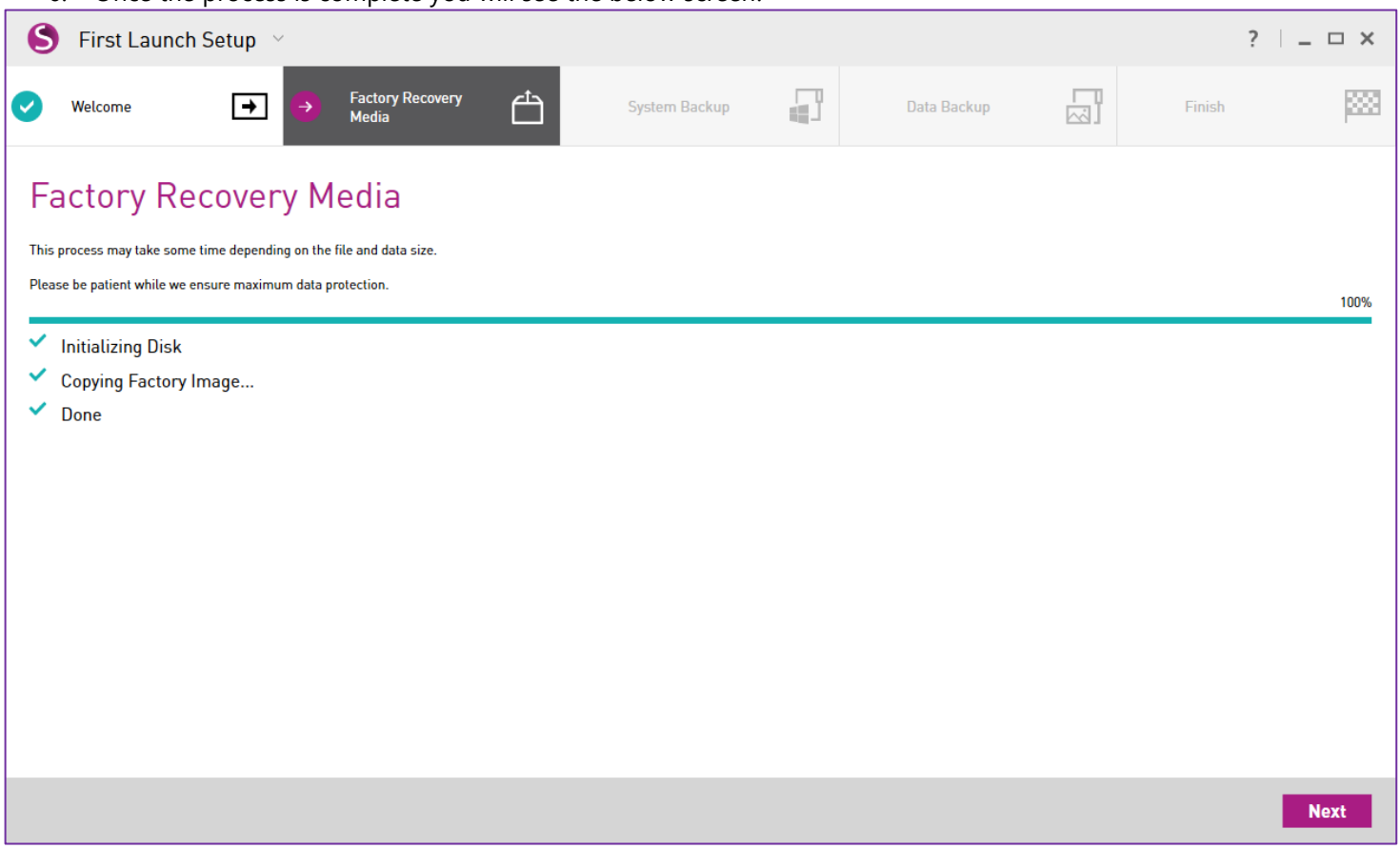
6. Once the process is complete you will see the below screen:



Note: Because of potential mismatch between your USB Hard Drive and your PC regarding the ability to start from your USB Hard Drive we recommend you to test this once you will have completed this wizard. Please try to start from USB Hard Drive to ensure you reach the recovery environment (See Restoring your system from your Recovery Media). Don't worry we will not make any modification on your device if you click on "Cancel" or "Quit" button when you arrive in the System Recovery user interface

7. Click on the "Next" button to continue to the next step.

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Protecting your system

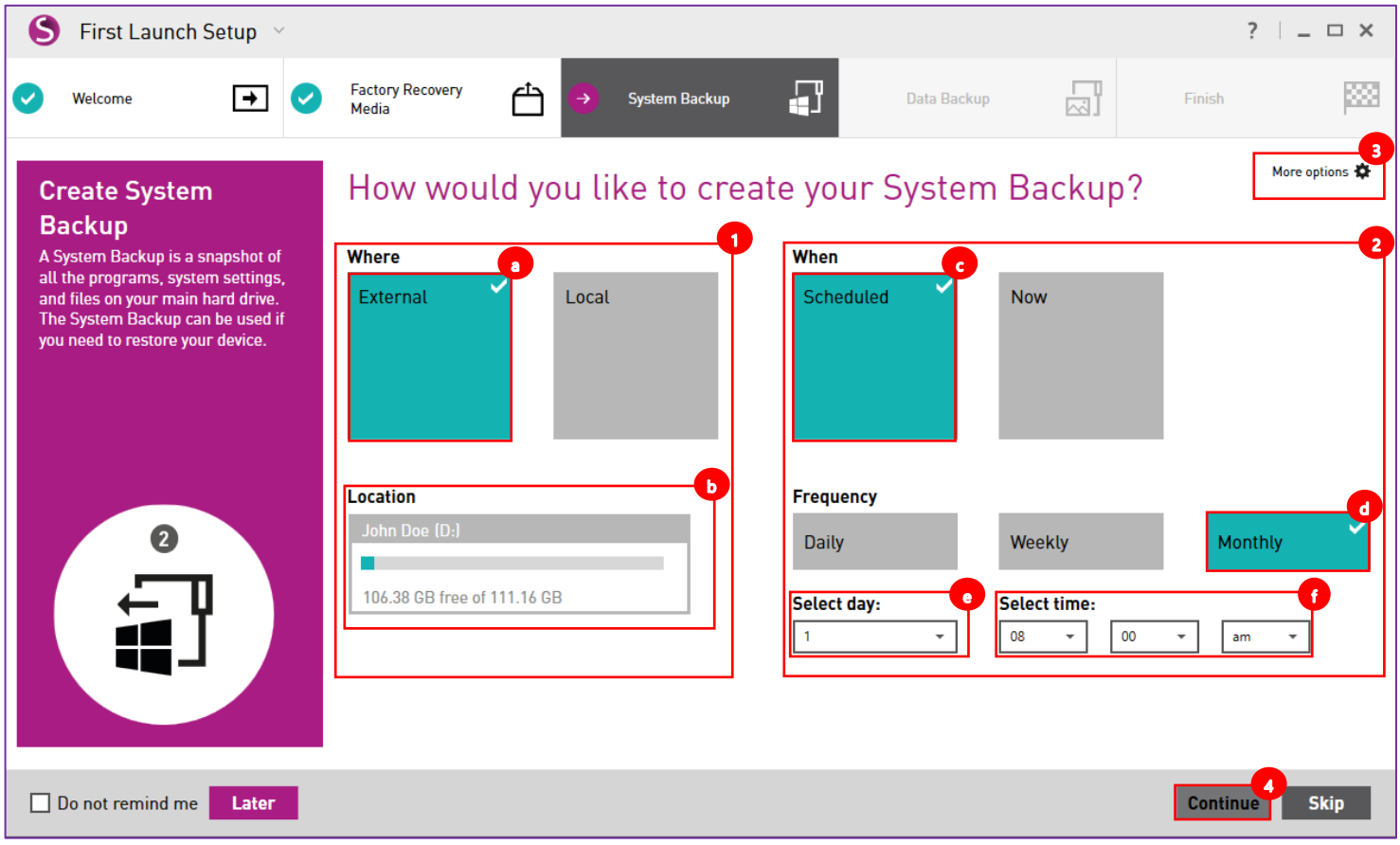
As explained in the previous step, SoftThinks Backup and Recovery allows you to recover your device in its factory state. But the Premium Edition can also recover it to any point in time if you regularly make snapshots of your system called System Backups. The System Backups include the operating system, registry, drivers, software applications and data files, as well as system areas hidden from you. To limit their size, only the files created or modified since the previous backup are saved and they are compressed.

You can create manually a System Backup right now but for the best protection we strongly recommend you to schedule the creation of System Backups. This is the solution we will describe below. Else you can back up your system now and schedule the creation of System Backups later through the application (See Creating a System Backup).

Scheduling the creation of System Backups

1. Select where you want to store your System Backups (1). You can choose to store your System Backups on either your local drive in a protected folder, or on any attached USB drive. We recommend you to use an external USB drive to prevent losing them in case of Hard Disk failure or replacement, and ideally the one you used for your Factory Recovery Media during the previous step if it was a USB drive. You will be able to move your System Backups to another location in the future (See Moving your System Backups).

   a. Click on the "External" tile (a):



   b. Click on the external USB drive in the list displayed under "Location" (b). The green square around the box indicates the currently selected drive. Faded drives indicate that there is not enough available free space to house the backup and are not selectable.

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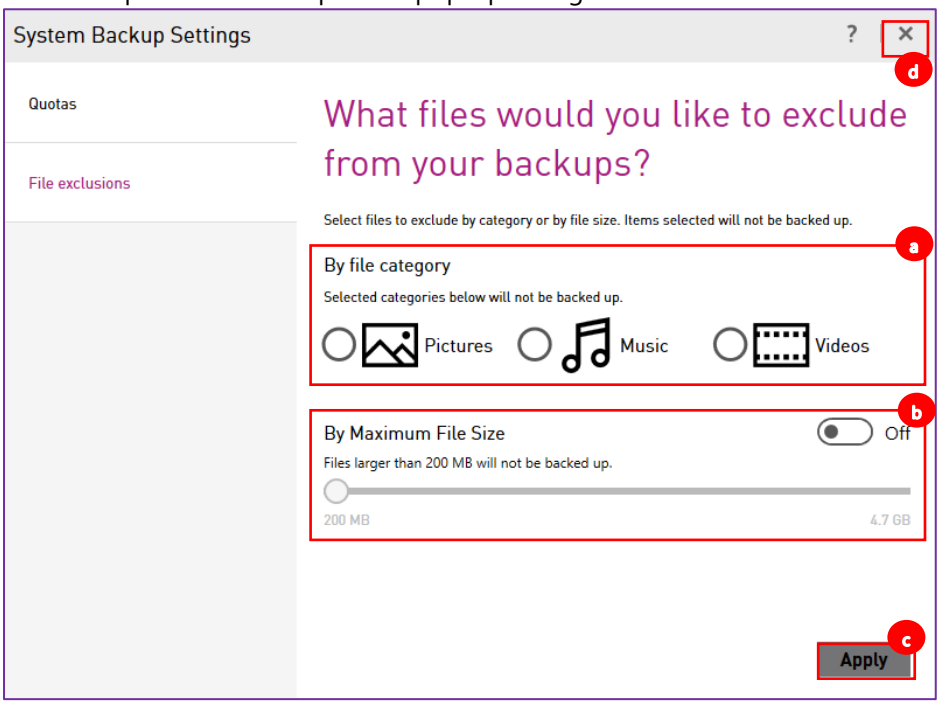
2. Select when you want to schedule the creation of your System Backups. In our example we schedule it monthly, the 1st day of each month at 08:00 AM:
   a. Click on "Scheduled" tile c
   b. Click on "Monthly" tile d
   c. Select which day of the month e
   d. Select the time f

   Note: If your system is not running at this time, the System Backup will be created the next time you will start your device. In order to make this process as transparent as possible without impacting the performances of your system, it is run with the lowest priority and this means that the capture could take several hours depending on the volume of data to back up.

3. If you wish to exclude files from your System Backups to decrease the size of the backups and speed up their creation, click on "More options " 3 to open the pop-up dialog box below:



   a. Select the file categories a you would like to exclude from your backup
   b. To exclude files larger than a given size, first slide the "By Maximum File Size" switch from OFF to ON and then click and drag the slider to your desired maximum allowed file size b
   c. When satisfied with your exclusion options, click on the "Apply" button c
   d. Then close the window by clicking on the "X" d in the upper right corner of the dialog box

   Note: Please choose carefully since any selection you choose will be excluded from your System Backup and will not be recovered in case of a System Recovery. The Quotas tab is useful only for local target and will be described in the chapter Defining a quota for your System Backups storage location.

4. Click on the "Continue" button 3 to configure your data protection.

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Protecting your data

Even if all your data are backed up with your system files when System Backups are created, you might want to back up your data more regularly than your system, and especially the important data you are modifying or creating on a daily basis for example.

This is the purpose of the Scheduled Data Backups and the Continuous Data Protection technologies:

- A Data Backup is a backup archive of a file or a group of files containing a copy of selected file/folder contents. When you create a Data Backup, only the data, along with the folder tree, are compressed and stored.

  You have certainly some documents, photos, music and video that you don't want to lose and you are modifying your documents over the time and you take photos and videos regularly. This is why you need to back those data regularly and the best way to ensure this is done is to schedule those data backups right now. Only the new files or the files modified will be saved and compressed in order to limit the size of the backup.

- Continuous Data Protection, also called **continuous backup** or **real-time backup**, refers to backup of computer data by automatically saving a copy of every change made to that data, essentially capturing every version of the data that the user saves. It allows you to restore data to any point in time.

  As a professional user, you might work on important documents several times per day and you want to be sure that in the case your system freezes, crashes, shutdowns or reboots unexpectedly, or in the case of a manual error, you can retrieve the document in the latest state it was. You might also want to roll back some modifications and go back to any previous version you made. The Continuous Data Protection feature allows you to protect your working documents in real time and to roll back to any version saved some minutes or hours ago. For the files modified, only the blocks changed are saved.

Our solution offers you those 2 technologies to fit perfectly your needs and you can even mix them, meaning regularly back up some data based on schedule (photos, video, music typically) and continuously protect some other critical data you are modifying several times per day. If so you can configure either the Scheduled Data Backup or the Continuous Data Protection now and reopen SoftThinks Backup and Recovery once the First Launch Setup completed to configure the other feature (See Data Backups).

You can save your Data to your local device, a second hard drive, a removable USB drive or a network. You can create Backup Profiles and select files based on categories, or choose specific folders to include. You can choose a different location for your Data Backups and your files saved by the Continuous Data Protection.

All the versions of the data backed up are indexed. This will allow you to view all the versions of all the files backed up even if the storage location is not reachable. For more details please refer to Recovering your data.

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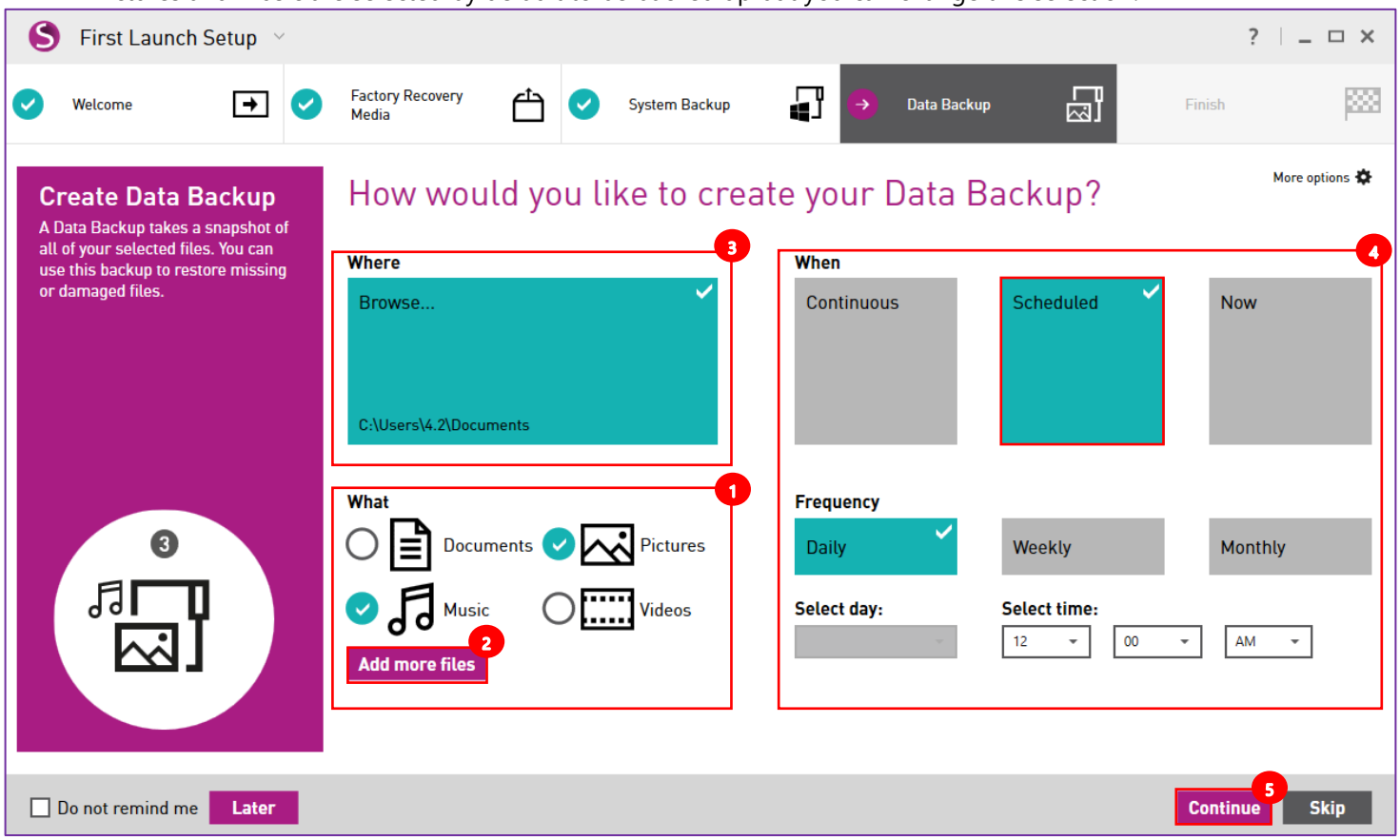
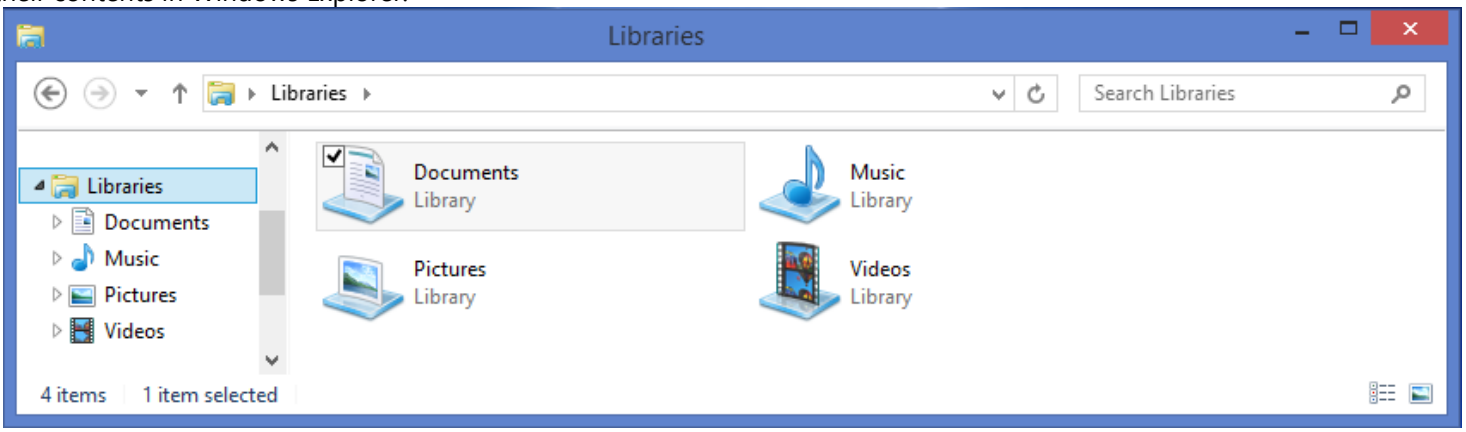
Scheduling Data Backups

1. Select the data libraries* (Documents, Pictures, Music, Video) you want to back up under the section "What" 1. Your Pictures and Music are selected by default to be backed up but you can change this selection:



*Libraries are user-defined collections of folders. By default, your applications store your data in those libraries. You can check their contents in Windows Explorer:



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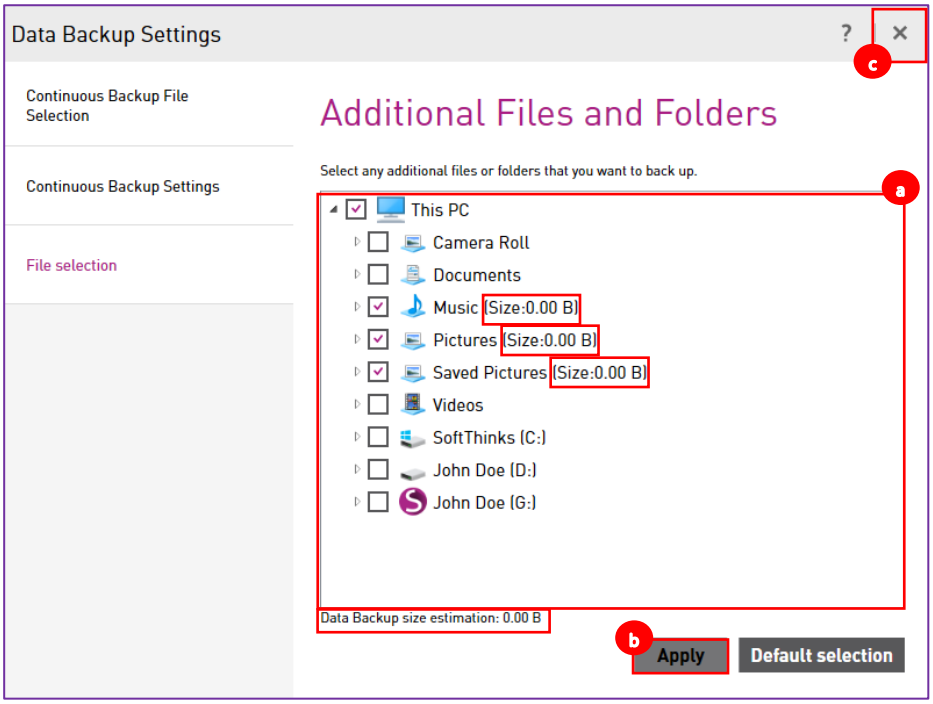
1. To add specific files and/or directories in the backup, click on the "Add more files" button (2) and the pop-up dialog box below will appear:



➔ Browse to their location in the tree (a) and put a check mark next to their name
➔ When satisfied with your data selections, click on the "Apply" button (b)
➔ Then on the "X" (c) in the upper left corner

Note: Below the tree you have an estimation of the size of the backup. You can revert back the selection to the default by clicking on the "Default selection" button

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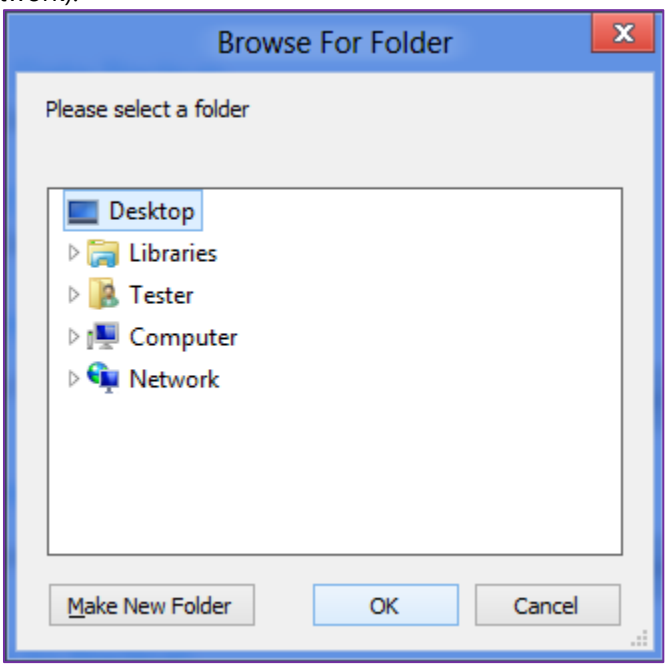
2. As you can see in the tile 3 under “Where” section, your Data Backups are stored by default in your “Documents” folder (“C:\users\4.2\Documents in our example). But you can select another location by clicking on this tile to browse for the folder where you want to store your Backups (this can be on your local device, a second hard drive, a removable USB drive or a network):



Note: If the storage target is not reachable (external drive not plugged or network not available for example), the schedule is ignored.

3. In the “When” section 4, click on the "Scheduled" tile and select the frequency you would like the backup to occur. In our example we decided to launch the Data Backup creation every day at 12:00 AM.

Note: If the PC or the software isn’t running, the next time SoftThinks Backup and Recovery will be launched it will create the backup

4. Click on the “Continue” button 5 to complete the setup

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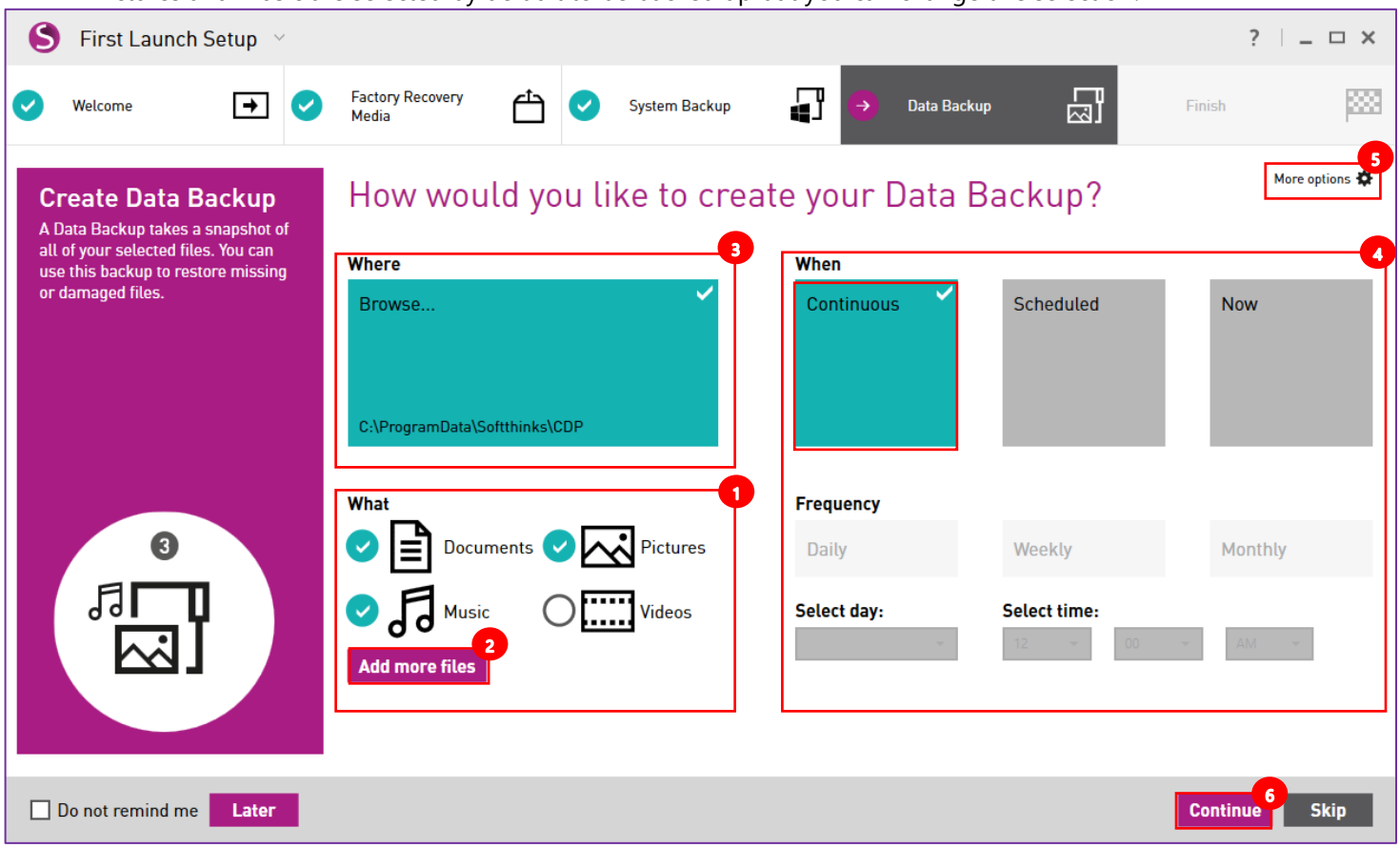
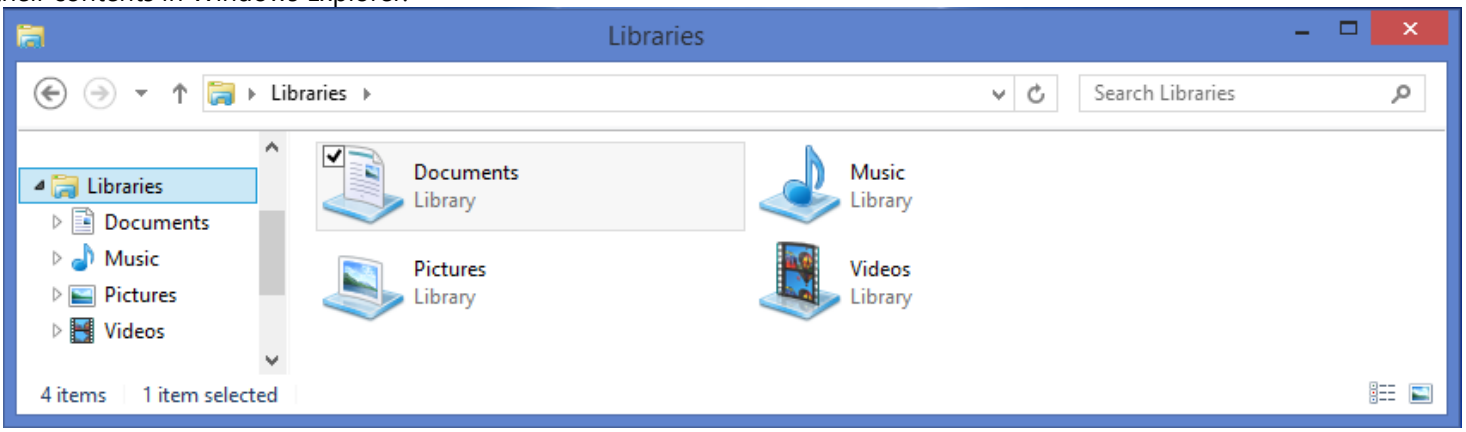
Protecting continuously your data

1. Select the data libraries* (Documents, Pictures, Music, Video) you want to back up under the section "What" 1. Your Pictures and Music are selected by default to be backed up but you can change this selection:



*Libraries are user-defined collections of folders. By default, your applications store your data in those libraries. You can check their contents in Windows Explorer:



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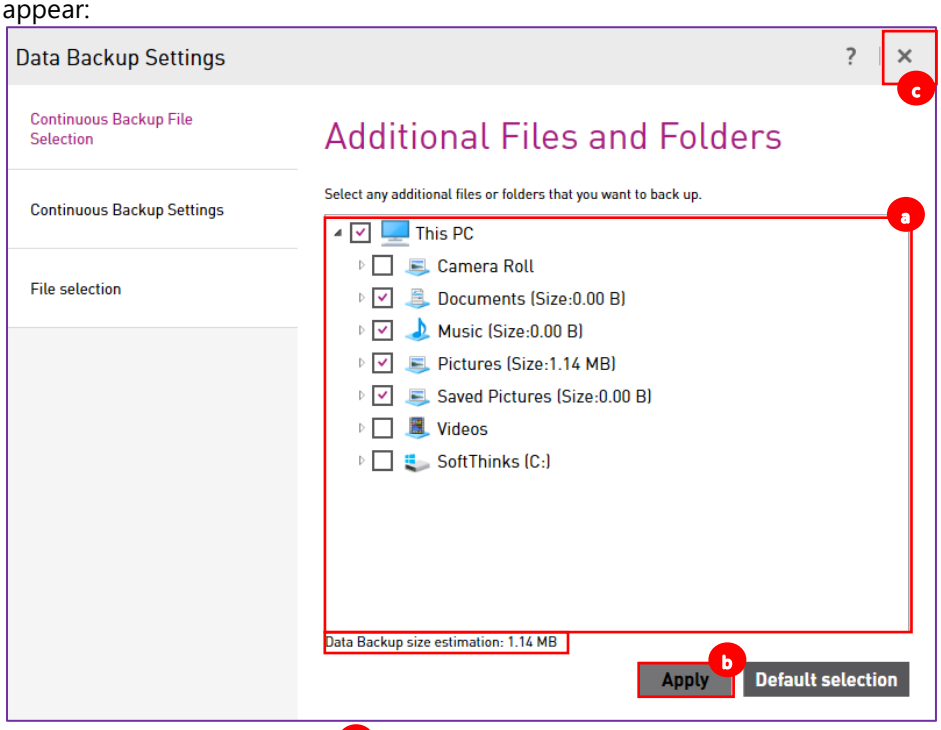
2. To add specific files and/or directories in the backup, click on the "Add more files" button (2) and the pop-up dialog box below will appear:



➔ Browse to their location in the tree (a) and put a check mark next to their name

➔ When satisfied with your data selections, click on the "Apply" button (b)

➔ Then on the "X" (c) in the upper left corner

Note: Below the tree you have an estimation of the size of the backup. You can revert back the selection to the default by clicking on the "Default selection" button

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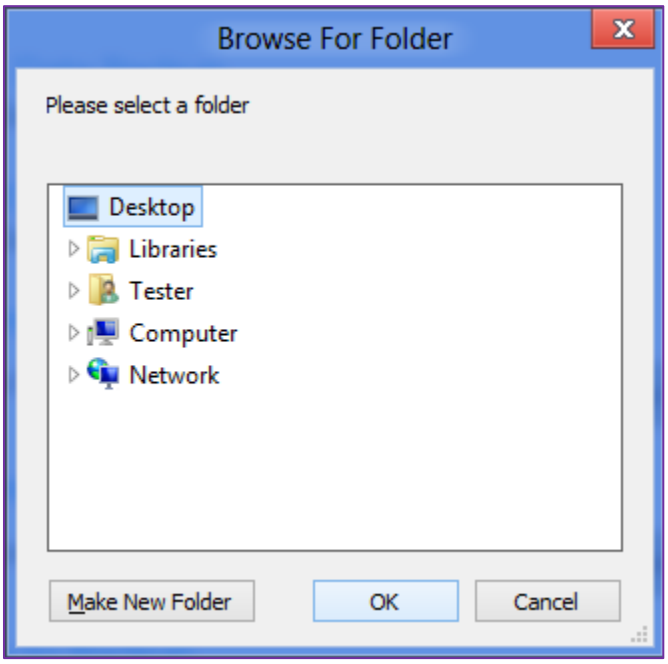
3. As you can see in the tile 3 under “Where” section, your Data Backups are stored by default in C:\ProgramData\SoftThinks\CPD. But you can select another location by clicking on this tile to browse for the folder where you want to store your Backups (this can be on your local device, a second hard drive, a removable USB drive or a network):



Note: If the storage target is not reachable (external drive not plugged for example), your data are saved locally and will be moved to the target storage once it will be available. If there is no more enough space locally, you will be alerted and we will suggest you to plug the external drive, or edit your profile to decrease the number of versions of each file he wants to keep, or to reduce the number of files you want to protect

4. In the “When” section 4, click on the "Continuous" tile.

Note: Even if your data are monitored in real time, we cannot capture the modifications you are making on your open documents until you save them.

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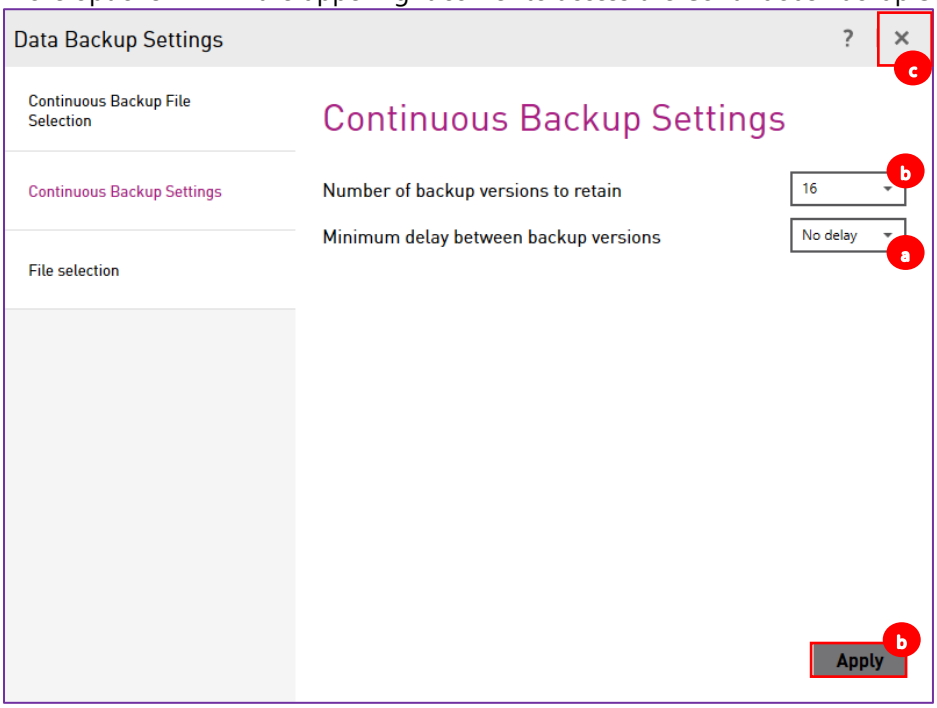
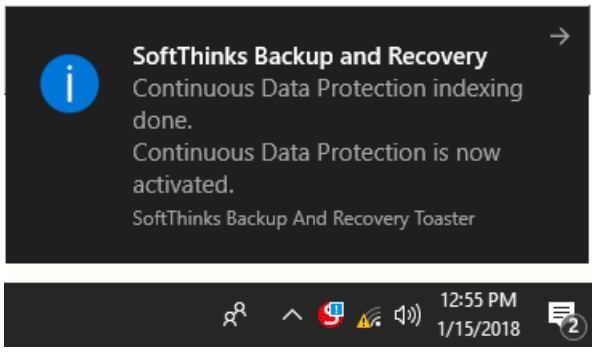
5. By default, your data selection is monitored in real time to capture any modification but you can change this setting by clicking on "More options" 5 in the upper right corner to access the Continuous Backup Settings:



   a. Specify the minimum delay between backup versions:
      - "No Delay": we back up all versions
      - 2 / 4 / 6 / 8 / 12 / 24 hours: we don't backup the versions modified during this interval
        - ➢ If you save a document at 8:00 AM, 8:45 AM, 10:05 AM, 10:20 AM, 1:50 PM, 2:35PM, 4:34 PM,6:00PM
          - ⇨ With 2h delay, we back up 8:00 AM, 10:05 AM, 1:50 PM and 4:34 PM versions
          - ⇨ With 4h delay, we back up 8:00AM, 1:50 PM and 6:00 PM version
          - ⇨ With 6h delay, we back up 8:00AM and 2:35 PM versions
          - ⇨ With 8h delay, we back up 8:00AM and 4:34 PM versions
          - ⇨ With 12h delay and more, we backup only 8:00 AM version

   b. You can also change the number of versions of each file protected you want to keep. By default, we keep the 16 latest versions of each file but you can choose between 1, 3, 7, 16, 28 and 32 versions to keep.

   c. When satisfied with your settings, click on the "Apply" button b and you will be notified that the Continuous Data Protection is now enabled:



   d. Then on the "X" c in the upper left corner

6. Click on the "Continue" button 6 to complete the setup

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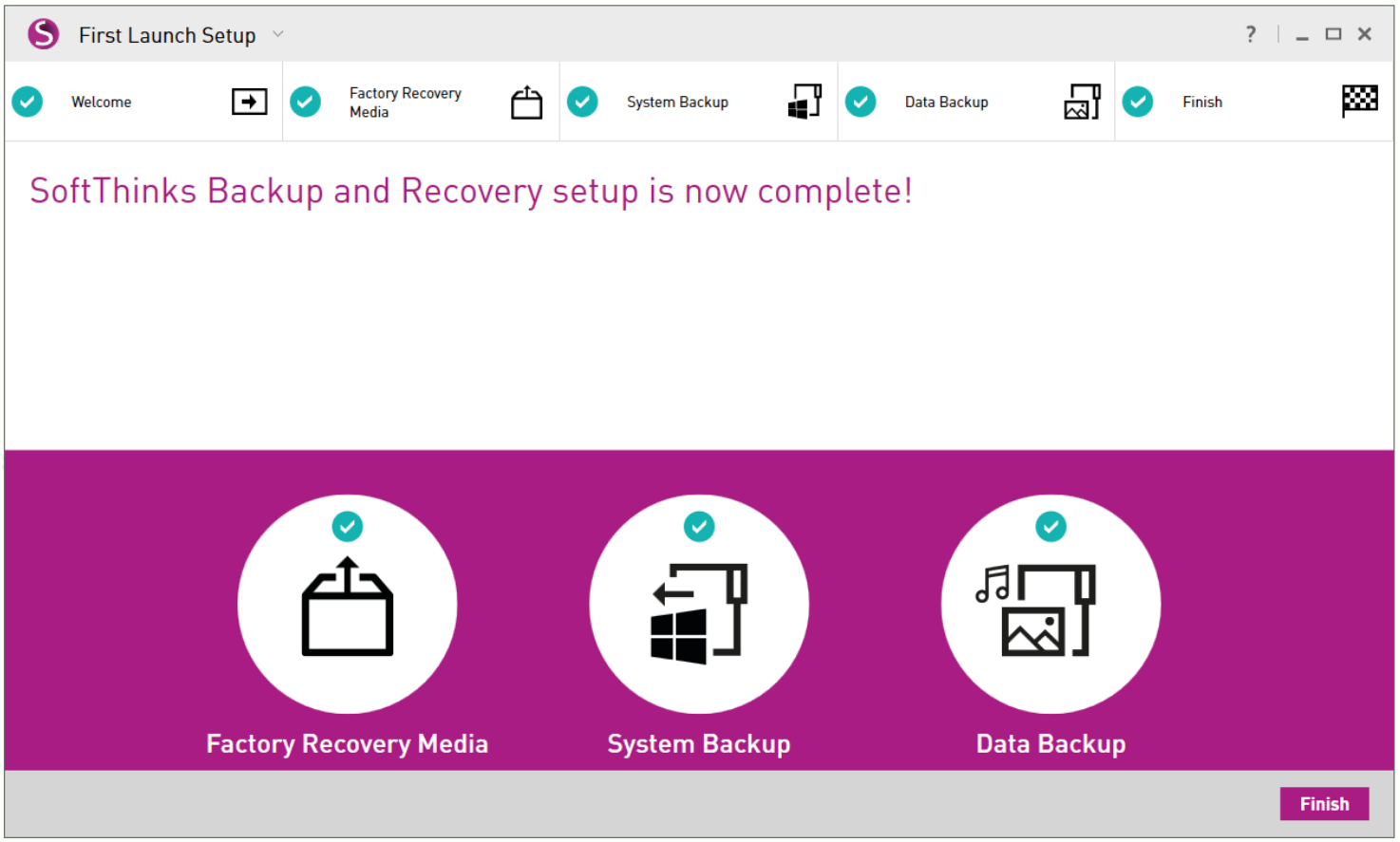
Once the latest step completed, your system and your data are now protected and you have your recovery media ready in the case you would need to recover your system:



When you click on the “Finish” button you will arrive on the main User Interface described in the next chapter.

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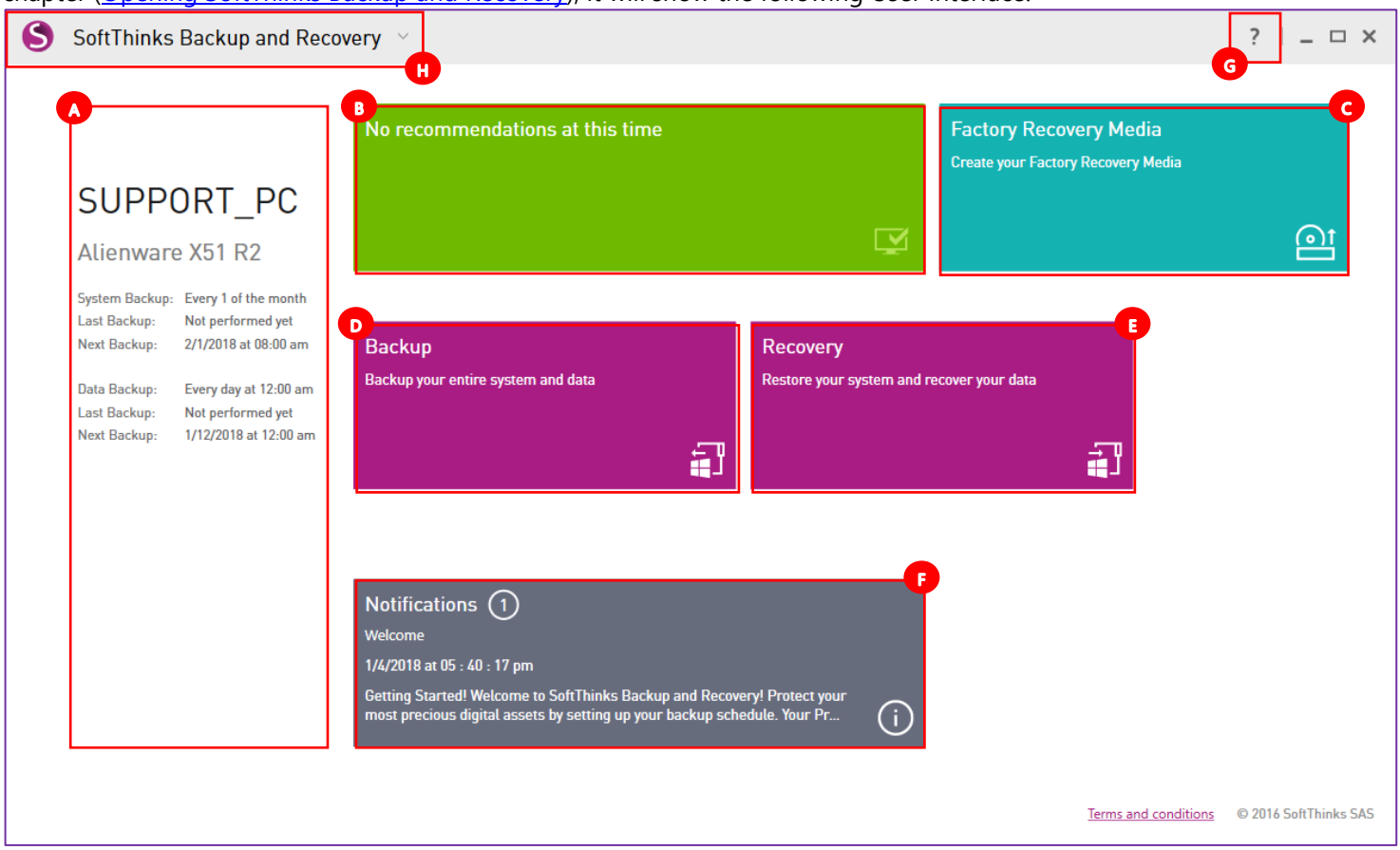
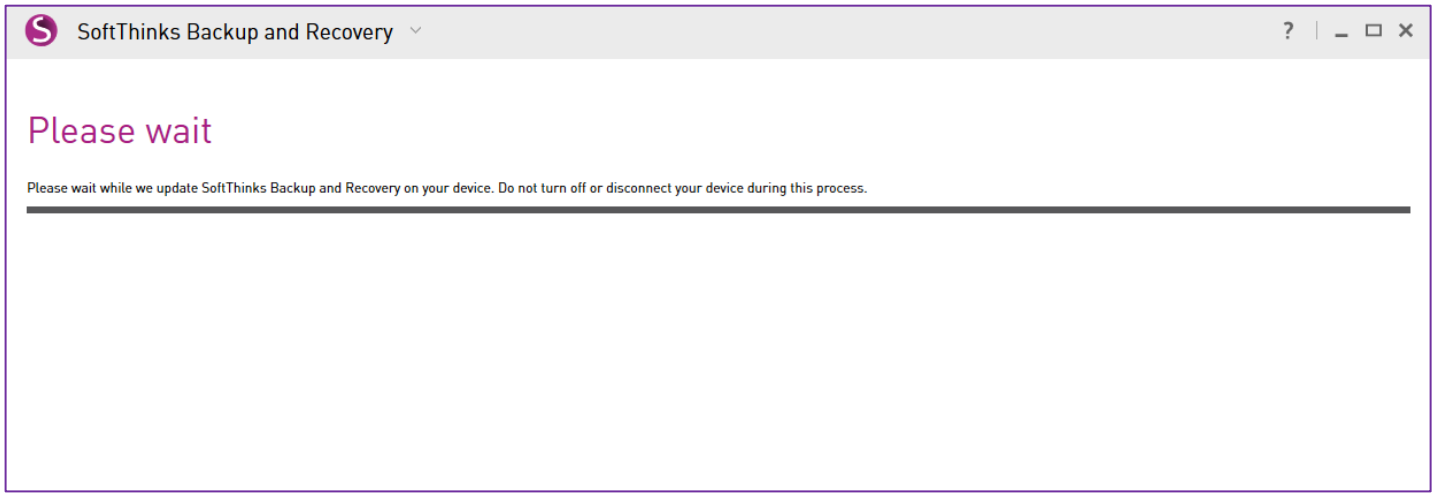
Using SoftThinks Backup and Recovery

If you have completed the First Launch Setup, when you open SoftThinks Backup and Recovery, as described in previous chapter (Opening SoftThinks Backup and Recovery), it will show the following User Interface:



This User Interface allows you to change the system and data backup policies and settings you configured in the First Launch Setup wizard, manually back up your system and/or data, manage those backups, and consult the history of the operations made (typically Data Backups and System Backups creation).

Sometimes you might see an intermediate screen as below. Please wait until the process is completed and you will arrive in the main screen as above:



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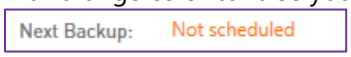
A Information

The left side area contains useful information about your system and its protection status:

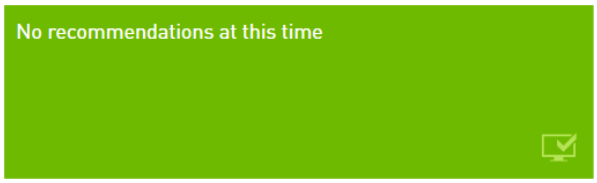
- PC Name
- Model Name
- System Backup policy, last creation date and next creation date
- Data Backup policy, last creation date and next creation date

Note: If you didn't schedule yet a System Backup or a Data Backup, the Next Backup date indicates "Not scheduled" with orange color to raise your attention and if you click it you will arrive directly to the screen to schedule it:

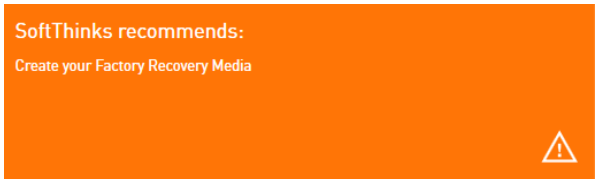


B Recommendations

By default, if you completed all the steps of the First Launch Setup wizard, the recommendations area will not contain any recommendation and will appear in green:



If there is an action that could protect your system and data more efficiently, it will be indicated in this area colored in orange to raise your attention and if you click on the tile the software will bring you directly to the screen where you will be able to make this action. In the example below, you didn't yet create your Factory Recovery Media and clicking on this tile will open the Factory Recovery Media creation screen described right after:



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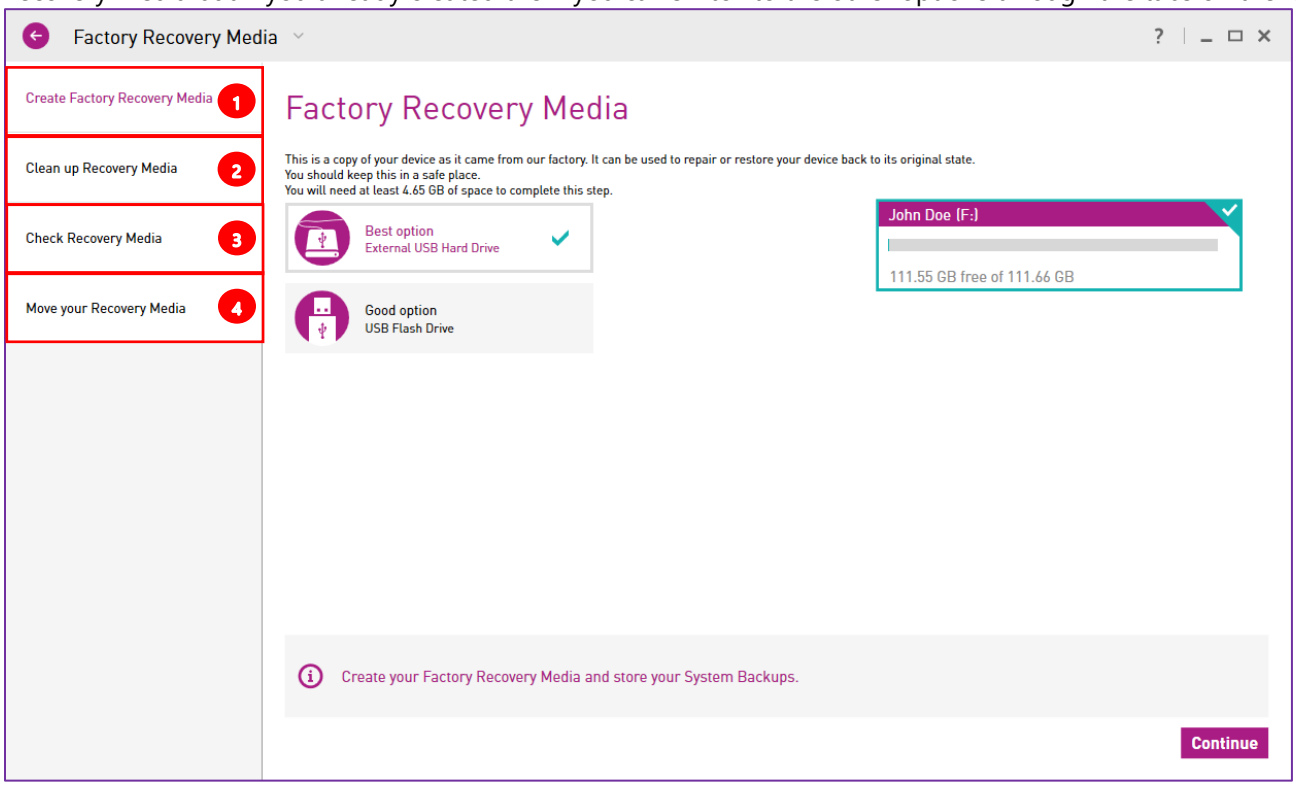
C Factory Recovery Media

Click on this tile to create or manage your Recovery Media. By default, it will display the screen to create your Factory Recovery Media but if you already created them you can switch to the other options through the tabs on the left side:



1 Create Factory Recovery Media

Create your Factory Recovery Media if not already done.
Please read the chapter Creating your Factory Recovery Media.

2 Clean up Recovery Media

If you used a USB Hard Drive to create your Recovery Media, this option allows you to delete a device from it. This operation cannot be un-done, so be careful when selecting this option.
Please refer to Cleaning up your USB Hard Drive Recovery Media chapter to get more details.

3 Check Recovery Media

You can check your Factory Recovery Media to ensure all the needed files are still on the disk. We will automatically add the needed files if we detect a problem and the files are available to us.
Please refer to Checking your USB Hard Drive Recovery Media chapter to get more details.

4 Move your Recovery Media

This action will move all of your Recovery Media files from one USB hard drive to another one. The new drive will only show as an available target if there is enough space on it. You will need to connect both USB drives to perform this action. If you have multiple devices stored on your Recovery Media, all devices will be moved to the new drive and the original USB hard drive will be cleaned up.
Please refer to Moving your USB Hard Drive Recovery Media contents to a new USB Hard Drive chapter to get more details.

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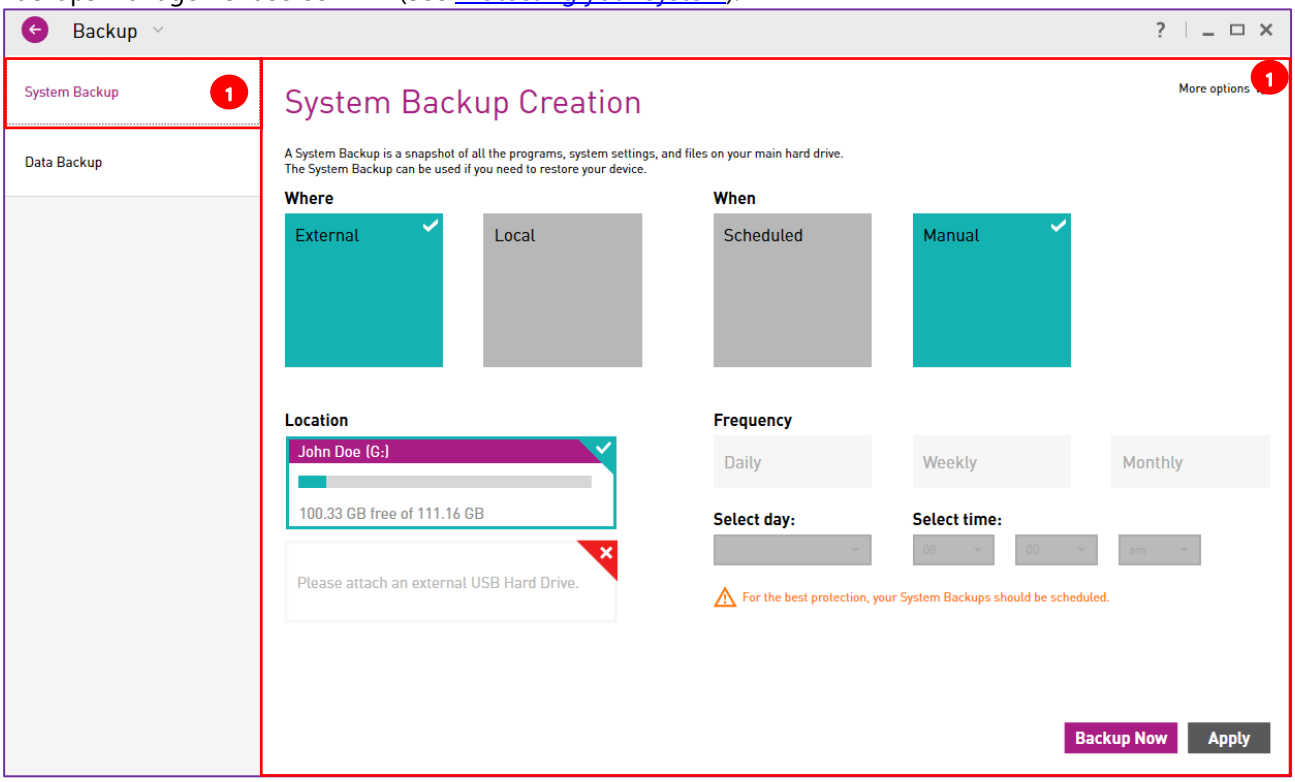
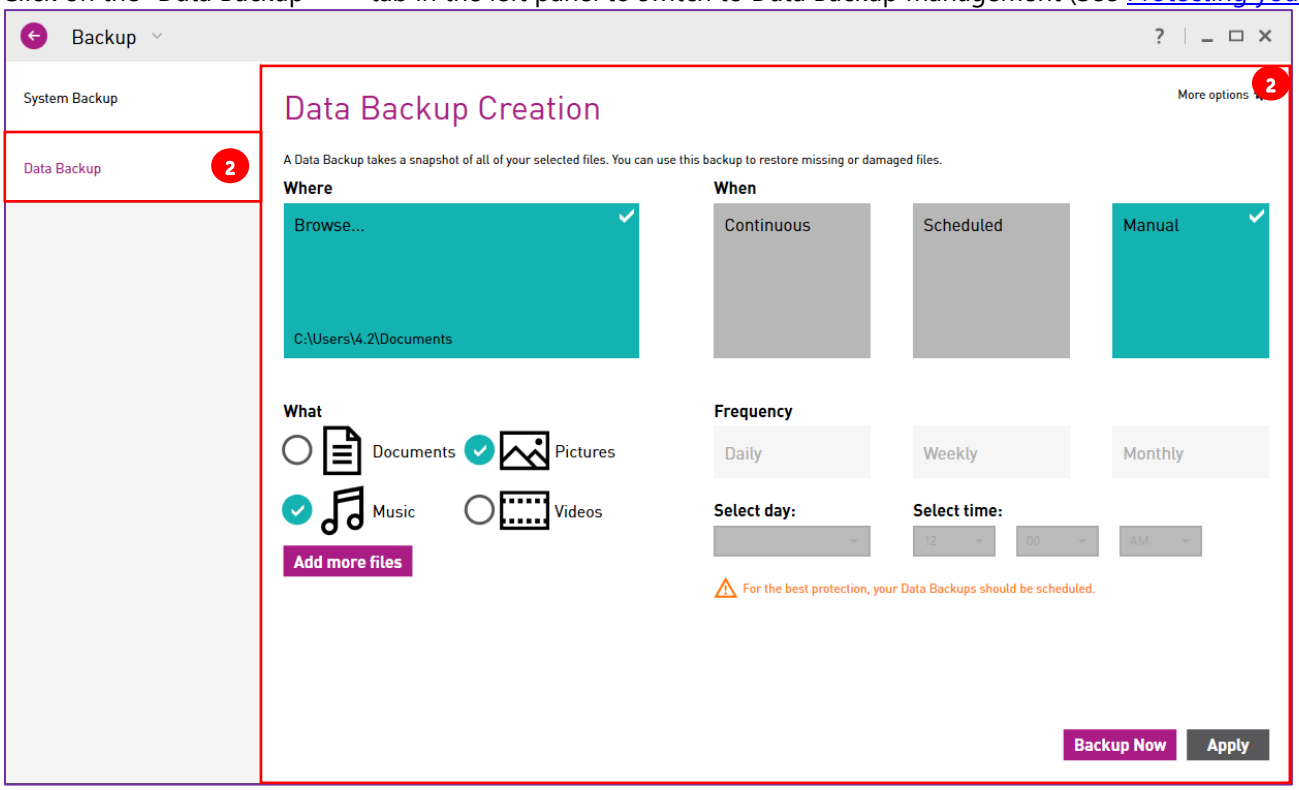
D Backup

Click on this tile to manage your System Backups and / or your Data Backups. By default, you will arrive to the System Backups management screen 1 (See Protecting your system):



Click on the "Data Backup" 2 tab in the left panel to switch to Data Backup management (See Protecting your Data):



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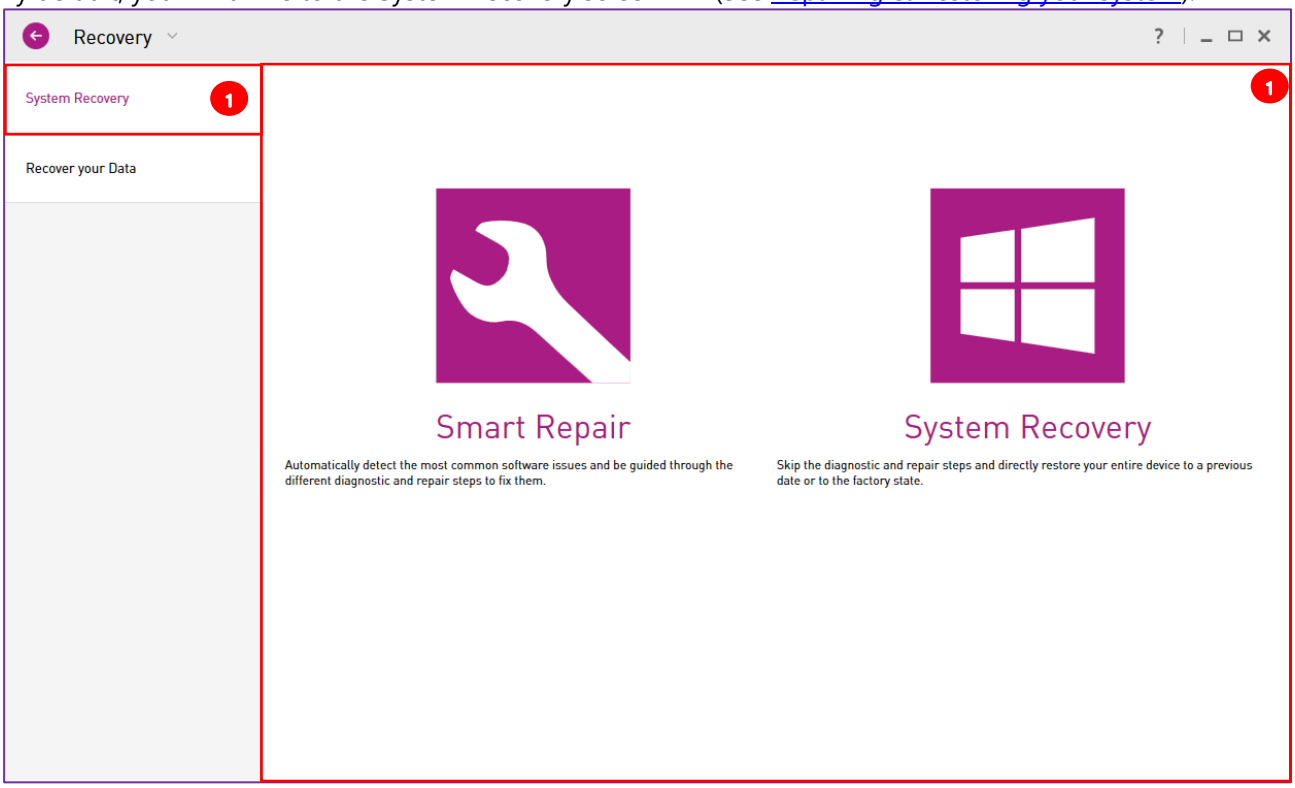
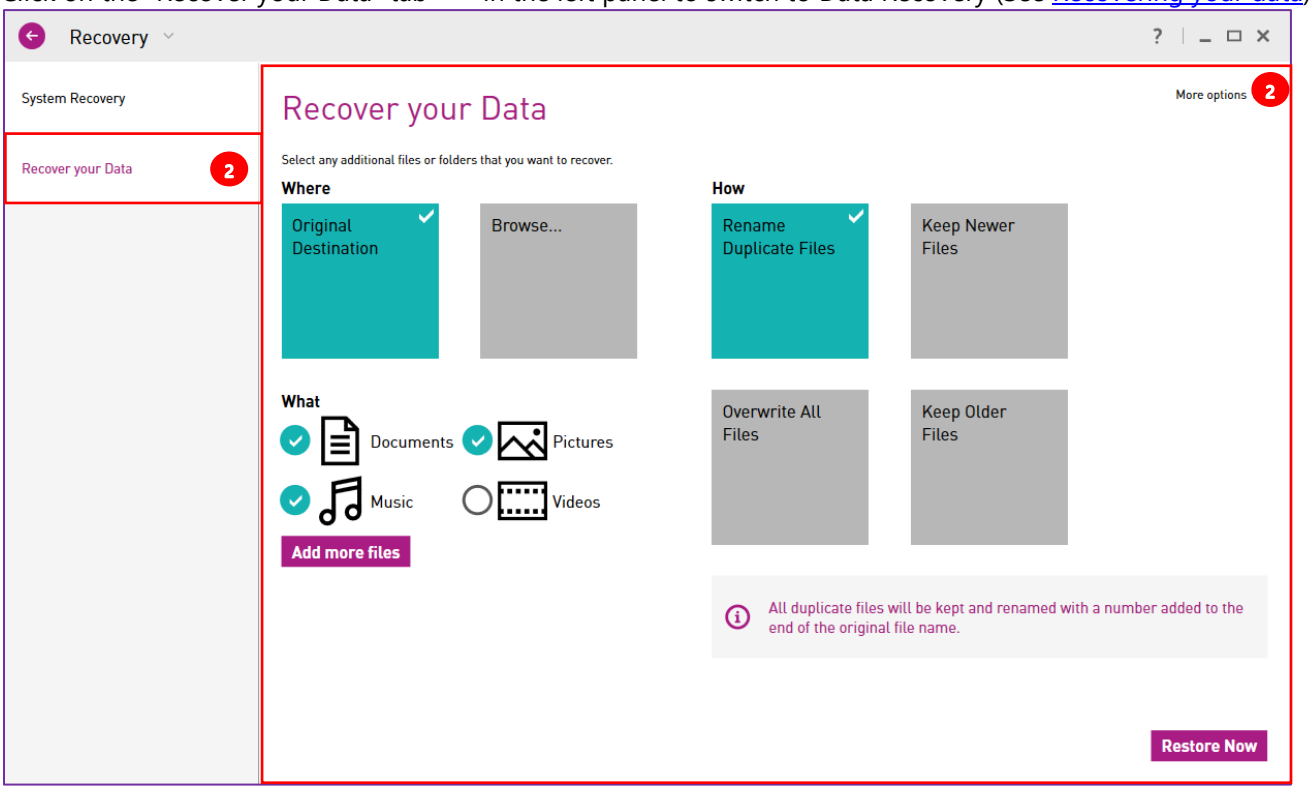
E Recovery

Click on this tile to recovery your system and / or your data.

By default, you will arrive to the System Recovery screen 1 (See Repairing & Restoring your system):



Click on the "Recover your Data" tab 2 in the left panel to switch to Data Recovery (See Recovering your data):



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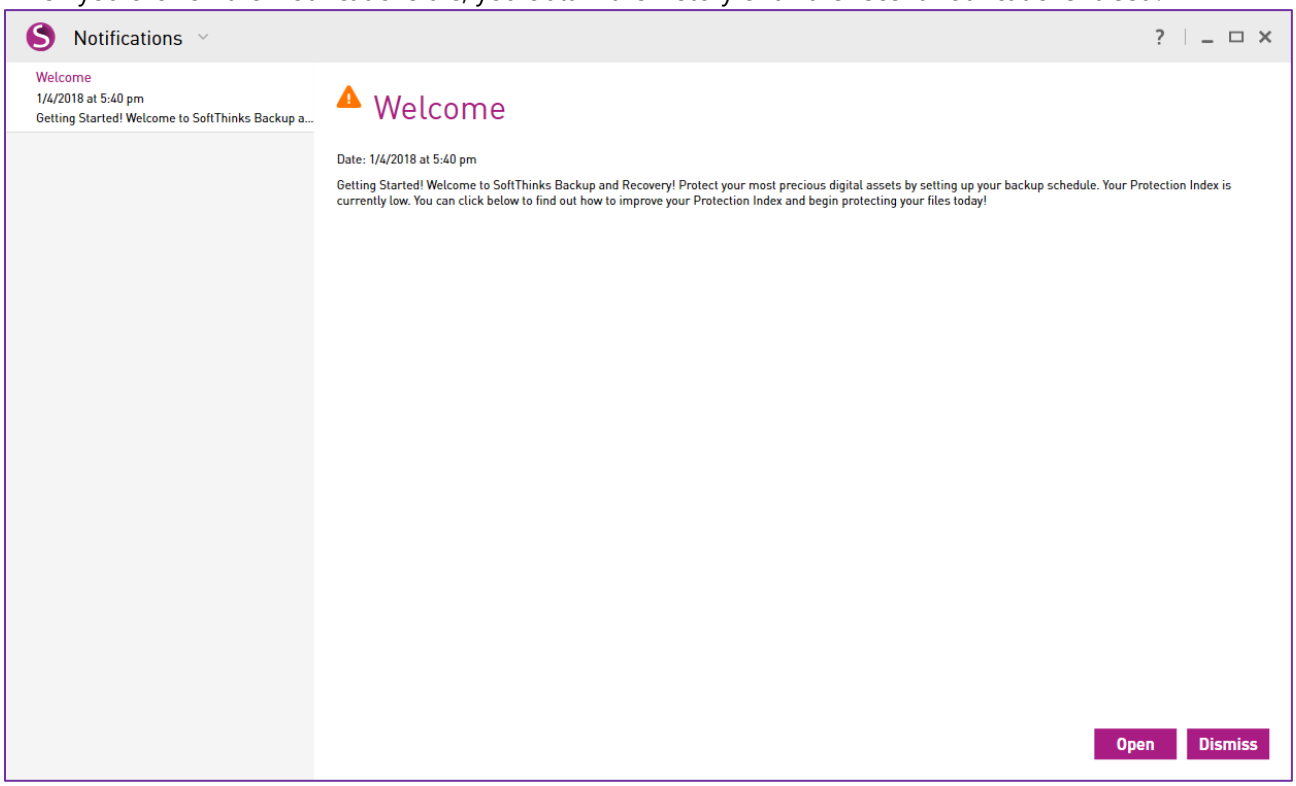
Notifications

The Notifications tile allows you to view all the notifications that have been raised and directly take the actions required. The Notifications tile shows an exclamation mark when there is a new notification.

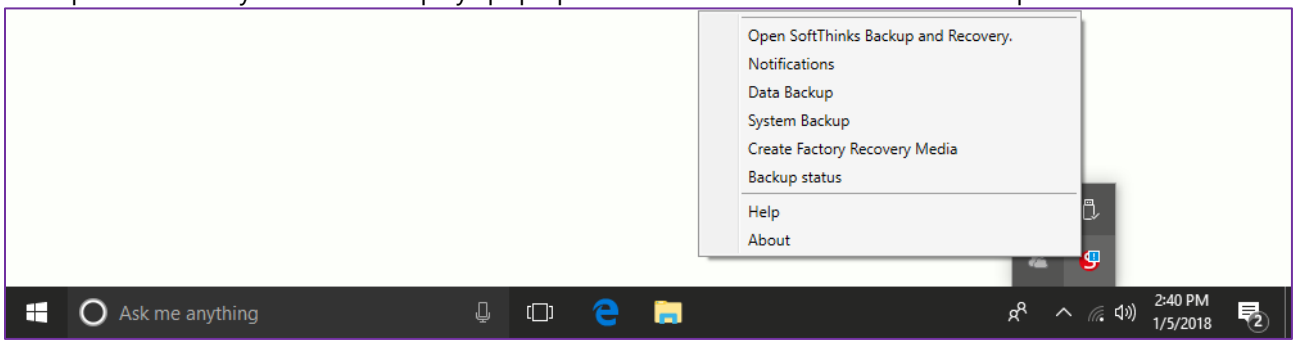
When you click on the Notifications tile, you obtain the history of all the recent notifications raised:



You can sort them by date (newest first or older first) and by priority. The priority is indicated by an icon in front of each notification and the date is displayed right before the notification description.

For each notification you have a button to proceed with the recommended action or dismiss this notification. You can dismiss any notification by clicking on the black cross at the right of this notification. After 90 days a notification is automatically removed.

There is a notification icon in the Windows Notification Area from which you can access many features of SoftThinks Backup and Recovery and which displays pop up notifications from time to time for important tasks or reminders



SoftThinks recommends that you do those tasks, but you can dismiss or postpone those tasks as well.

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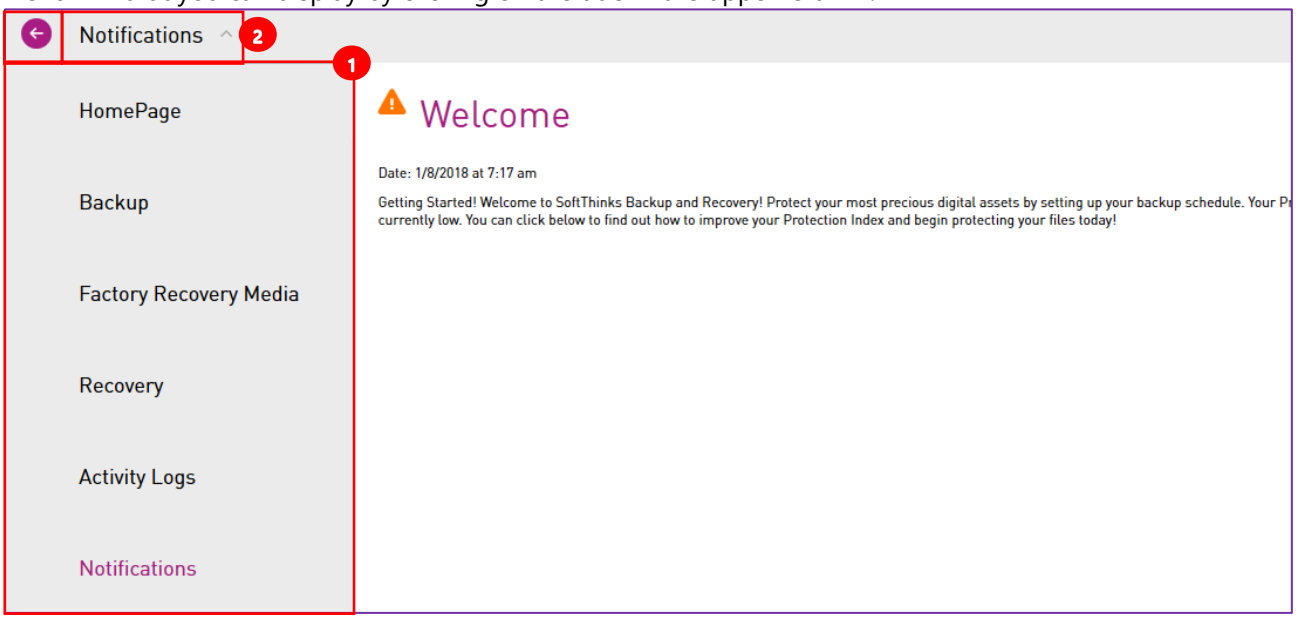
G Navigation

Wherever you are in the interface, you can go to the homepage or directly access any feature through the dropdown menu 1 that you can display by clicking on the title in the upper left 2:



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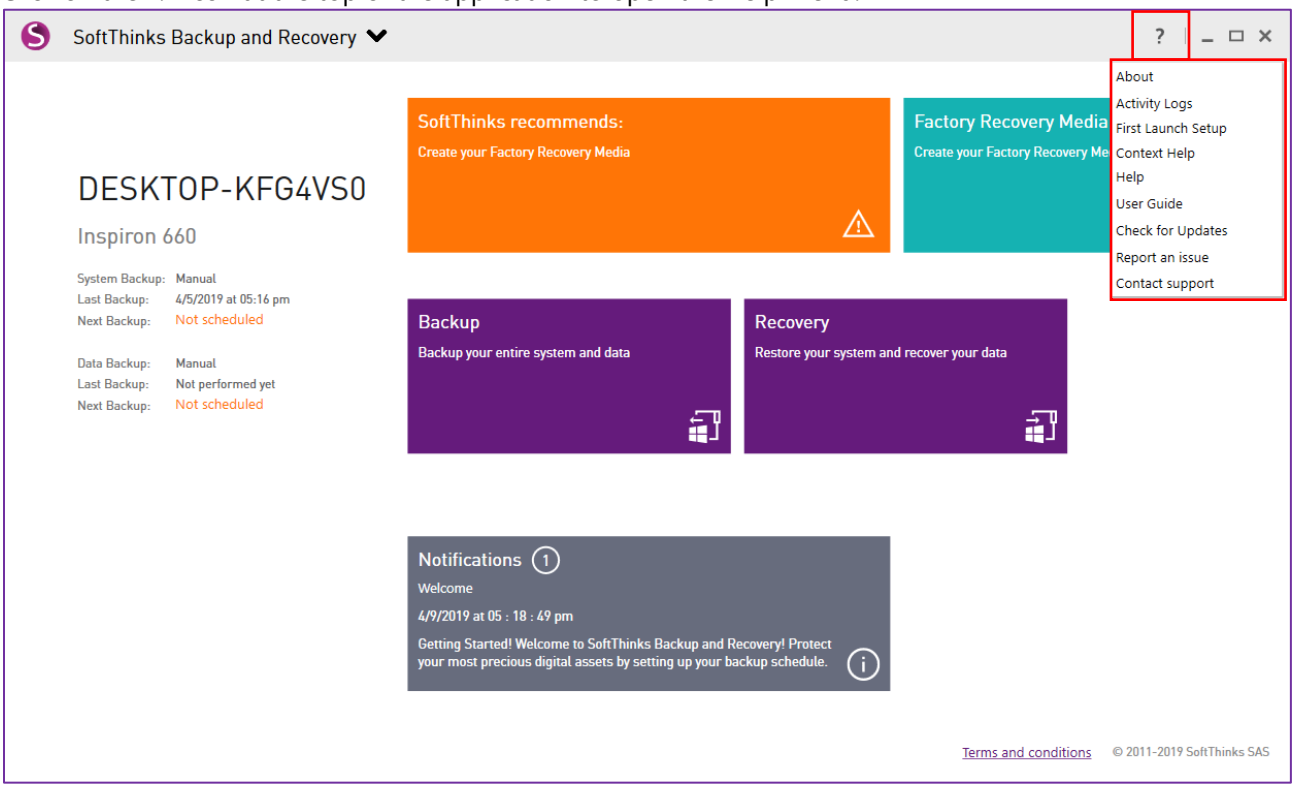
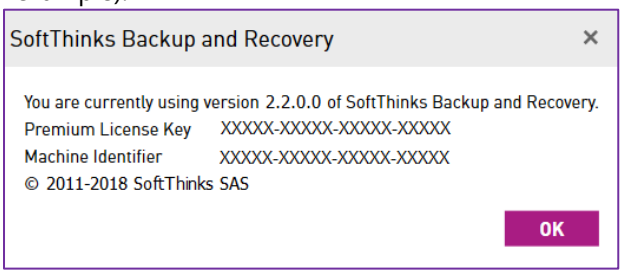
Help menu

Click on the "?" icon at the top of the application to open the Help Menu:



About

Displays the About box with the version of your product, the Premium License Key you should note and keep in a safe place, and the Machine Identifier you will be asked for if you need to reactivate your product (if you change our motherboard or hard disk for example):



Activity Logs

Checks your activity logs for actions that have been completed or that were missed in SoftThinks Backup and Recovery. Please refer to Checking the activity of your product.

First Launch Setup

Opens the First Launch Setup. Please refer to Configuring SoftThinks Backup and Recovery.

Context Help

Displays the help relative to the current screen in a floating dialog box.

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Help
Opens the online help through your default internet browser.

User Guide
Opens the User Guide. If you don't have any software which can open PDF files please search for on Internet.

Check for updates
Checks if an update is available for your product. In order to keep the best protection possible and ensure the compatibility with newer versions of Windows we recommend you to check regularly for updates.

Report an issue
Allows you to report an issue to our support (See Reporting an issue).

Contact Support
Allows you to send a question / request to our support (See Contacting support).

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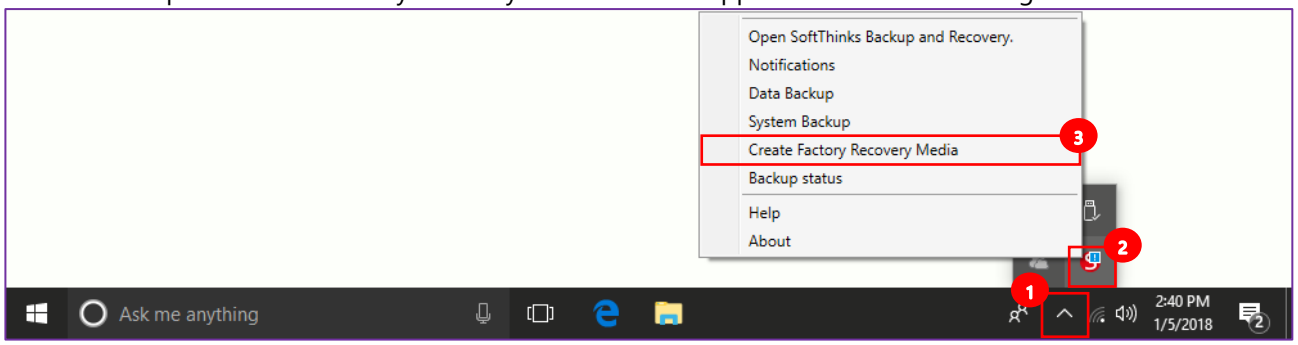
Creating and managing your Factory Recovery Media

Softthinks Backup and Recovery provides you with the tools to create a bootable backup containing a complete copy of all software originally installed on your device. This so-called "Factory Image" which is unique to your device, creates a vital restore point for data recovery.

By creating these Recovery Discs, you are making a backup of all the software that was installed on your device at the factory. This allows you to reinstall all applications, drivers and the Windows operating system that came with your device. While there is a similar copy of the software in the recovery partition, creating recovery discs provides additional protection for the factory-installed software.

In order to create and manage your Recovery Media, please either open SoftThinks Backup and Recovery or access directly to this feature through the system tray icon:

- From the toaster in the taskbar notification area:
    1. Click on the up arrow (1) in the system tray area to see the application that are running:



    2. Right click on the icon (2)
    3. Click on “Create Factory Recovery Media” in the pop-up menu

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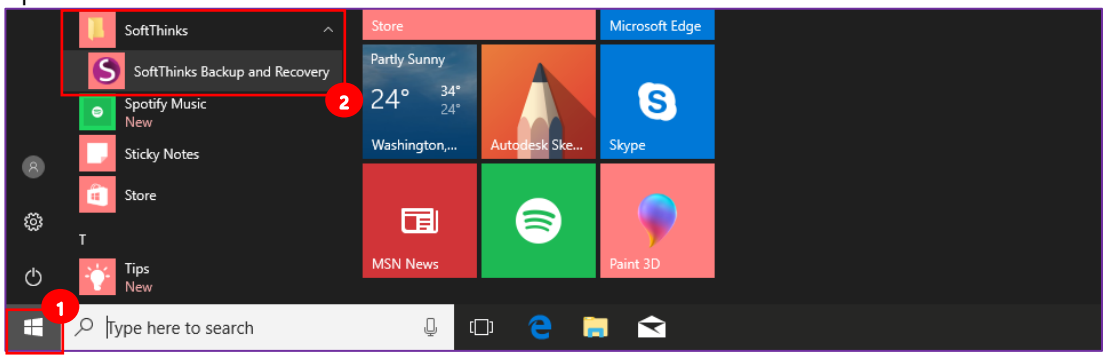
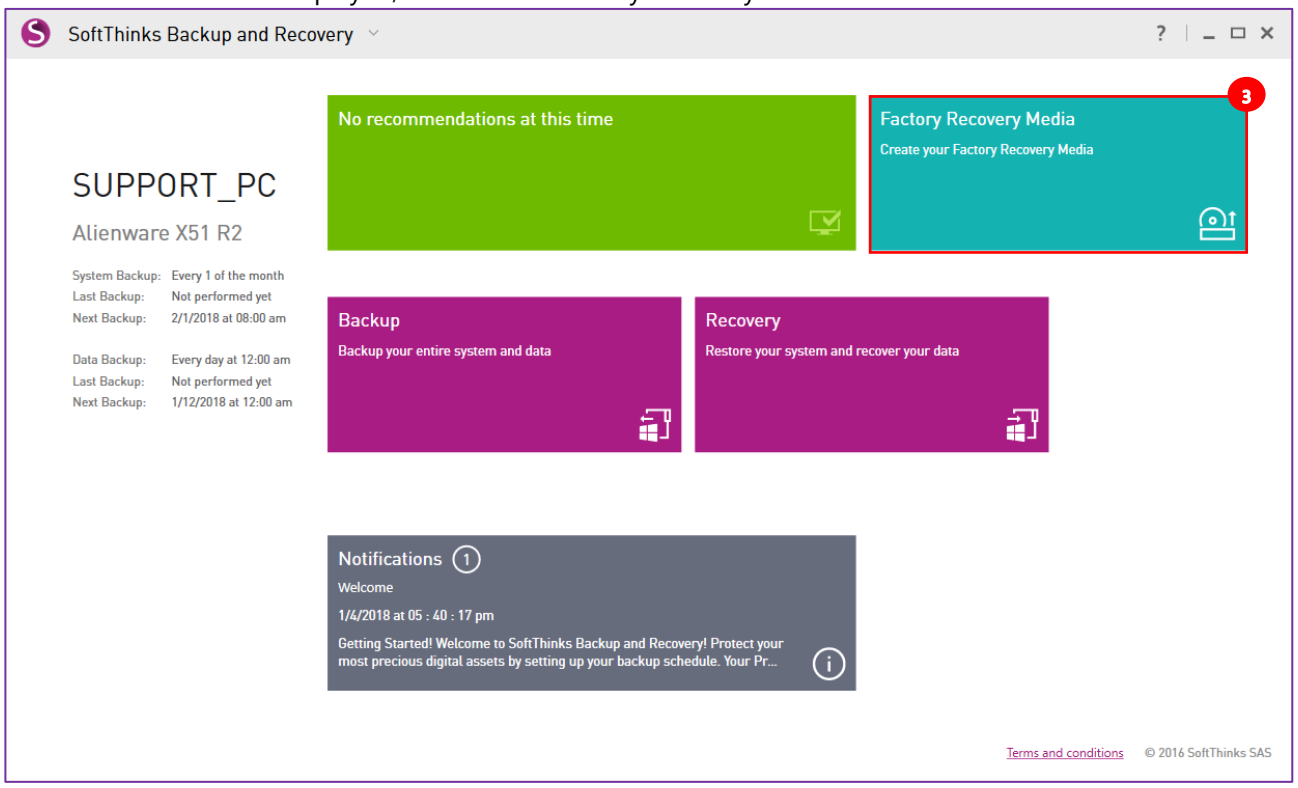
- From the Start Menu:

1. Click on the Windows icon in the taskbar (1), or press the Windows logo key on your keyboard, to open the Start Menu:



2. Scroll to the "SoftThinks" folder (2) and expand it to click on "SoftThinks Backup and Recovery"

3. Once the below screen displayed, click on the "Factory Recovery Media" tile:



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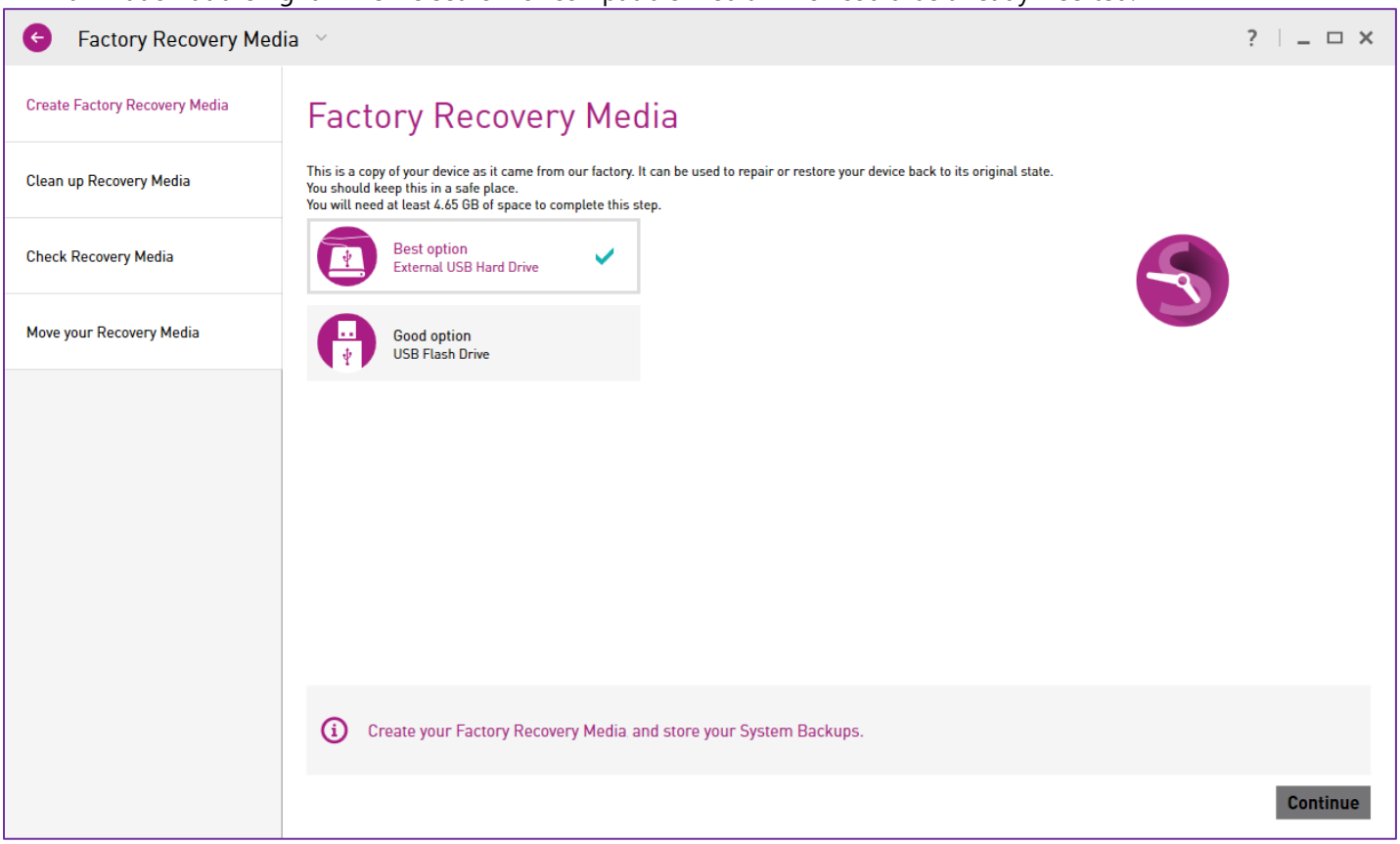
Creating your Factory Recovery Media

1. By default, you arrive to the screen which allows you to create your Factory Recovery Media. It will display an animation at the right while we search for compatible media which could be already inserted:



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2. Select if you can create your Factory Recovery Media on an external USB Hard Drive or an USB Flash Drive:

- **Best option – External USB hard drive – Recommended**

The "Best option" is a way for you to have all of your recovery media in one place.

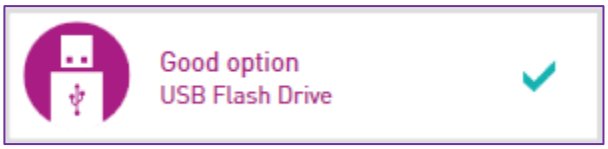
This USB hard drive will be created with all of the files that would be needed to recover your device.

This drive can also hold your System Backups.

You can add up to 10 devices that have SoftThinks Backup and Recovery application installed to your Recovery Media. This would allow you to store and manage all of your devices recovery files on one consolidated USB hard drive. The devices must use the same boot process in order to share the same Recovery Media. You can always create an individual Recovery Media for each device.

Before using a USB Hard Drive please read How to ensure that my USB Hard Drive can be used as Recovery Media.

- **Good option – USB Flash Drive**



This option allows you to create a Factory Recovery Media that contains your original Factory image. This media can be used to restore your device back to factory if needed.

Note: Some USB Flash Drives which are certified for Windows can behave as an external USB Drive.

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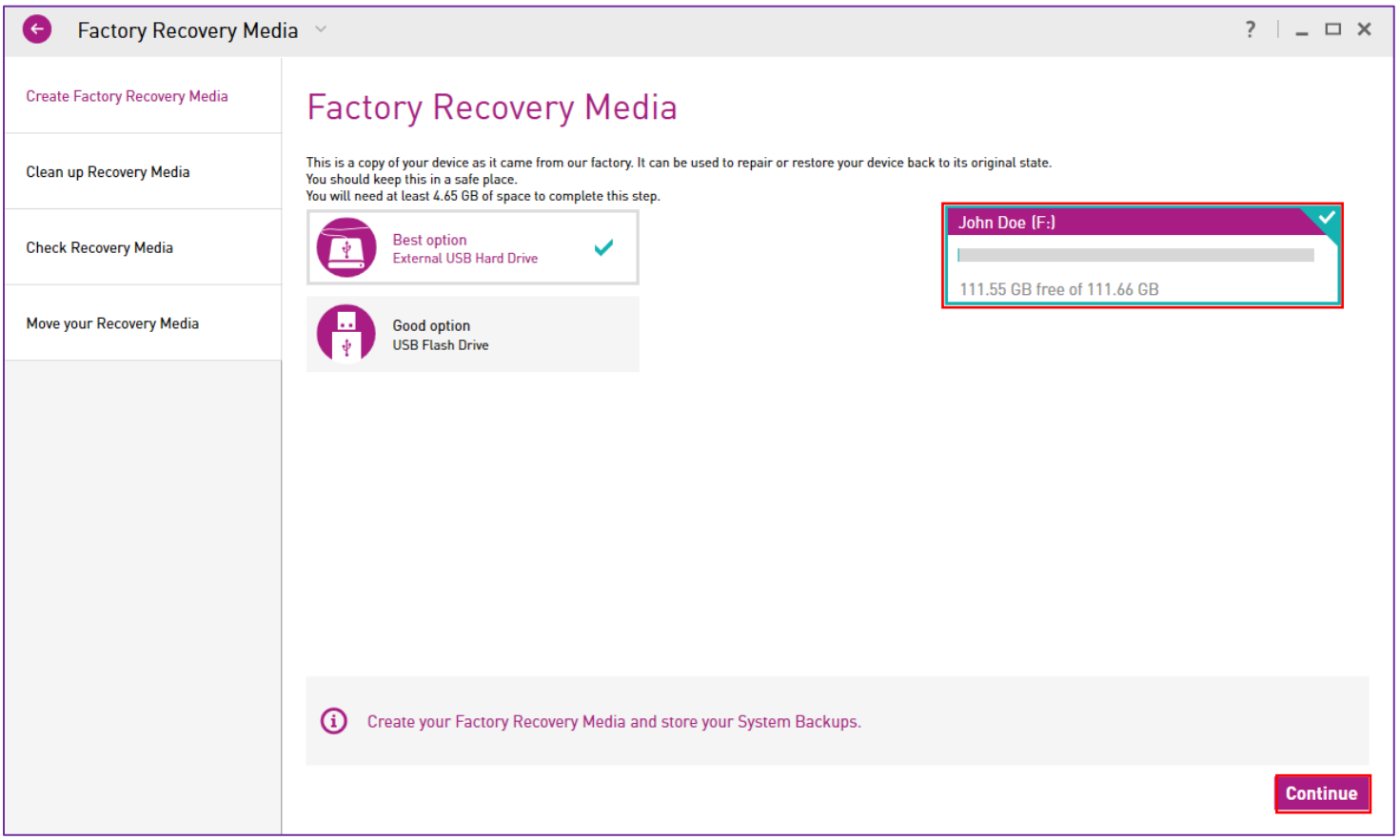
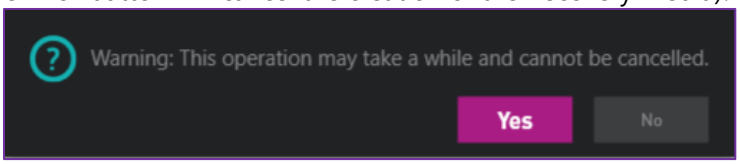
Creating Recovery Media on an USB Hard Drive

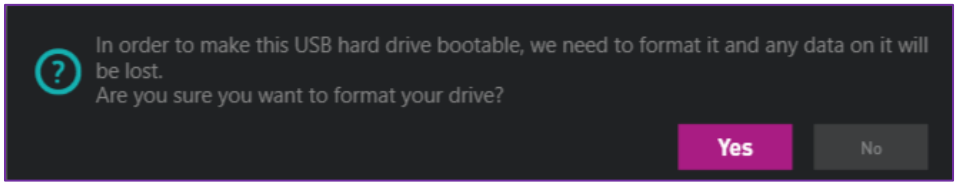
3. Connect a USB Hard drive to the system and click on and highlight the drive which appears before clicking on the "Continue" button:



4. Click on the "Yes" button in the pop-up message box notifying you that the process my take a while and cannot be canceled (Clicking on the "No" button will cancel the creation of the Recovery Media):



Note: By default, your data will be kept but, in some scenario, due to technical limitations, we will have to erase the disk contents. Don't worry you will be notified and will be able to cancel the process (to allow you to back up your data or try another external USB drive):



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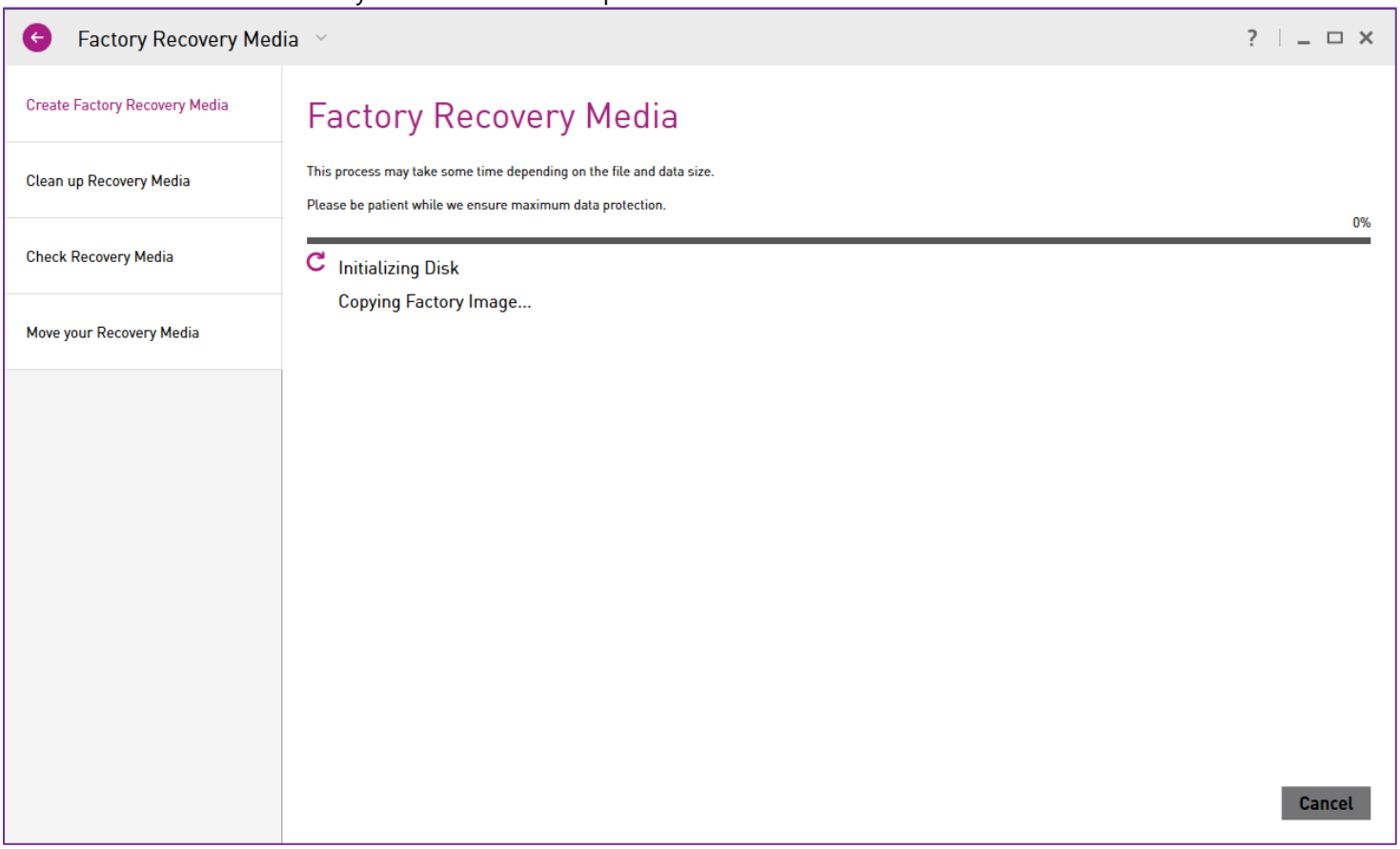
5. Below is the first screen you will see when the process starts to initialize the disk:



Note: If an error occurs during this step, please ensure that your USB Hard Drive is compliant with your system (How to ensure that my USB Hard Drive can be used as Recovery Media). You can retry after having cleaned up your recovery media (See Cleaning up your USB Hard Drive Recovery Media). If the issue still persists please use another USB Hard Drive.

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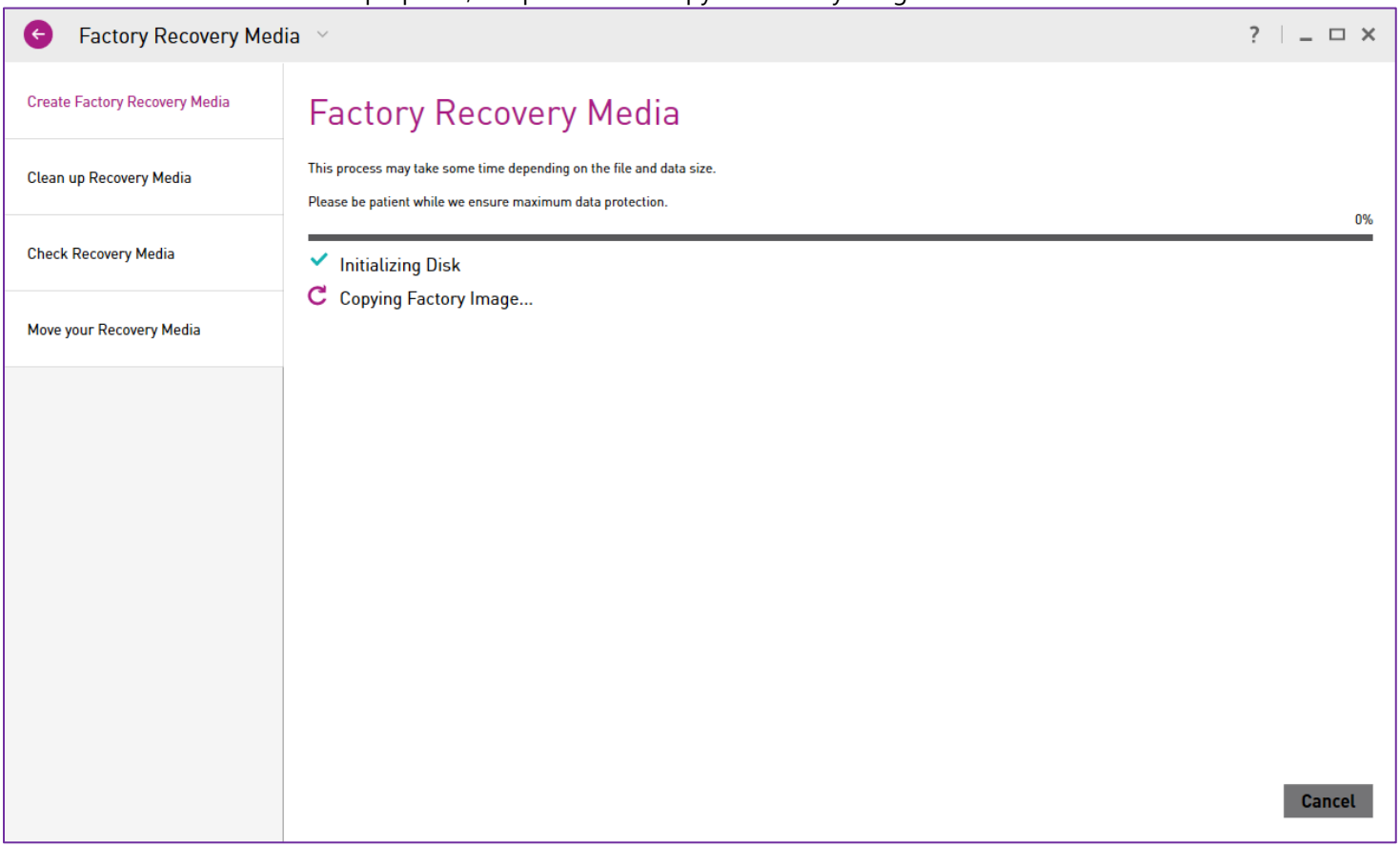
6. Once the drive has been prepared, the process will copy the Factory Image to the USB Hard drive as shown below:



Note: The amount of time this process will take depends on the amount of data contained in your Factory Image.

Note: If an error occurs during this step, we recommend you to restart your system and retry after having cleaned up your recovery media (See Cleaning up your USB Hard Drive Recovery Media). and use another USB Hard Drive. If the issue still persists please use another USB Hard Drive.

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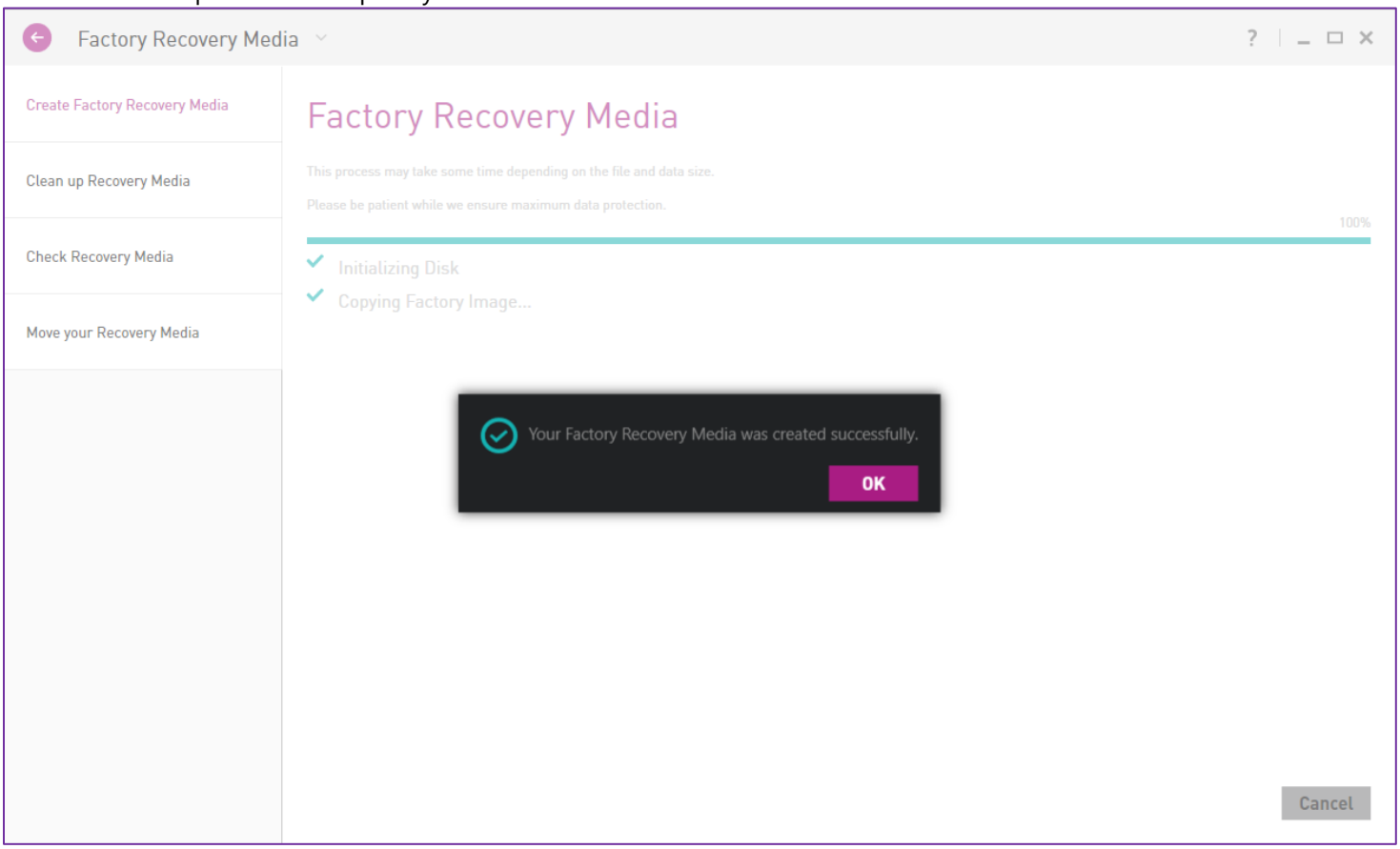
7. Once the process is complete you will see the below screen. Just click ok:



8. Because of potential mismatch and limitations between your USB Hard Drive and your PC regarding the ability to start your PC from your USB Hard Drive, we recommend you to ensure that you will be able to use this Recovery Media to restore your system later (See Restoring your system from your Recovery Media). Don't worry we will not make any modification on your device if you click on "Cancel" or "Quit" button when you arrive in the System Recovery user interface.

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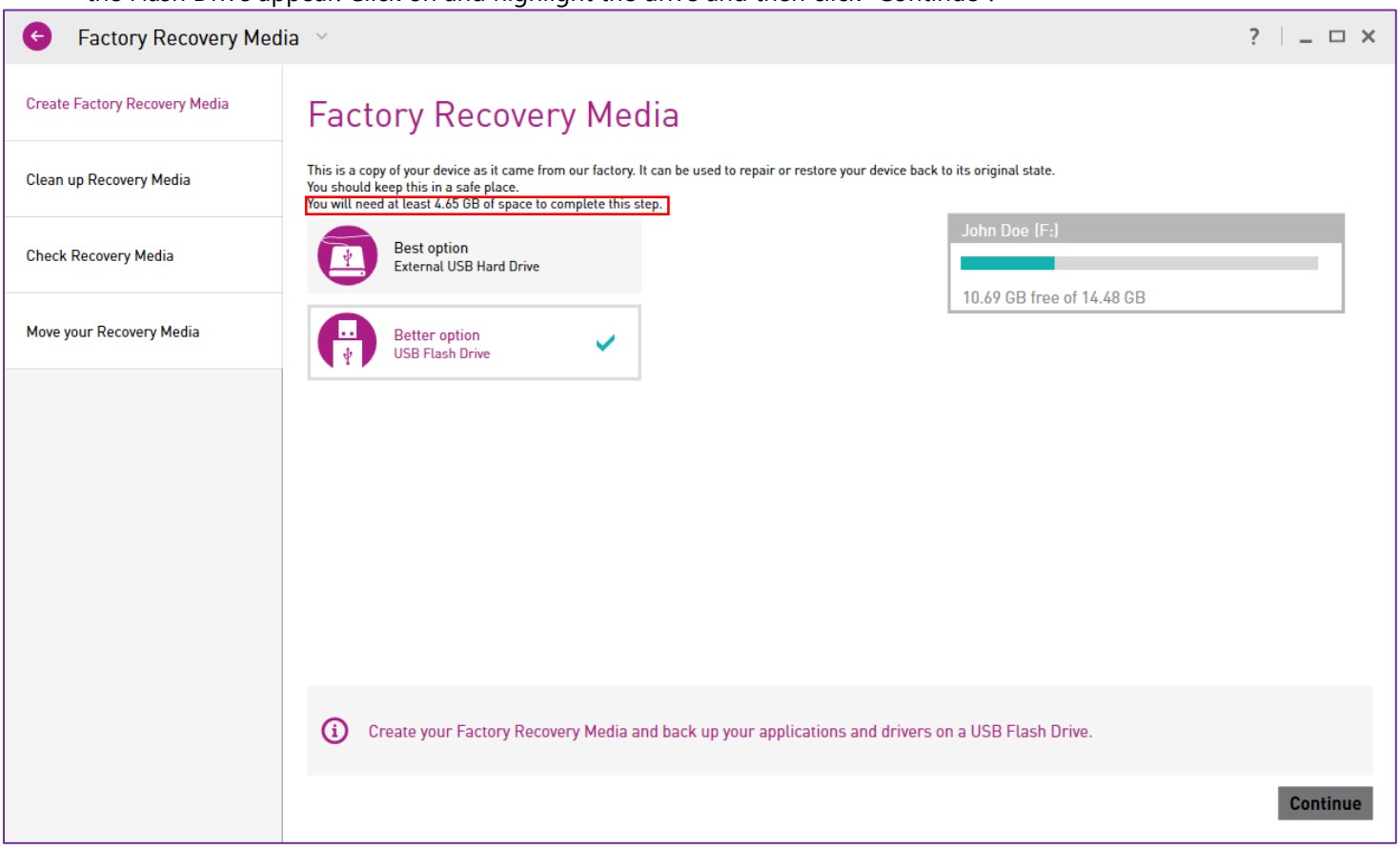
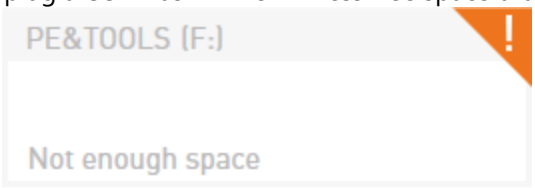
Creating Recovery Media on a USB Flash Drive

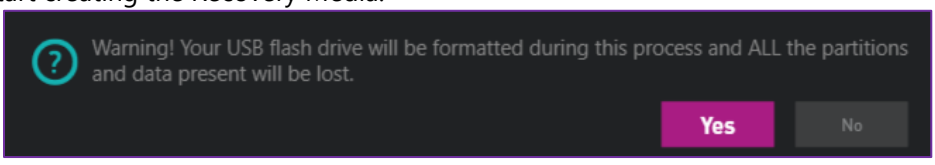
6. Connect the USB Flash Drive with enough free space (5.04 GB in our example below) to the system and you will see the Flash Drive appear. Click on and highlight the drive and then click "Continue":



Note: You will be notified if you plug a USB Flash Drive will less free space than indicated:



7. The drive will be formatted as you see in the below image. Make sure you have your data before continuing. Click "Yes" to start creating the Recovery Media:



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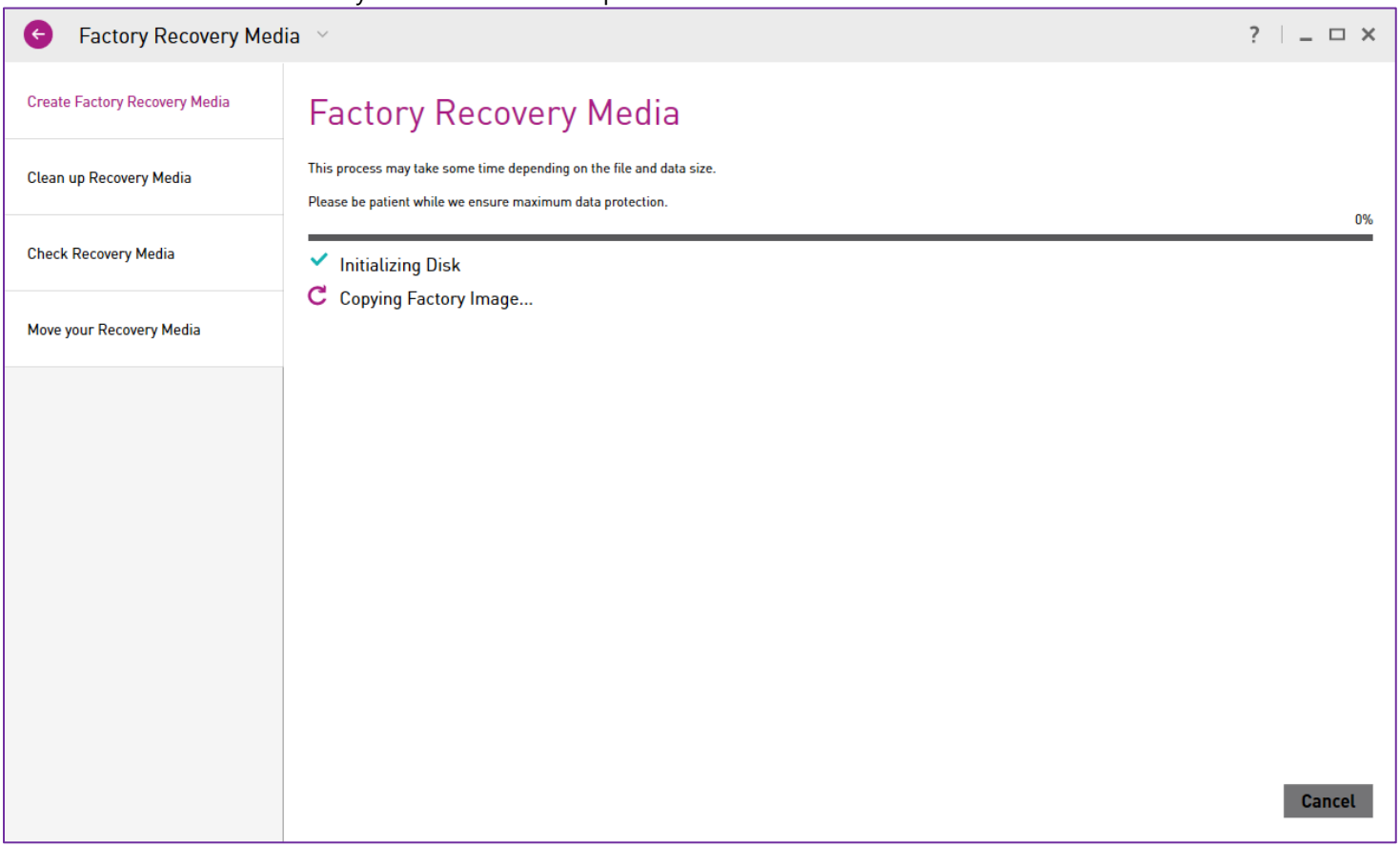
8. Below is the first screen you will see when the process starts to initialize the USB Flash Drive:



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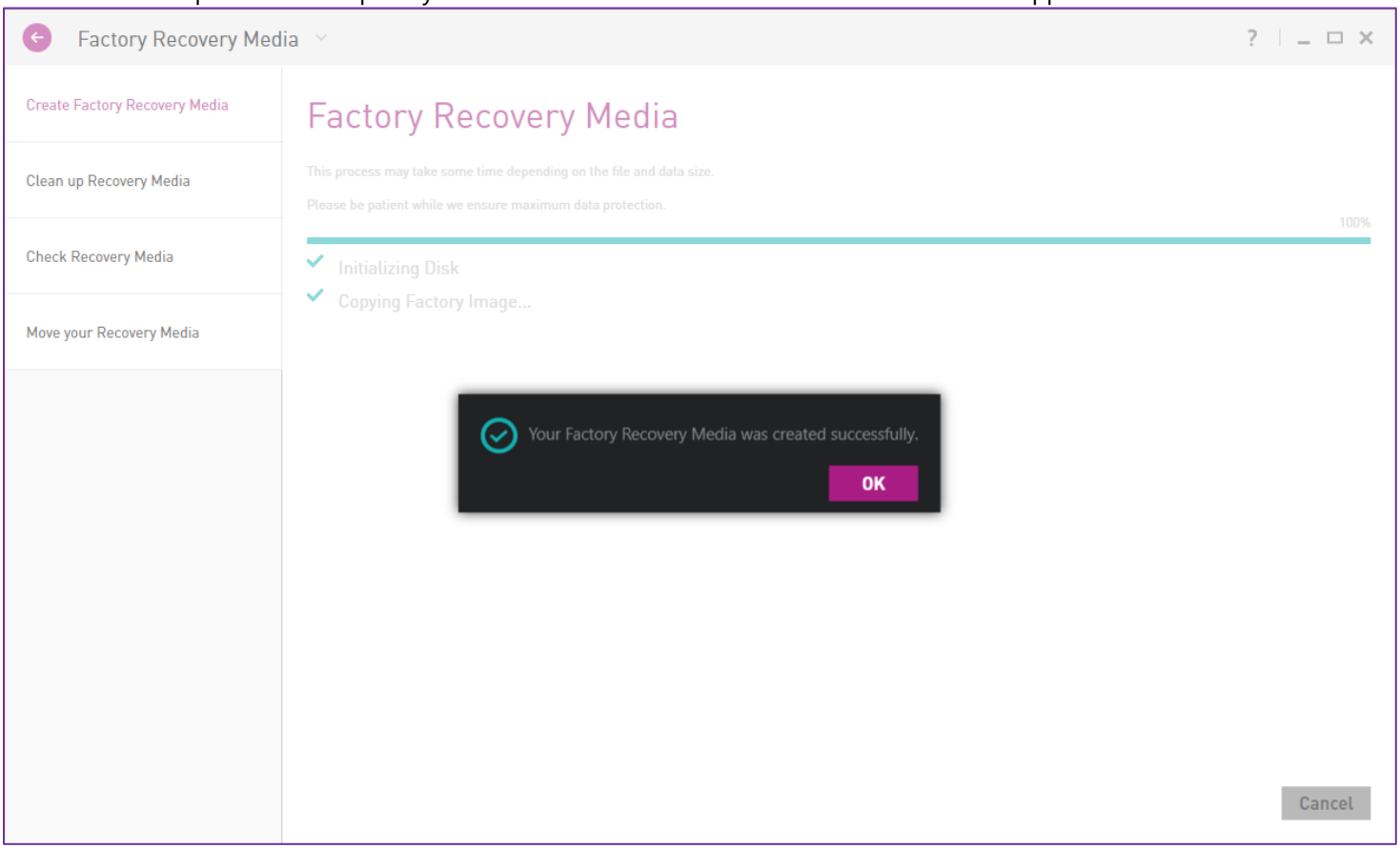
9. Once the process is complete you will see the below screen. Just click “OK” and the application will exit:



10. Because of potential mismatch and limitations between your USB Flash Drive and your PC regarding the ability to start your PC from your USB Flash Drive, we recommend you to ensure that you will be able to use this Recovery Media to restore your system later (See Restoring your system from your Recovery Media). Don’t worry we will not make any modification on your device if you click on “Cancel” or “Quit” button when you arrive in the System Recovery user interface.

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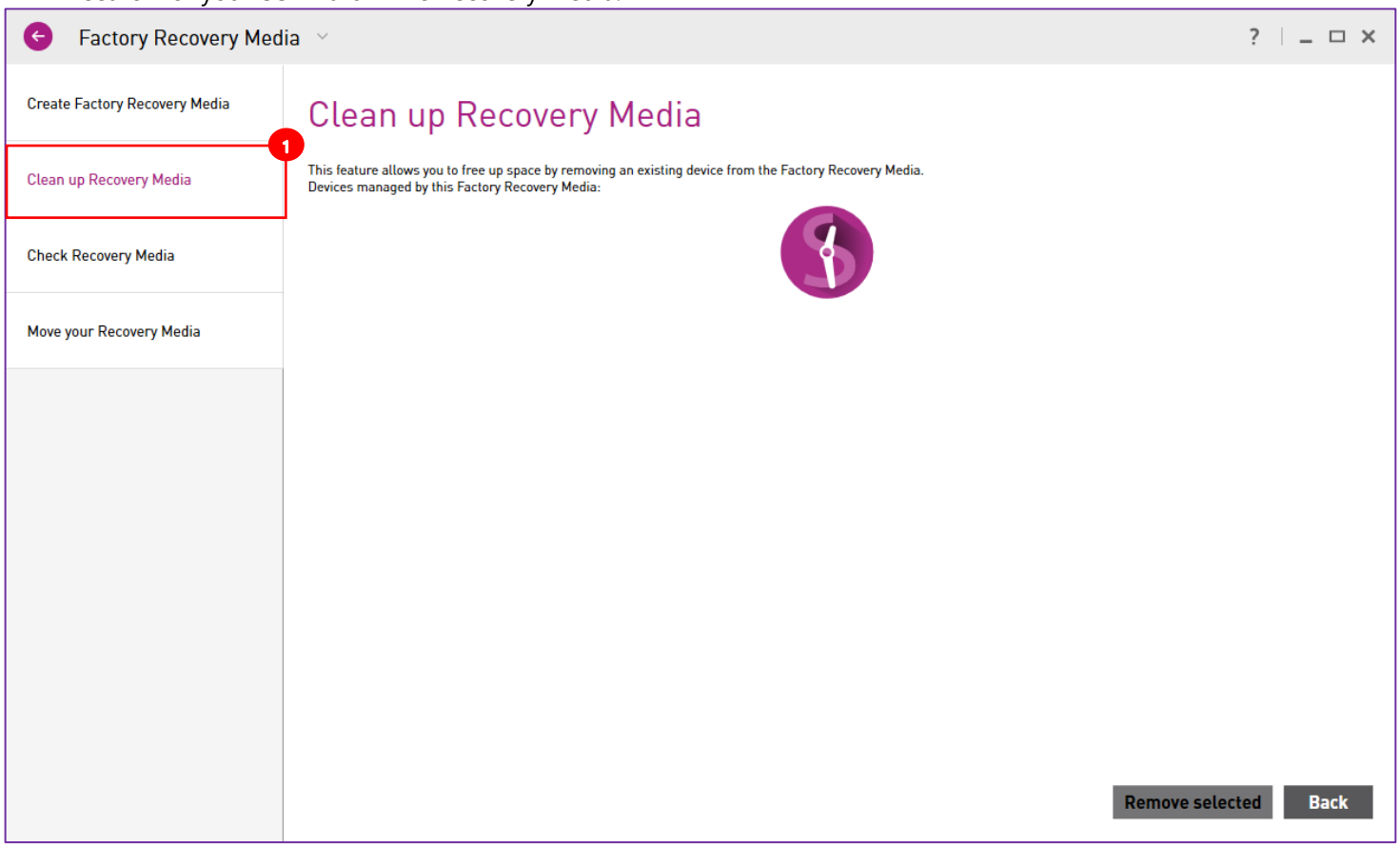
Cleaning up your USB Hard Drive Recovery Media

If you used a USB Hard Drive to create your Recovery Media, this option allows you to delete a device from it. This operation cannot be un-done, so be careful when selecting this option.

1. From the "Factory Recovery Media" screen, click on the "Clean up Recovery Media" tab (1) on the left and we will search for your USB Hard Drive Recovery Media:



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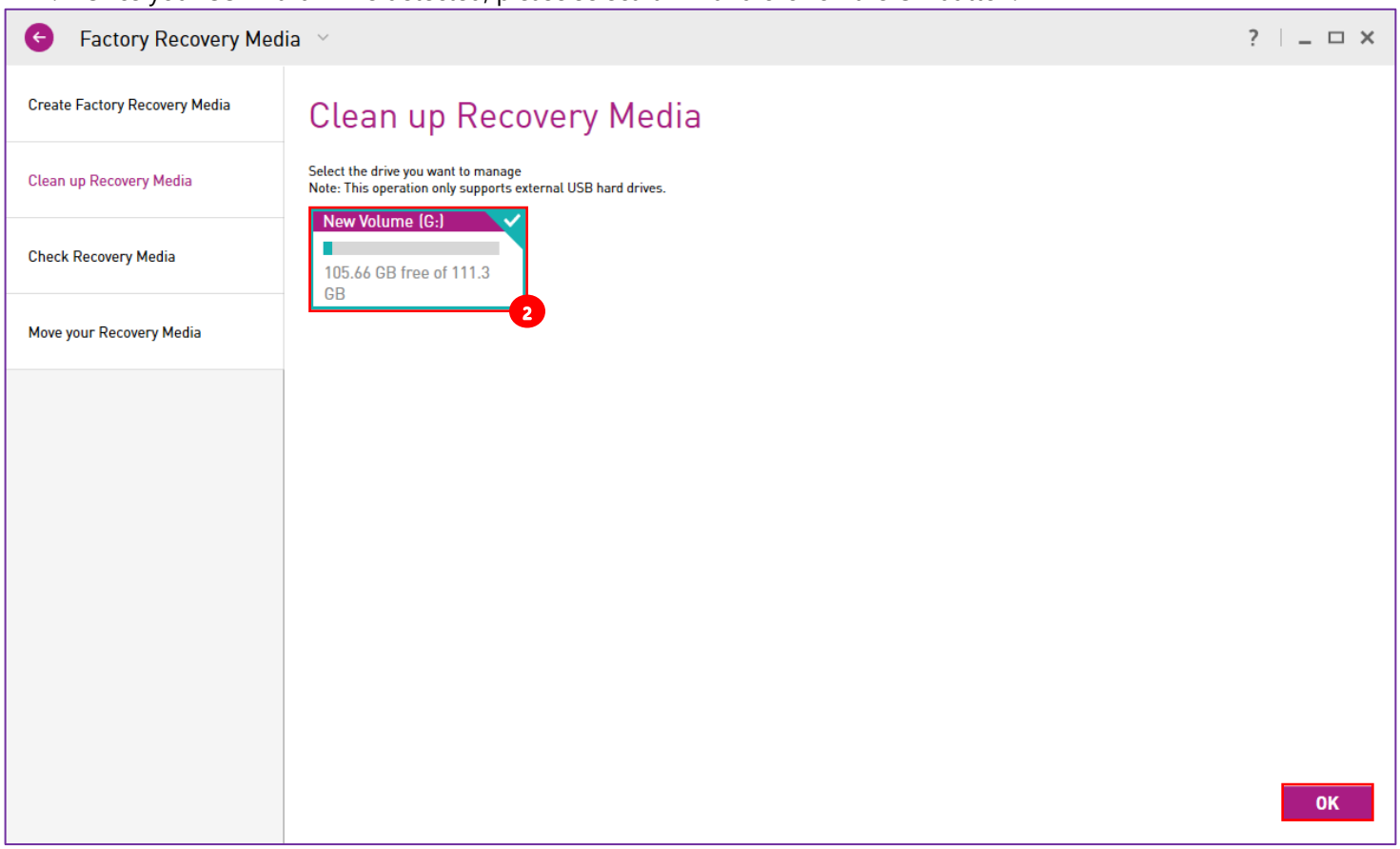
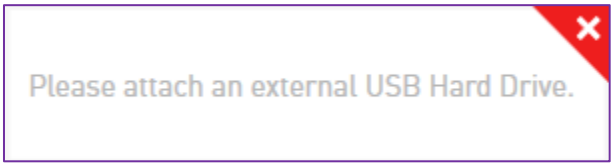
2. Once your USB Hard Drive detected, please select it (2) and click on the OK button:



Note: If you didn't yet plug your USB Hard Drive you will be invited to attach it and it will be automatically detected after few seconds:



Note: If your USB Hard Drive is still not detected, please unplug it and re-plug it. If the issue still persists, please ensure that your USB Hard Drive is visible in Windows Explorer. If yes, close SoftThinks Backup and Recovery, relaunch it and follow the same steps. Else, restart your system and first ensure that your USB Hard Drive is correctly detected by Windows.

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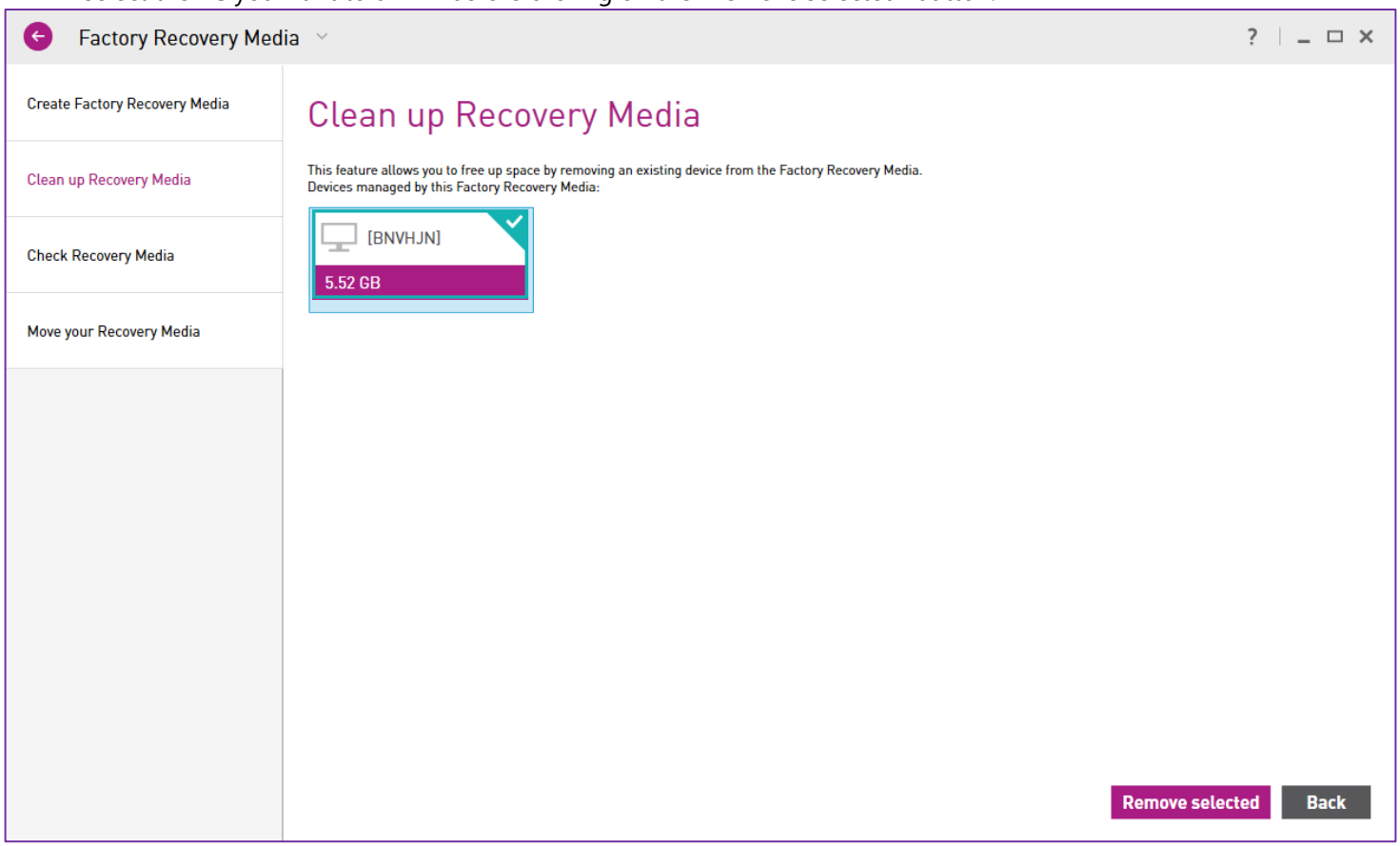
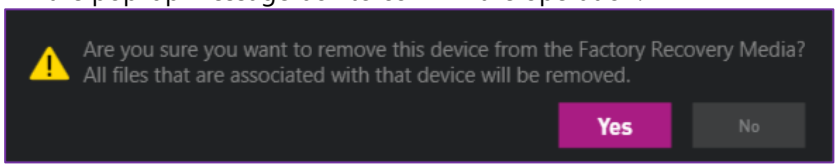
3. Please wait some few seconds while we are parsing your USB Hard Drive to list all the PCs to which it is linked and select the PC you want to unlink before clicking on the "Remove selected" button:



Note: In our example the Recovery Media has been created on the current PC and has not be linked to another one so we see only 1 device. You can see the space you will recover in the tile (5.52GB here).

4. Click on the "Yes" button in the pop-up message box to confirm the operation:



Note: Once you will have removed the selected device from your USB Hard Drive, the Factory Image and System Backups made for this device will be deleted so will not be able anymore to recover the device selected through this USB Hard Drive.

5. Once the process complete, you will be redirected automatically back to the step 2.

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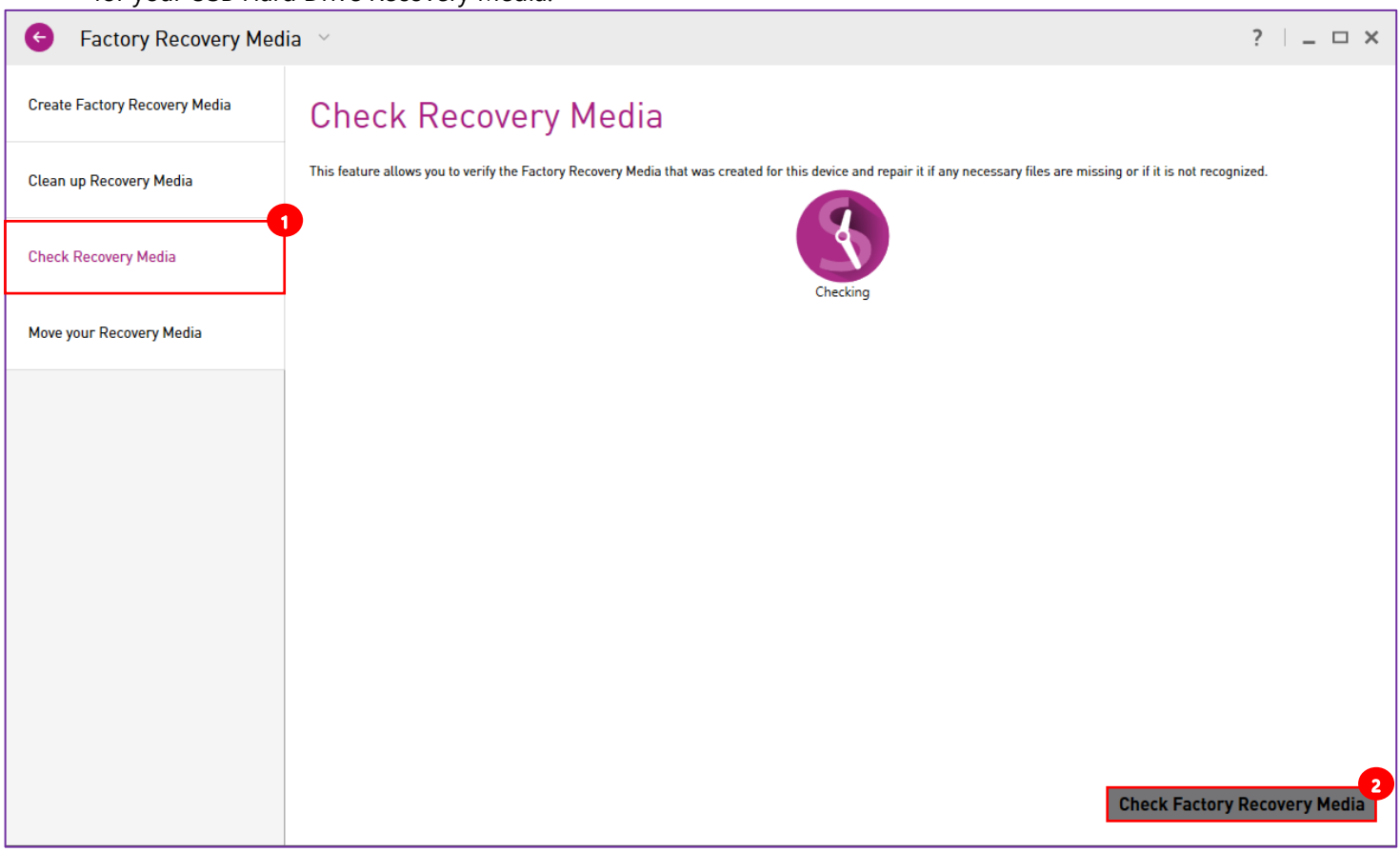
Checking your USB Hard Drive Recovery Media

You can check your Factory Recovery Media to ensure all the needed files are still on the disk. We will automatically add the needed files if we detect a problem and the files are available to us.

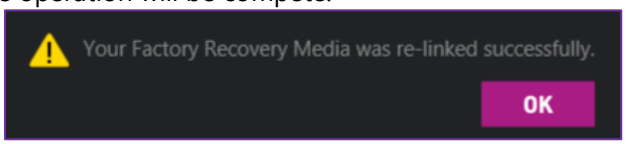
1. From the "Factory Recovery Media" screen, click on the "Check Recovery Media" tab (1) on the left and we will search for your USB Hard Drive Recovery Media:



2. Once your USB Hard Drive detected, the "Check Factory Recovery Media" button (2) becomes enable. Click on it.

   Note: If the "Check Factory Recovery Media" button stays disabled, it means that your USB Hard Drive is not detected. Please unplug it and re-plug it. If the issue still persists, please ensure that your USB Hard Drive is visible in Windows Explorer. If yes, close SoftThinks Backup and Recovery, relaunch it and follow the same steps. Else, restart your system and first ensure that your USB Hard Drive is correctly detected by Windows.

3. You will be notified when the operation will be compete:



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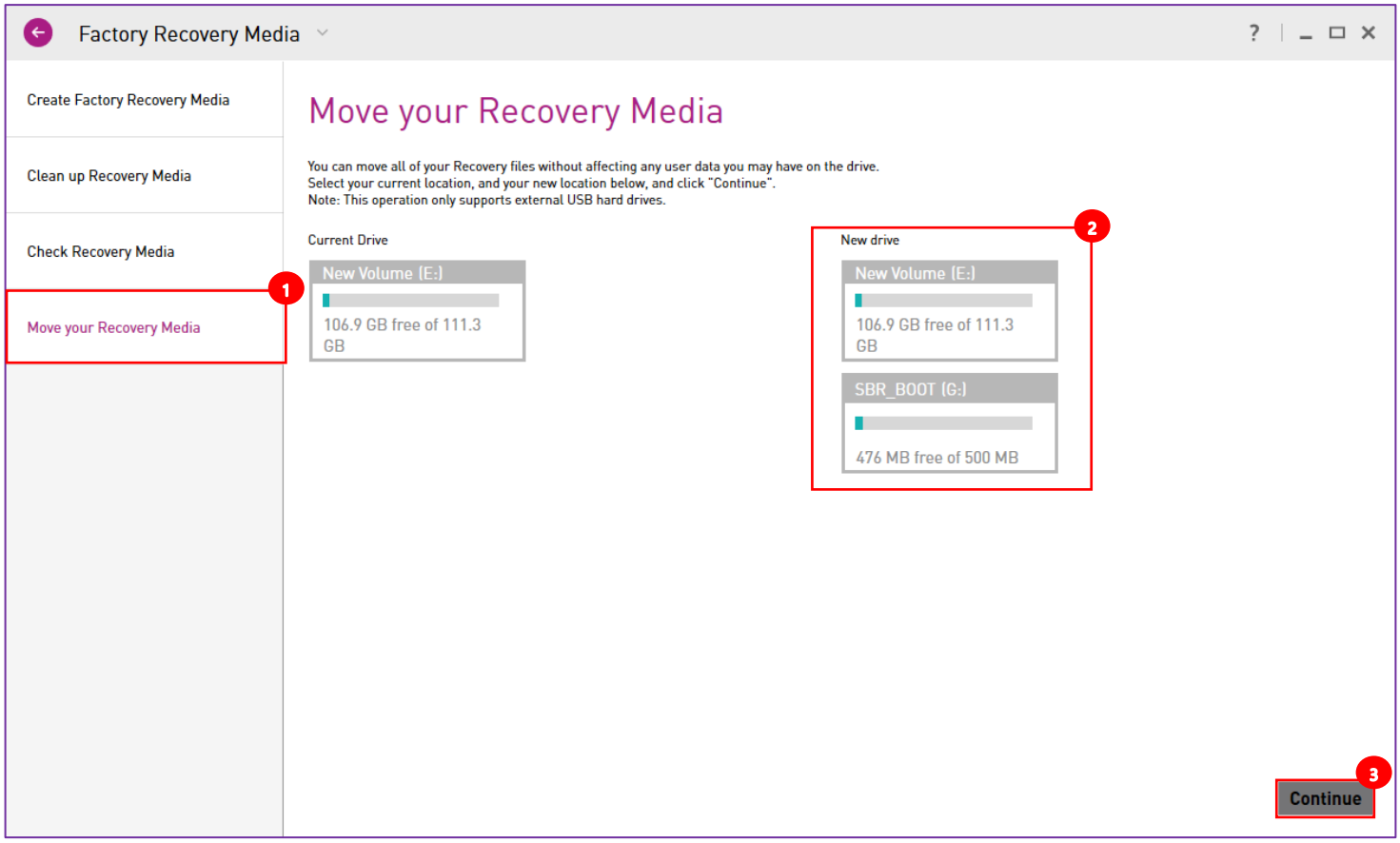
Moving your USB Hard Drive Recovery Media contents to a new USB Hard Drive

This action will move all of your Recovery Media files from one USB hard drive to another one. The new drive will only show as an available target if there is enough space on it. You will need to connect both USB drives to perform this action. If you have multiple devices stored on your Recovery Media, all devices will be moved to the new drive and the original USB hard drive will be cleaned up.

1. From the "Factory Recovery Media" screen, click on the "Move your Recovery Media" tab (1) on the left and we will search for all the USB Hard Drives found:



2. Select the target disk in the "New drive" list

3. Click on the "Continue" button

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Protecting your system

System Backups store snapshots of the User Partition at a certain point in time. The snapshots include the operating system, registry, drivers, software applications and data files, as well as system areas hidden from the user. You can exclude files by type and by size (see Excluding files from your System Backups).

By default, a complete backup of your system has been made with Softthinks Backup and Recovery when it has been installed. This so-called "Factory Image" which is unique to your device, creates a vital restore point for system recovery since it contains a complete copy of all software originally installed on your device. It is stored in a protected area of your system.

This allows you to reinstall all applications, drivers and the Windows operating system that came with your device.

When your system becomes unstable or even no more usable, you might want to restore it to a more recent state than the factory one. This is the purpose of the System Backups that can create at any time (on demand and on schedule) in order to restore later your system to this current state.

When you first set up your device or upon upgrading your system, you should immediately create a System Backup.

You can choose to store your System Backups on either your local drive in a protected folder, or on any attached USB drive. You will need to make sure to have a USB drive with enough available space to store your System Backups, or it will not be displayed.

Note: You should create regular System Backups so that you can undo any settings or return to a point in time if the device becomes unstable.

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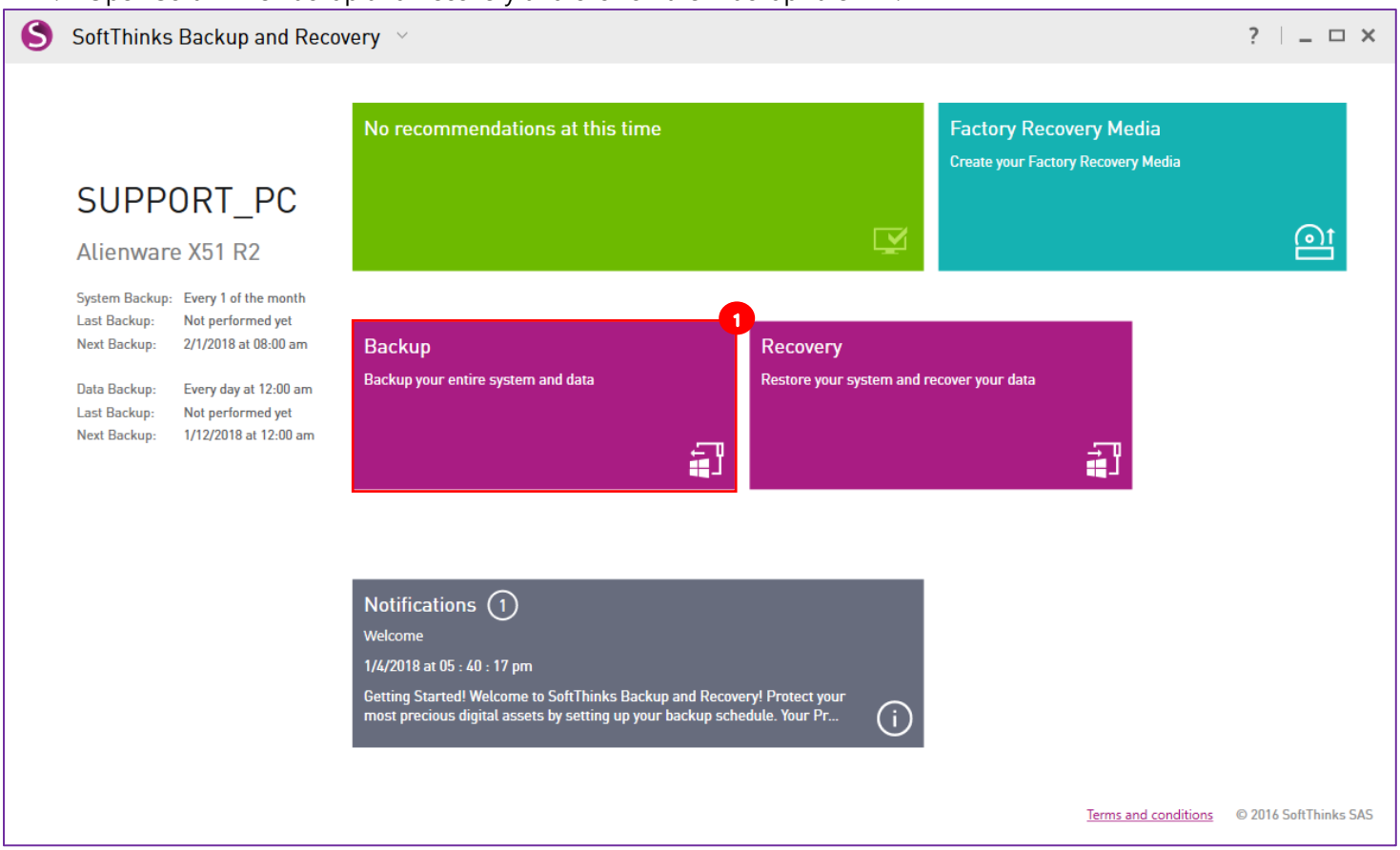
Scheduling a System Backup

1. Open SoftThinks Backup and Recovery and click on the “Backup” tile 1:



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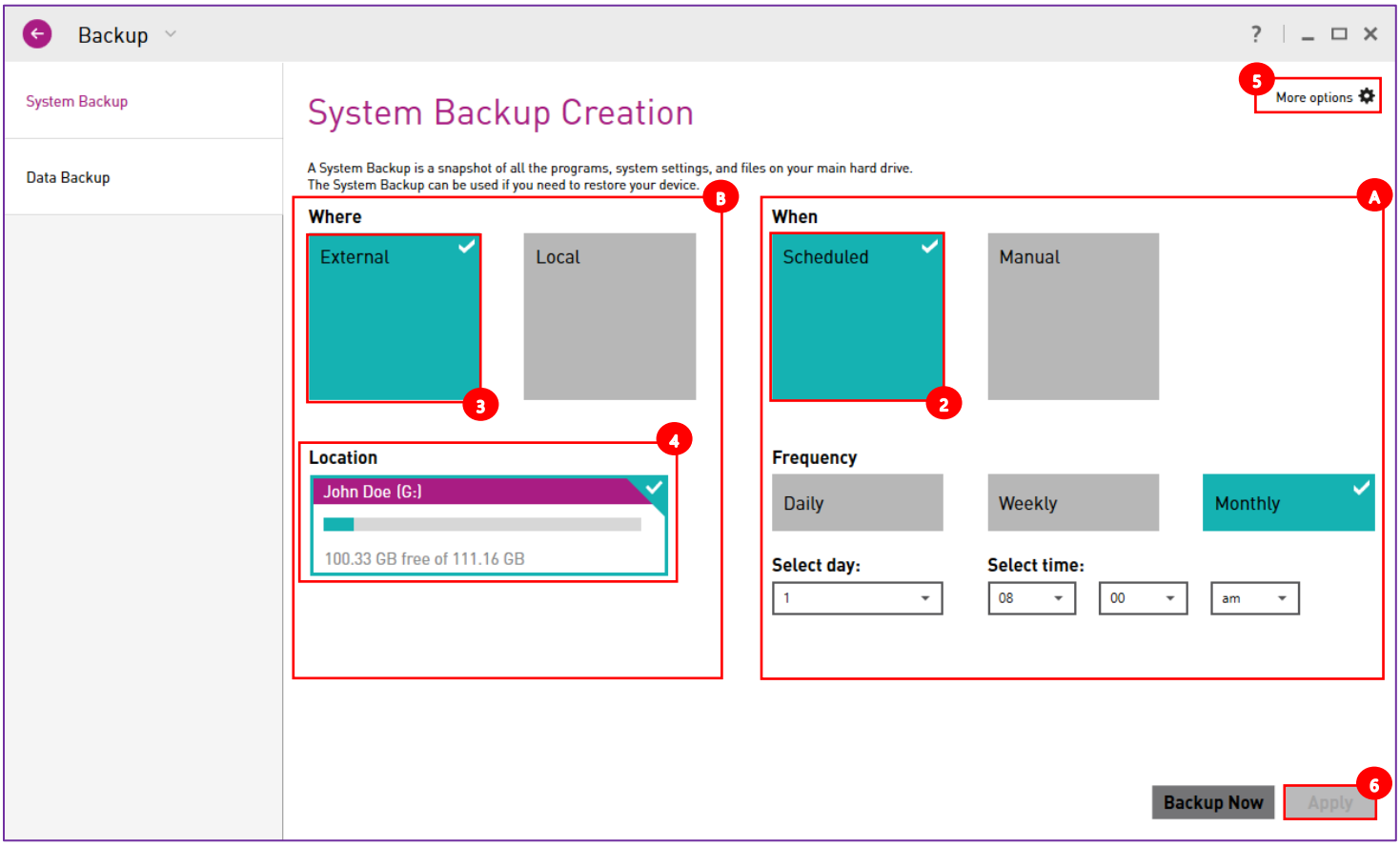
2. In the "When" section A, click on the "Scheduled" tile 2.



In our example we schedule it monthly, the 1st day of each month at 08:00 AM:

a. Click on "Scheduled" tile c
b. Click on "Monthly" tile d
c. Select which day of the month e
d. Select the time f

Note: If your system is not running at this time, the System Backup will be created the next time you will start your device. In order to make this process as transparent as possible without impacting the performances of your system, it is run with the lowest priority and this means that the capture could take several hours depending on the volume of data to back up.

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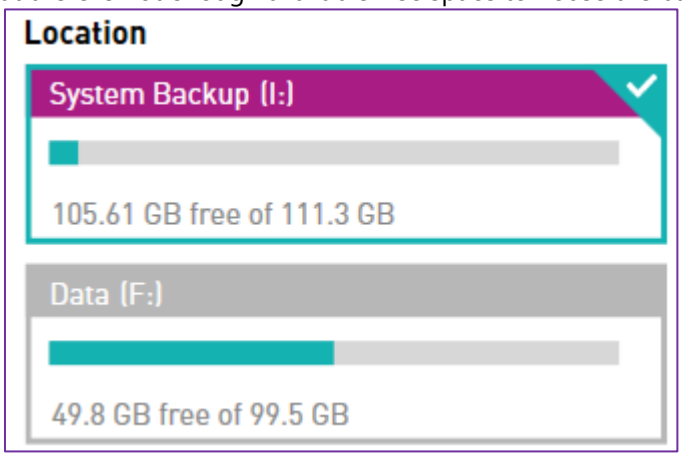
3. Select where you want to store your System Backup in the "Where" section B. If your already created or scheduled a System Backup your last location will be pre-selected. You can choose to store your System Backup on either your local drive in a protected folder by clicking on the "Local" tile, or on any attached USB drive by clicking on the "External" tile 3 as in our example.

   Note: We recommend you to use an external USB drive to prevent losing them in case of Hard Disk failure or replacement, and ideally the Factory Recovery Media you should have created if it was an USB Hard Drive.

4. For both cases the list of the available target drives will be displayed in the "Location" area 4. Click on the local or USB drive you wish to target from the list presented. The green square around the box indicates the currently selected drive. Faded drives indicate that there is not enough available free space to house the backup and are not selectable:



   Note: If you already created at least one System Backup and you change the target location, the existing System Backups will be moved to the new location (See Moving your System Backups).

5. If you wish to exclude files from your System Backups to decrease the size of the backups and speed up their creation, click on "More options " 5 and follow the instructions described in Excluding files from your System Backups.

6. Click on the "Apply" button 6 (if the button is disabled / greyed out, please ensure that you selected a target drive at the step 4).

   Note: Even if you didn't change any setting you might be asked if you want to use the modification. This occurs when you make a System Backup for the 1st time after having created your Factory Recovery Media since we automatically change the target to the external drive. Please click on the "Yes" button to create your System Backup to your newly created Factory Recovery Media. If you prefer storing your System Backups locally (not recommended), click on "No" button and switch to Local target.

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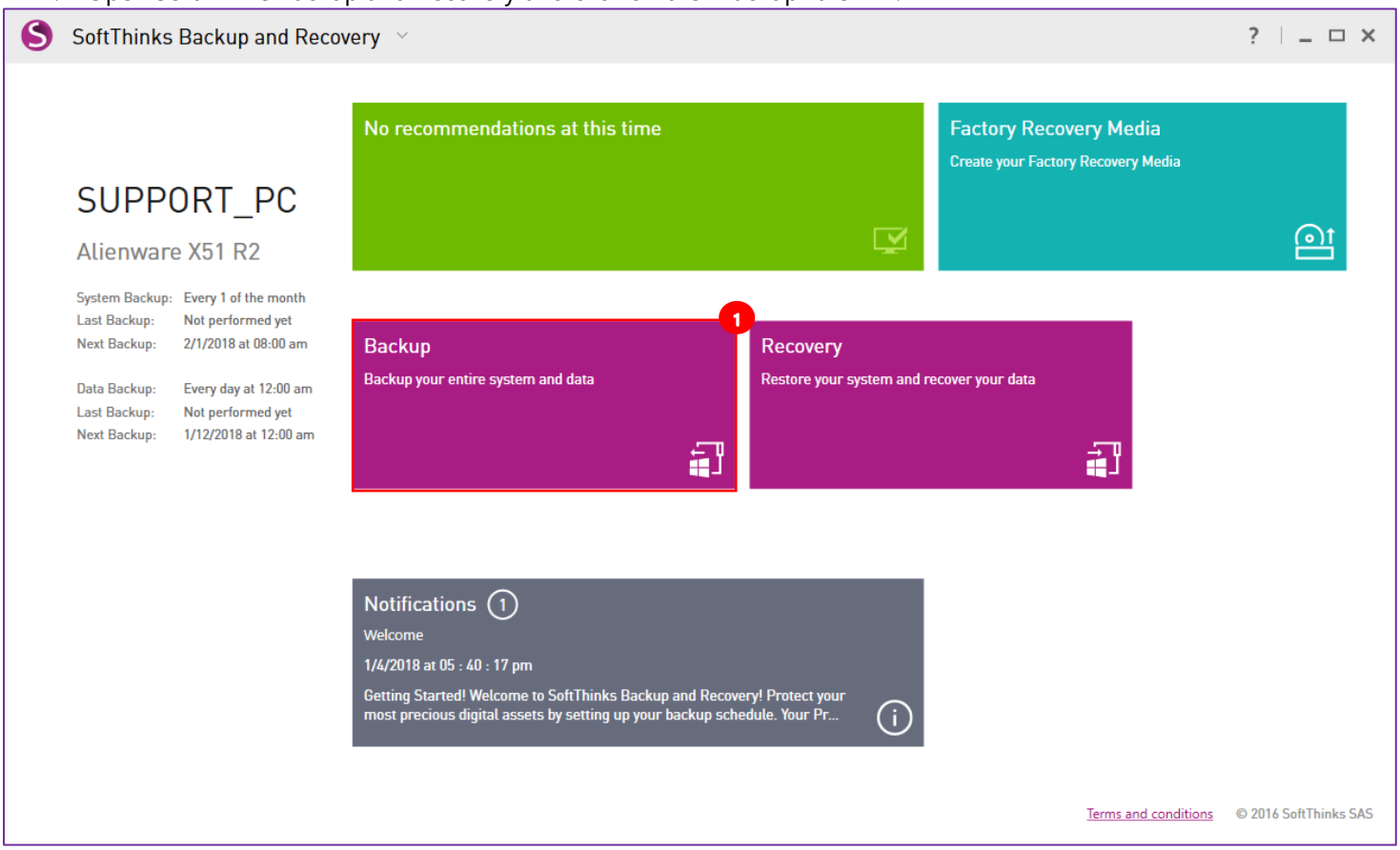
Creating a System Backup on demand

Even if you scheduled the backup of your system as recommended you might want to make a System Backup at a specific point in time, for example once you have installed applications or applied some important updates, in order to be able to go back to the current state. In such situation please follow the steps below:

1. Open SoftThinks Backup and Recovery and click on the “Backup” tile 1:



If you already scheduled a System Backup and want to backup now your system to the location you already defined you can go directly to the step 6.

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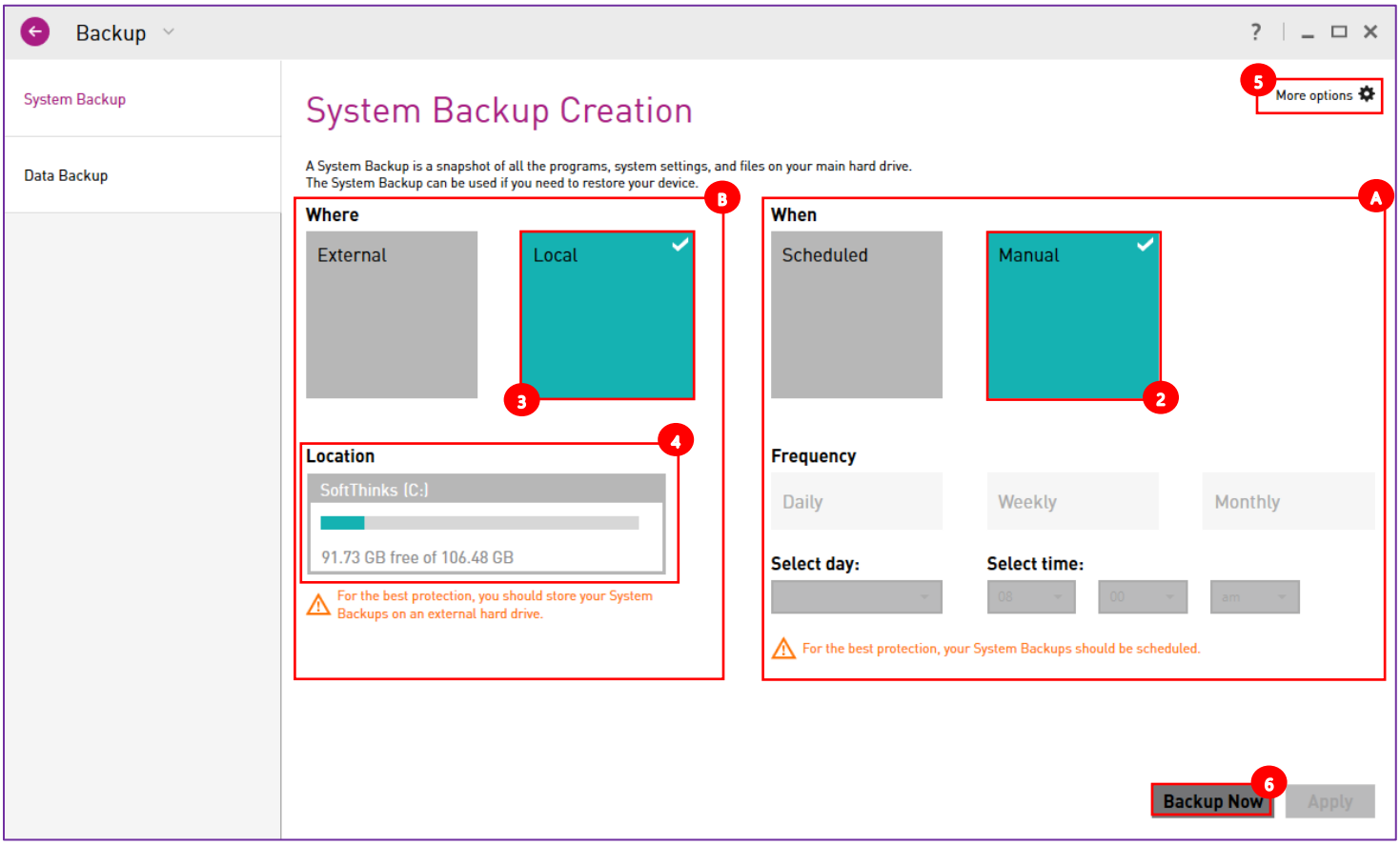
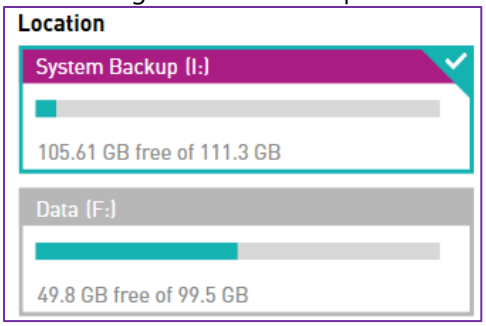
2. In the "When" section A, click on the "Manual" tile 2:



3. Select where you want to store your System Backup in the "Where" section B: either on your local drive in a protected folder by clicking on the "Local" tile 3 as in our example, or on any attached USB drive by clicking on the "External" tile. If your already created or scheduled a System Backup your last location will be pre-selected.

   Note: We recommend you to use an external USB drive to prevent losing them in case of Hard Disk failure or replacement, and ideally the Factory Recovery Media you should have created if it was an USB Hard Drive.

4. For both cases the list of the available target drives will be displayed in the "Location" area 4. Click on the local or USB drive you wish to target from the list presented. The green square around the box indicates the currently selected drive. Faded drives indicate that there is not enough available free space to house the backup and are not selectable:



   Note: If you already created at least one System Backup and you change the target location, the existing System Backups will be moved to the new location (See Moving your System Backups).

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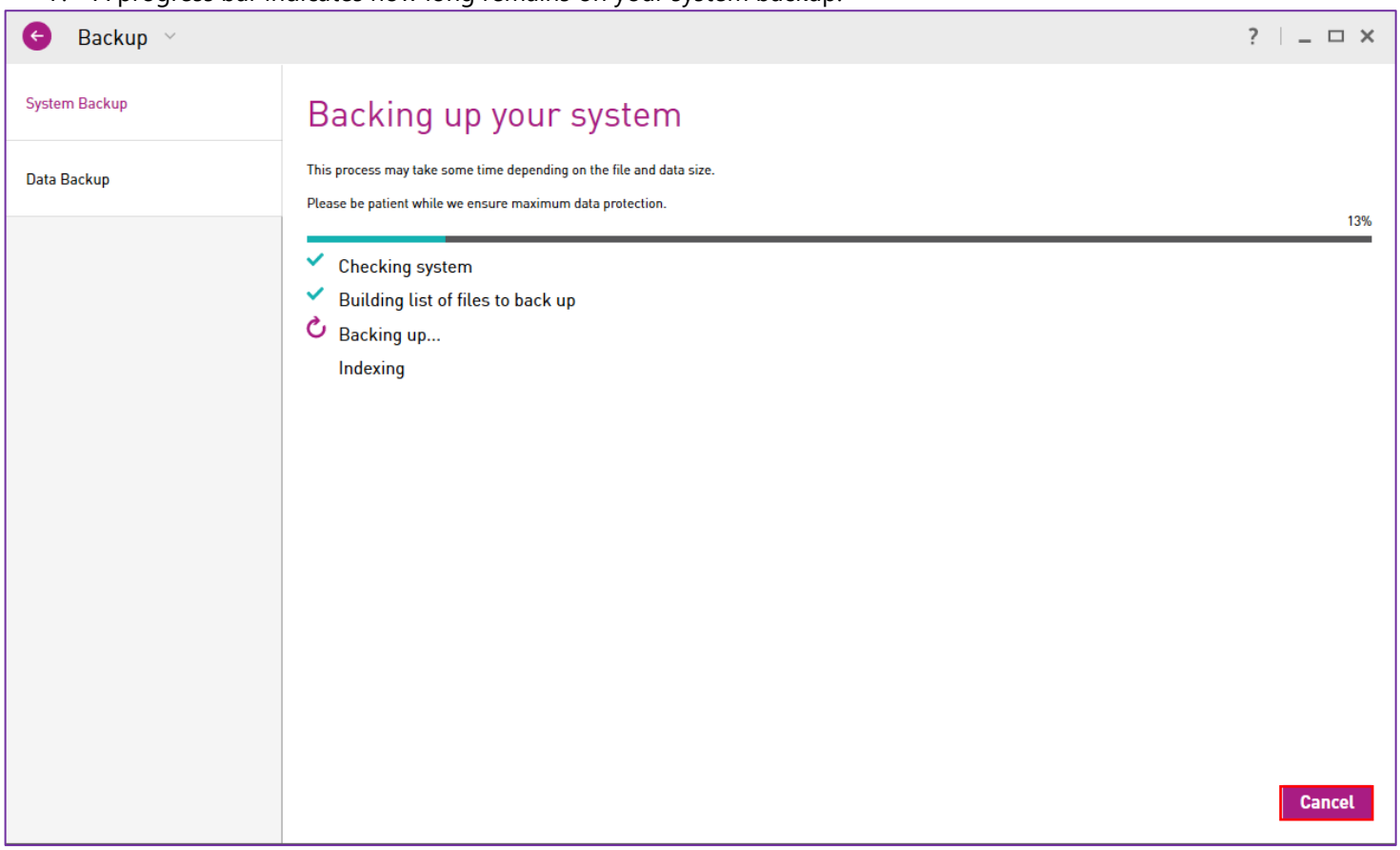
5. If you wish to exclude files from your System Backups to decrease the size of the backups and speed up their creation, click on "More options " 5 and follow the instructions described in Excluding files from your System Backups.

6. Click on the "Backup now" button 6 (if the button is disabled / greyed out, please ensure that you selected a target drive at the step 4).

   Note: Even if you didn't change any setting you might be asked if you want to use the modification. This occurs when you make a System Backup for the 1st time after having created your Factory Recovery Media since we automatically change the target to the external drive. Please click on the "Yes" button to create your System Backup to your newly created Factory Recovery Media. If you prefer storing your System Backups locally (not recommended), click on "No" button and switch to Local target.

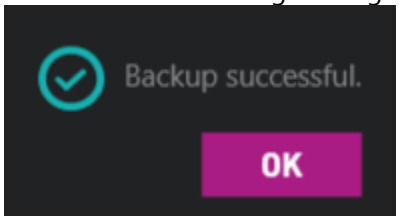
7. A progress bar indicates how long remains on your system backup:



   Note: This process will take some time depending on the amount of data in your Factory Image.

   Note: To cancel the backup process, click on the "Cancel" button at the bottom right corner:

8. When the System Backup completes you will see the following message:



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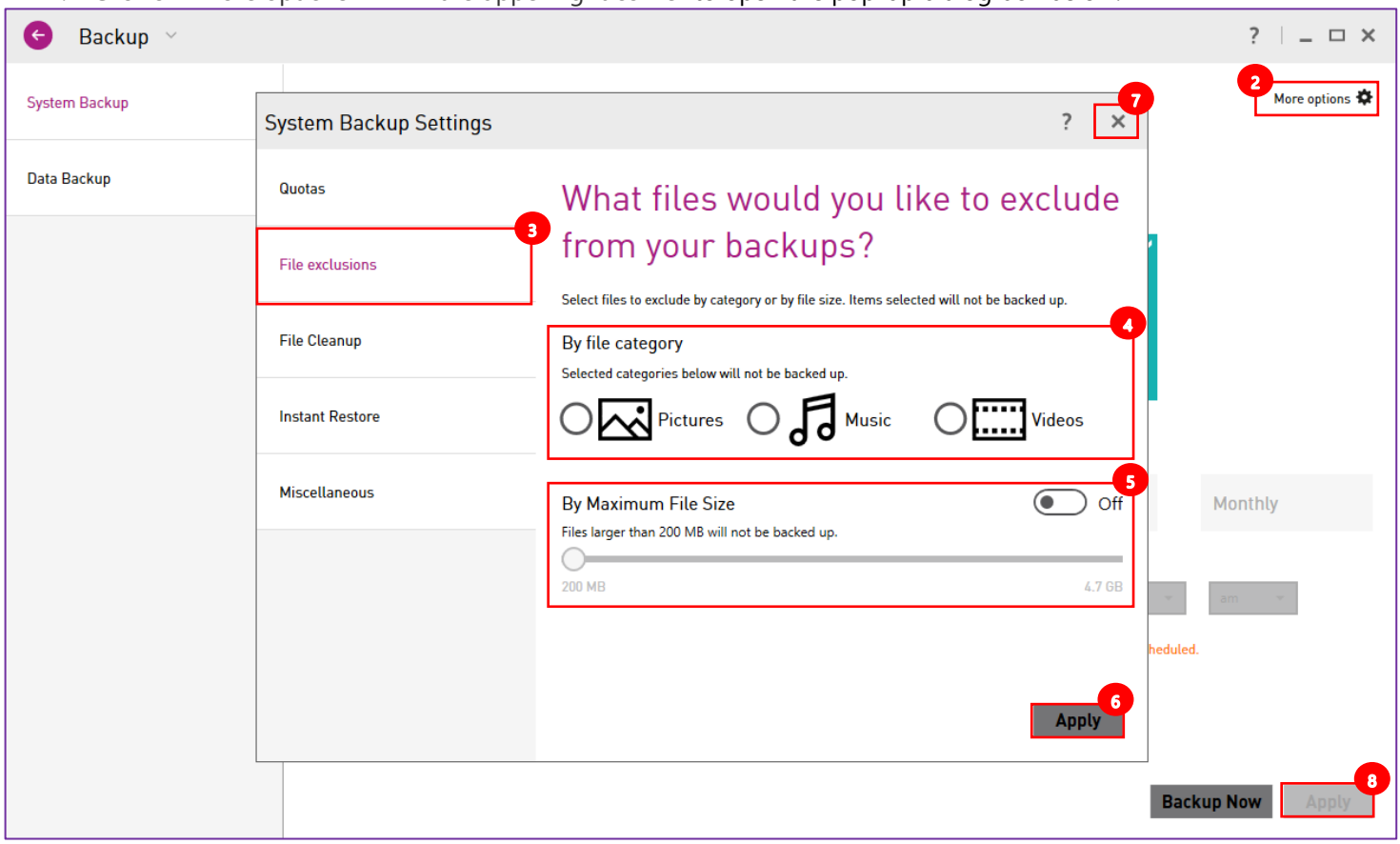
Excluding files from your System Backups

You may wish to exclude files from your System Backups to decrease the size of the backup or speed up their creation. Files can be excluded either by size, type or both:

1. Open SoftThinks Backup and Recovery and click on the “Backup” tile
2. Click on “More options” 2 in the upper right corner to open the pop-up dialog box below:



3. Click on the “File exclusions” tab 3 on the left of the pop-up dialog box
4. Select the file categories 4 you would like to exclude from your backup
5. To exclude files larger than a given size, first slide the "By Maximum File Size" switch from OFF to ON and then click and drag the slider to your desired maximum allowed file size 5
6. When satisfied with your exclusion options, click on the “Apply” button of the pop-up dialog box 6
7. Then close the window by clicking on the "X" 7 in the upper right corner of the dialog box
8. Click on the “Apply” button 8

Note: Please choose carefully since any selection you choose will be excluded from your System Backup and will not be recovered in case of a System Recovery. Do not select any system file or application file.

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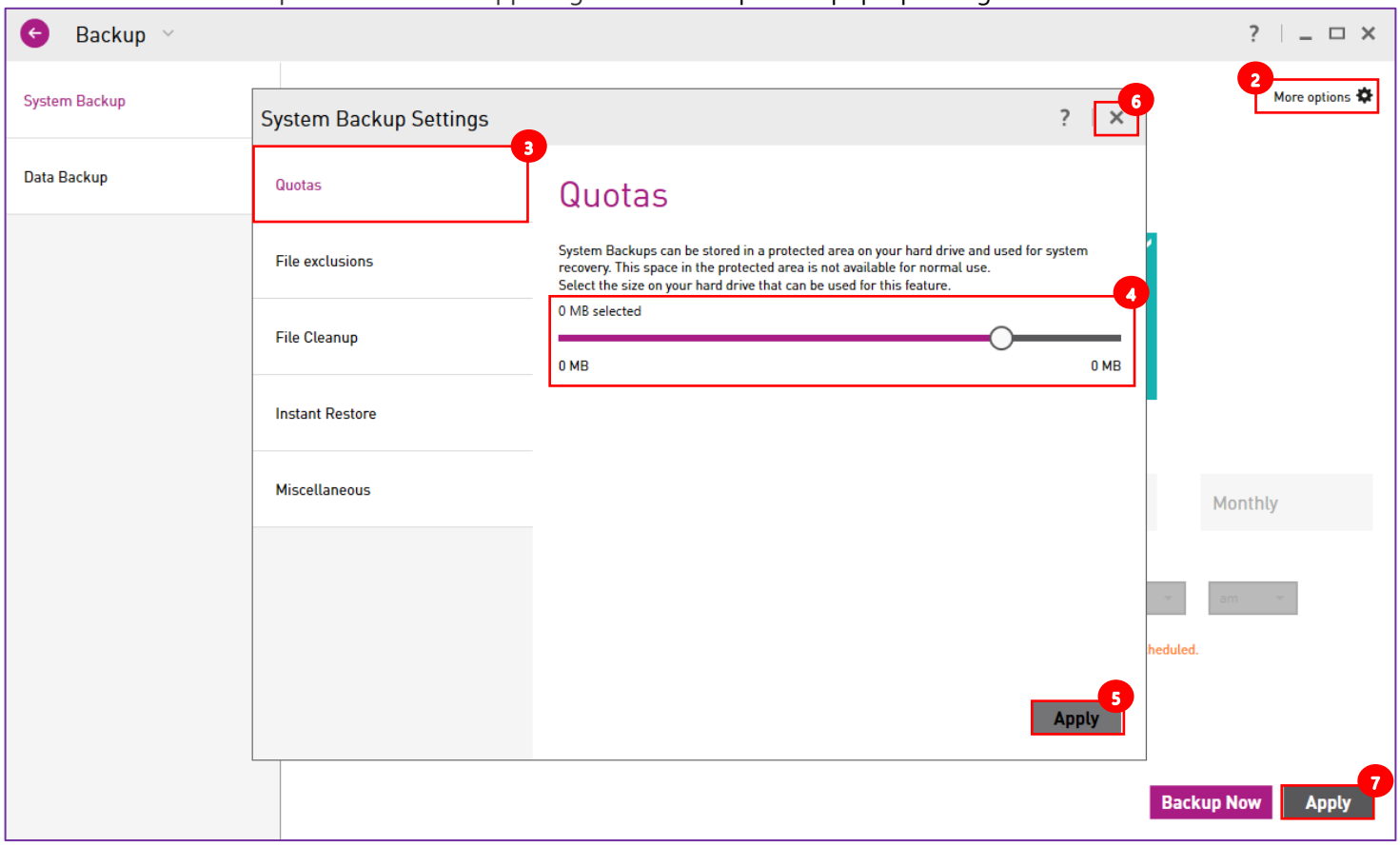
Defining a quota for your System Backups storage location

If your System Backups are stored locally on your device you can limit the amount of space used for those backups. By default, System Backups may consume up to 25% of the C: drive. This allocation may be modified but the allocation may never exceed 30% of the drive.

1. Open SoftThinks Backup and Recovery and click on the "Backup" tile
2. Click on "More options" 2 in the upper right corner to open the pop-up dialog box below:



3. Click on the "Quotas" tab 3 on the left of the pop-up dialog box
4. Move the slider 4 the size you want to dedicate to the System Backups storage
5. When satisfied with your exclusion options, click on the "Apply" button of the pop-up dialog box 5
6. Then close the window by clicking on the "X" 6 in the upper right corner of the dialog box
7. Click on the "Apply" button 7

Note: Once you are near the limit set, you will receive a warning. Once the space limit has been reached, you have a few options on how to manage your System Backups.

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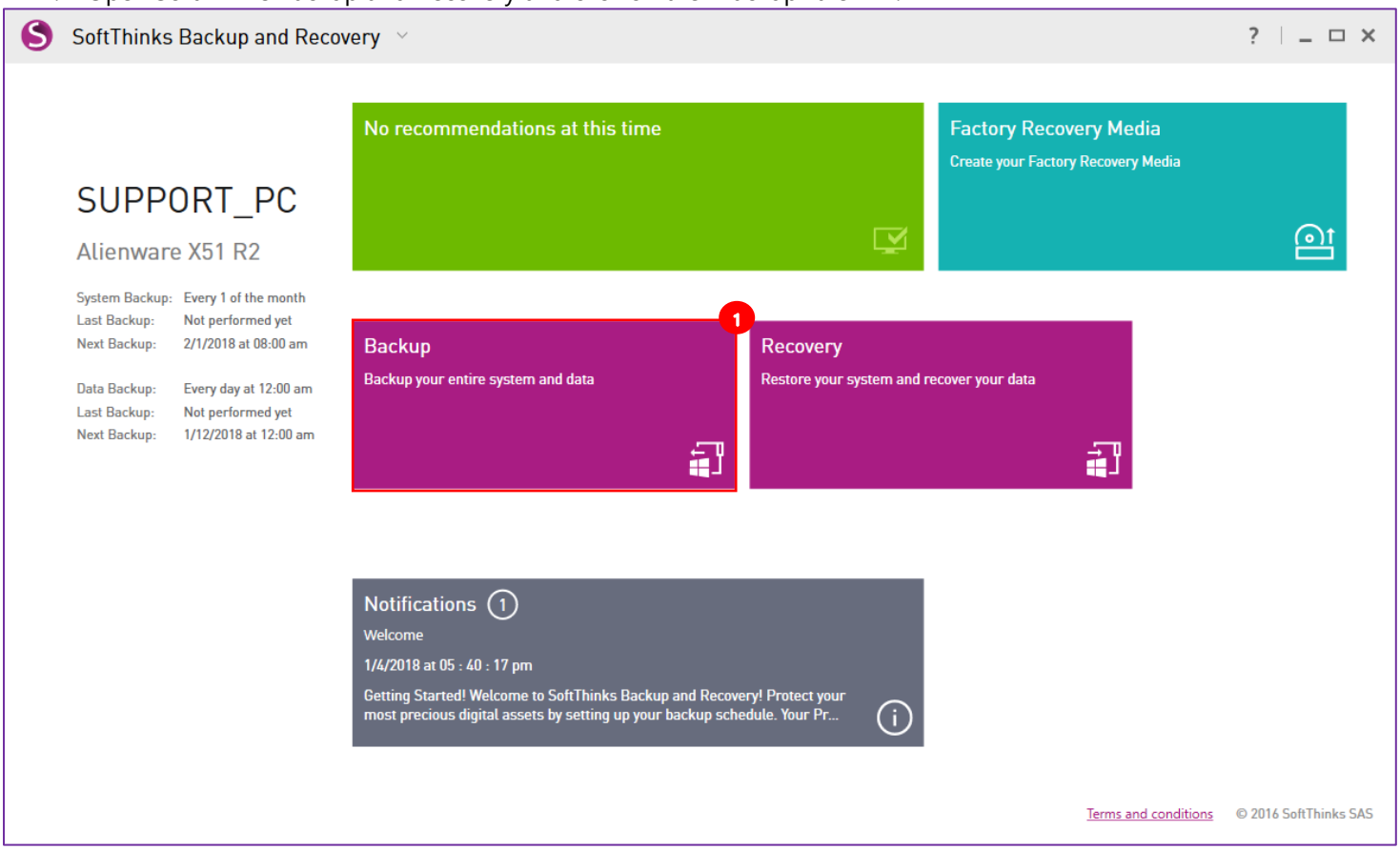
Moving your System Backups

We recommend you to store your System Backups on an USB Hard Drive but you might not have one available when configuring the product initially. In the meantime, you might run out of space locally or buy an USB Hard Drive for example. In such case you can change your target location and move all your existing System Backups to a new location.

1. Open SoftThinks Backup and Recovery and click on the “Backup” tile 1:



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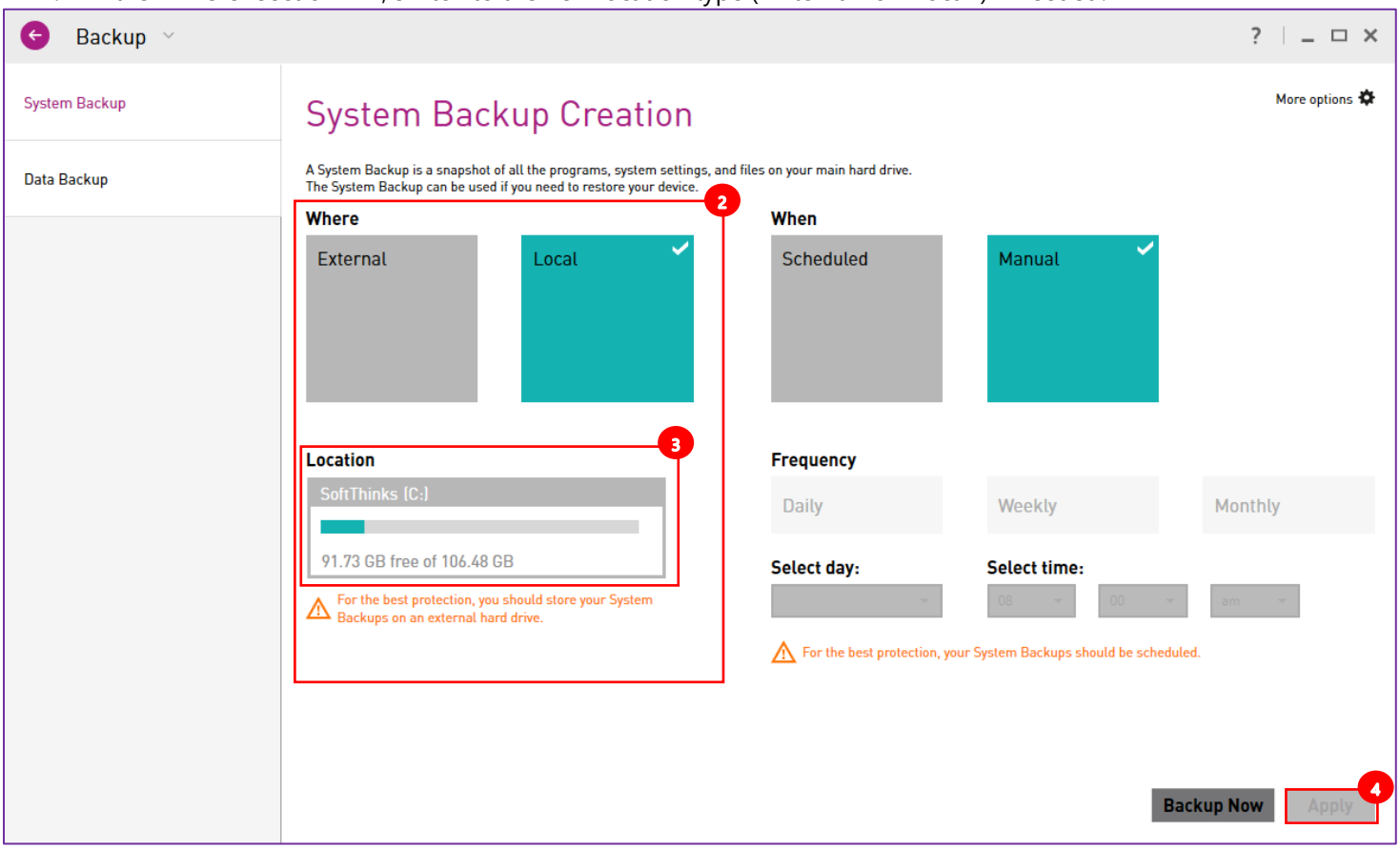
2. In the "Where" section 2, switch to the new location type ("External" or "Local") if needed:



3. Then select the new target drive in the Location area 3

4. Click on the "Apply" button 4 at the bottom right

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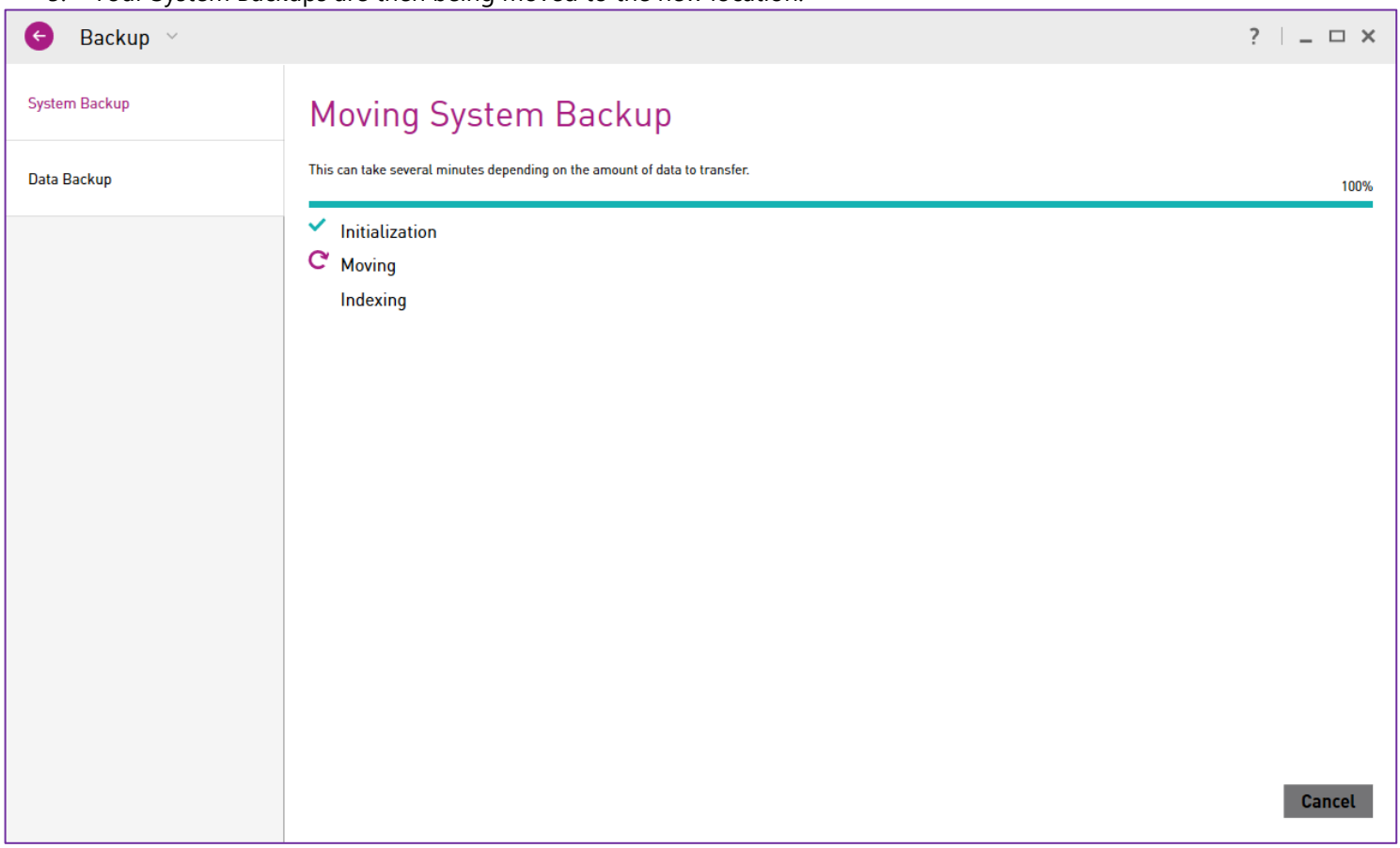
5. Your System Backups are then being moved to the new location:



6. Once the process complete, you will be redirected automatically to the home page.

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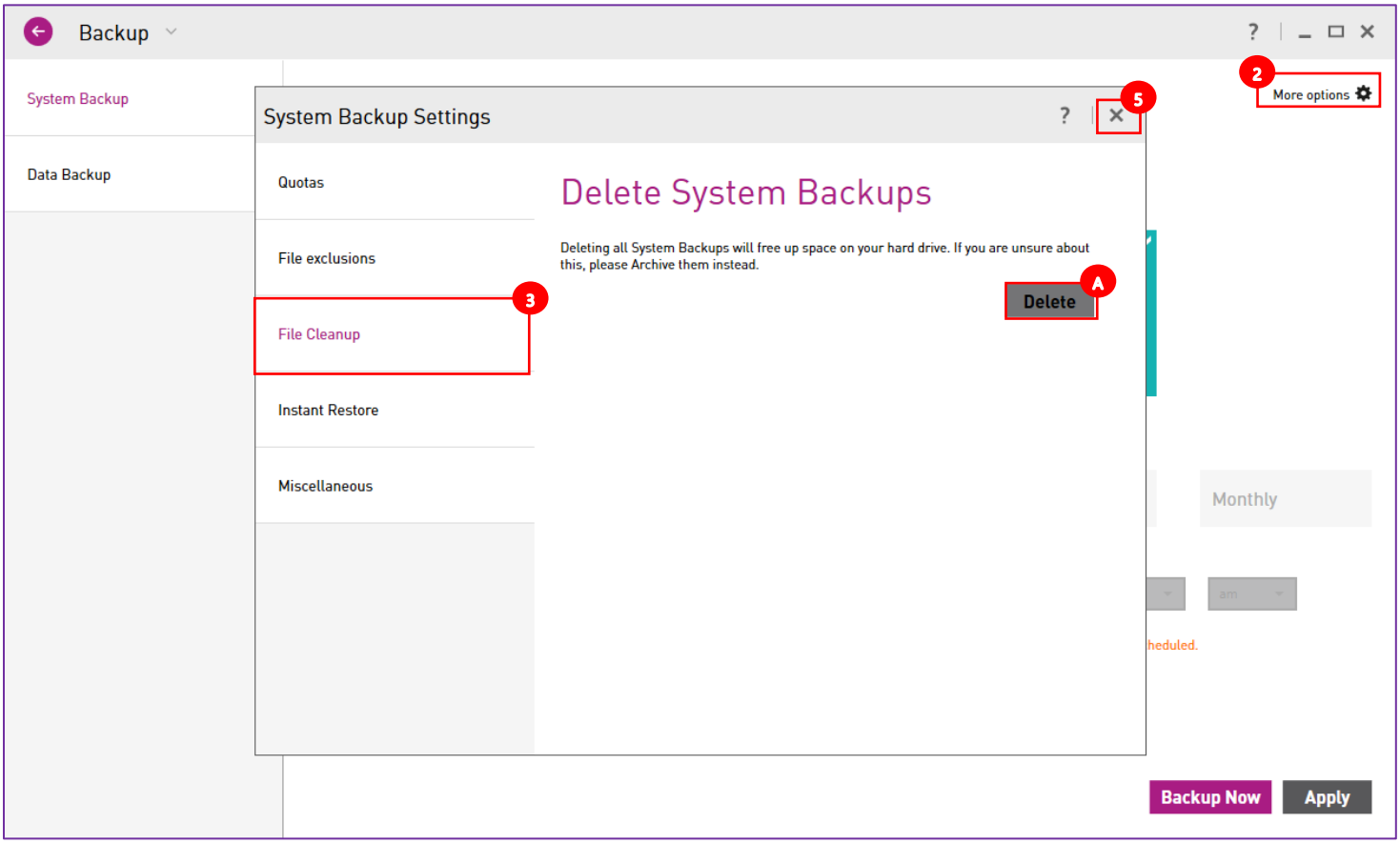
Managing your System Backups

If you are running out of space on your System Backups storage location or just want to make some free space, you can move them to another location as we just described, or delete them to create a new chain:

1. Open SoftThinks Backup and Recovery and click on the “Backup” tile
2. Click on “More options” 2 in the upper right corner to open the pop-up dialog box below:



3. Click on the “File Cleanup” tab 3 on the left of the pop-up dialog box
4. Click on the “Delete” button
5. Then close the window by clicking on the "X" 5 in the upper right corner of the dialog box

Deleting System Backups

Deleting existing System Backups removes the selected System Backups, and will re-start your System Backup Chain.

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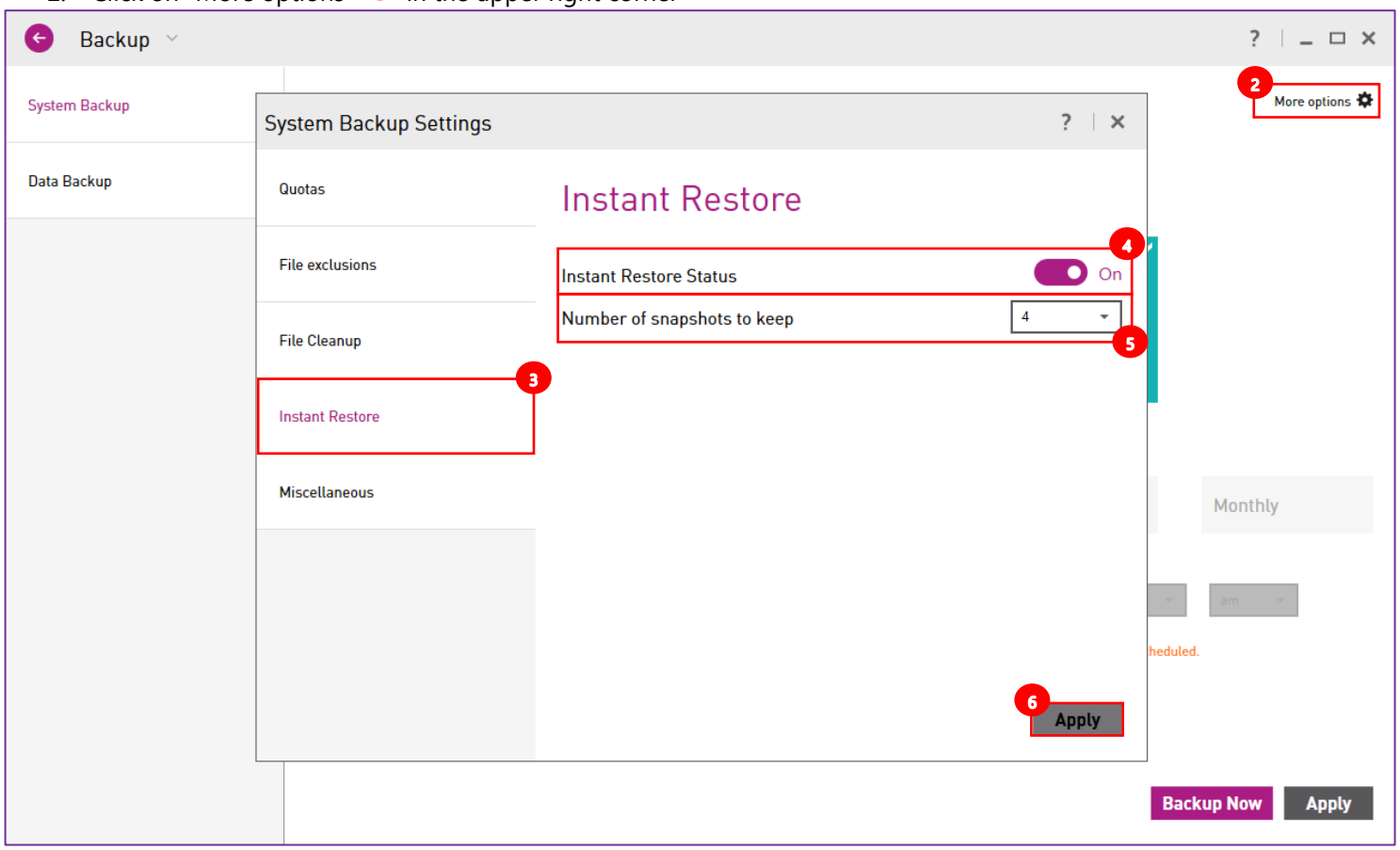
Instant Restore snapshots

Instant Restore feature repairs certain software issues that might arise during the Windows lifecycle without the need to restore a System Backup, or Windows restore point. All your personal files and settings will remain untouched. In order to achieve those objectives, Instant Restore will define the most relevant software triggers and create "OS status snapshots" which consist of metadata & registry information (about 30 MB per snapshot, except after important Windows Updates) and are stored in an hidden and protected folder on your hard disk.

Instant Restore is enabled by default but you can disable this feature and you can also customize the number of snapshots to keep:

1. Open SoftThinks Backup and Recovery User Interface and click on the "Backup" tile
2. Click on "More options" 2 in the upper right corner



3. Select the "Instant Restore" tab 3 on the left
4. Switch the "Instant Restore Status" slider 4 to "Off" to disable Instant Restore feature
5. Select the number of snapshot that you want to keep 5
6. Click on the "Apply" button 6 to save your settings

Note: You will not be able to disable Instant Restore feature if an Instant Restore snapshot is currently being created. In this case please retry later.

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Protecting your Data

Even if all your data are backed up with your system files when System Backups are created, you might want to back up your data more regularly than your system, and especially the important data you are modifying or creating on a daily basis for example.

This is the purpose of the Scheduled Data Backups and the Continuous Data Protection technologies:

- A Data Backup is a backup archive of a file or a group of files containing a copy of selected file/folder contents. When you create a Data Backup, only the data, along with the folder tree, are compressed and stored.

  You have certainly some documents, photos, music and video that you don't want to lose and you are modifying your documents over the time and you take photos and videos regularly. This is why you need to back those data regularly and the best way to ensure this is done is to schedule those data backups right now. Only the new files or the files modified will be saved and compressed in order to limit the size of the backup.

- Continuous Data Protection, also called **continuous backup** or **real-time backup**, refers to backup of computer data by automatically saving a copy of every change made to that data, essentially capturing every version of the data that the user saves. It allows you to restore data to any point in time.

  As a professional user, you might work on important documents several times per day and you want to be sure that in the case your system freezes, crashes, shutdowns or reboots unexpectedly, or in the case of a manual error, you can retrieve the document in the latest state it was. You might also want to roll back some modifications and go back to any previous version you made. The Continuous Data Protection feature allows you to protect your working documents in real time and to roll back to any version saved some minutes or hours ago. For the files modified, only the blocks changed are saved.

Our solution offers you those 2 technologies to fit perfectly your needs and you can even mix them, meaning regularly back up some data based on schedule (photos, video, music typically) and continuously protect some other critical data you are modifying several times per day.

You can save your Data to your local device, a second hard drive, a removable USB drive or a network. You can create Backup Profiles and select files based on categories, or choose specific folders to include. You can choose a different location for your Data Backups and your files saved by the Continuous Data Protection.

All the versions of the data backed up are indexed. This will allow you to view all the versions of all the files backed up even if the storage location is not reachable. For more details please refer to Recovering your data.

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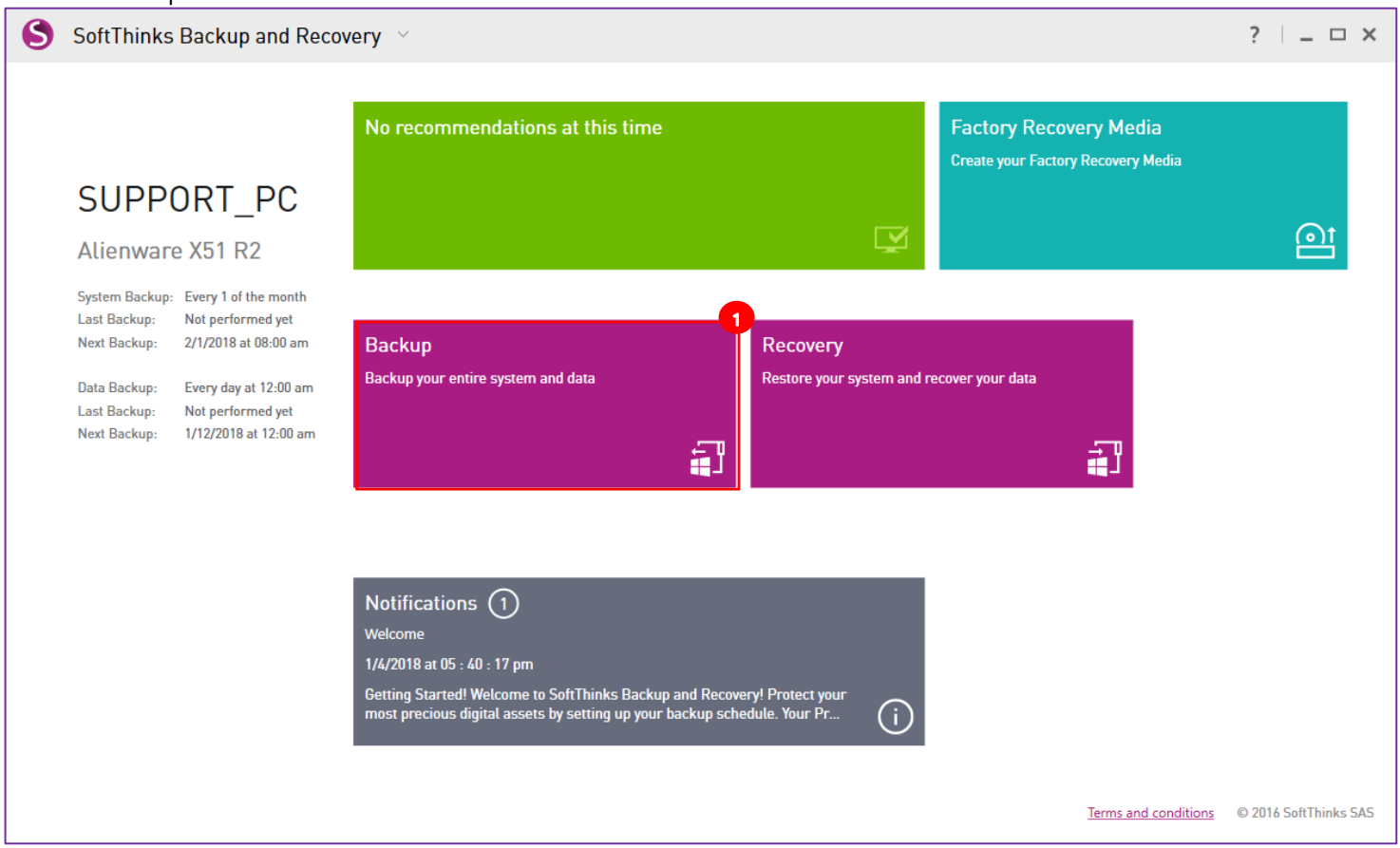
To protect your data please follow those steps:

1. Open SoftThinks Backup and Recovery User Interface (See Opening SoftThinks Backup and Recovery) and click on the "Backup" tile 1:



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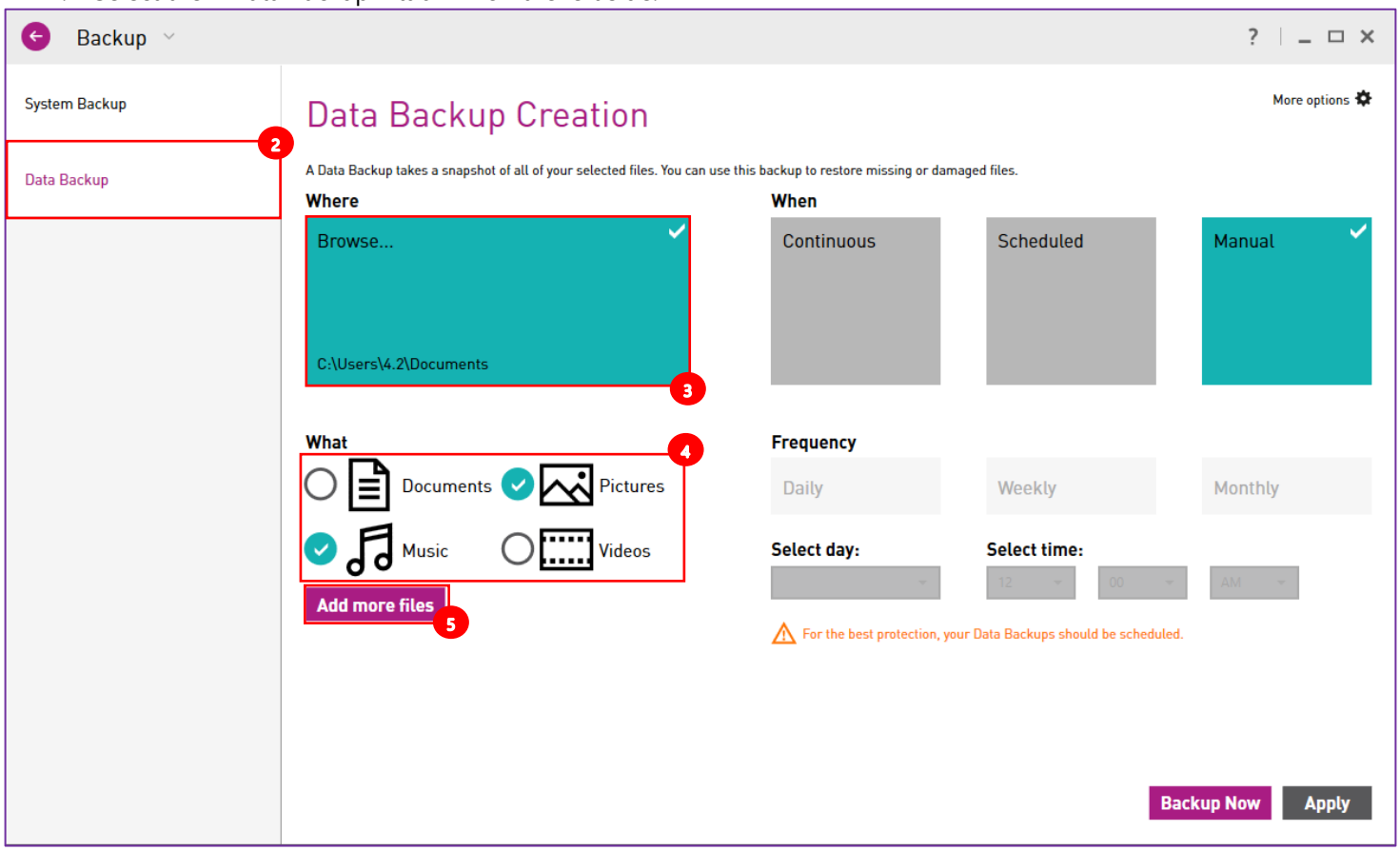
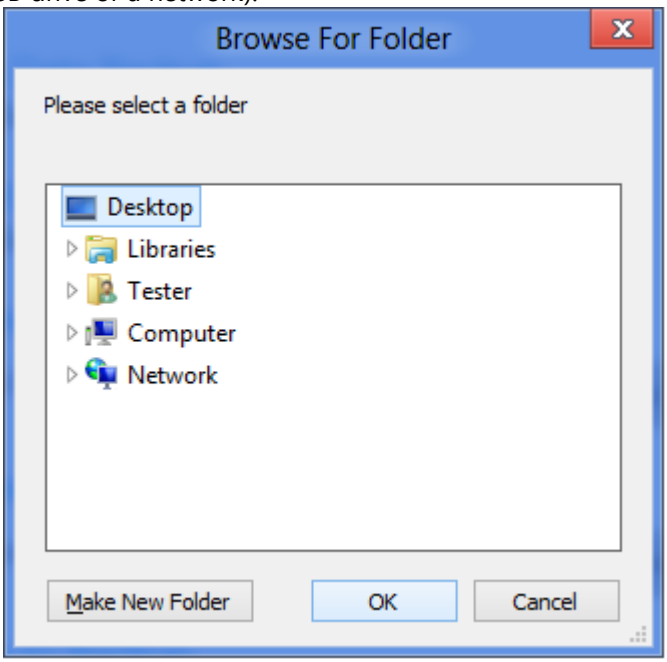
2. Select the « Data Backup » tab 2 on the left side:



3. Select where you want to store the data backed up. Click on the “Browse…” tile 3 to open the "Browse for folder" dialog below to find (or make) a location for your files to be backed up to (this can be on your local device, a second hard drive, a removable USB drive or a network):



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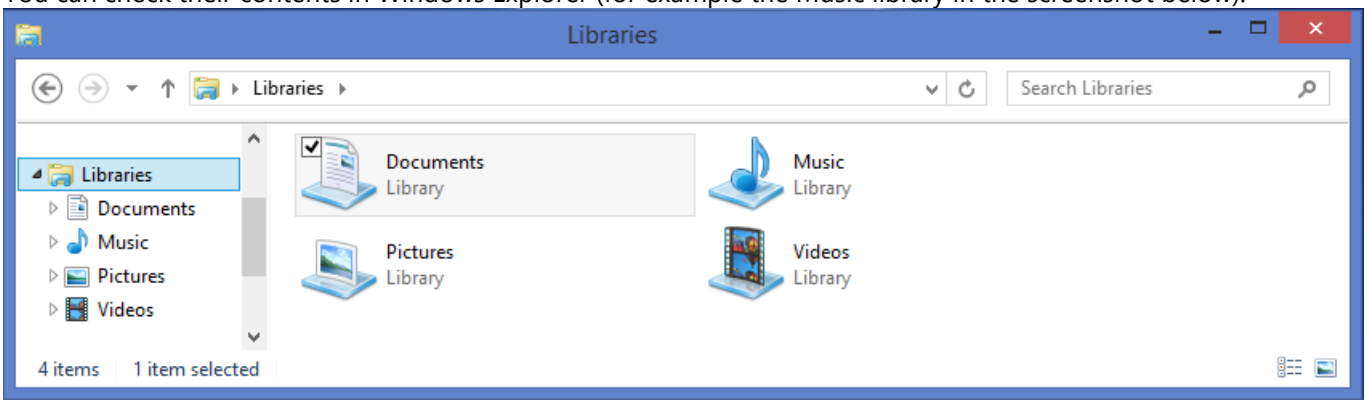
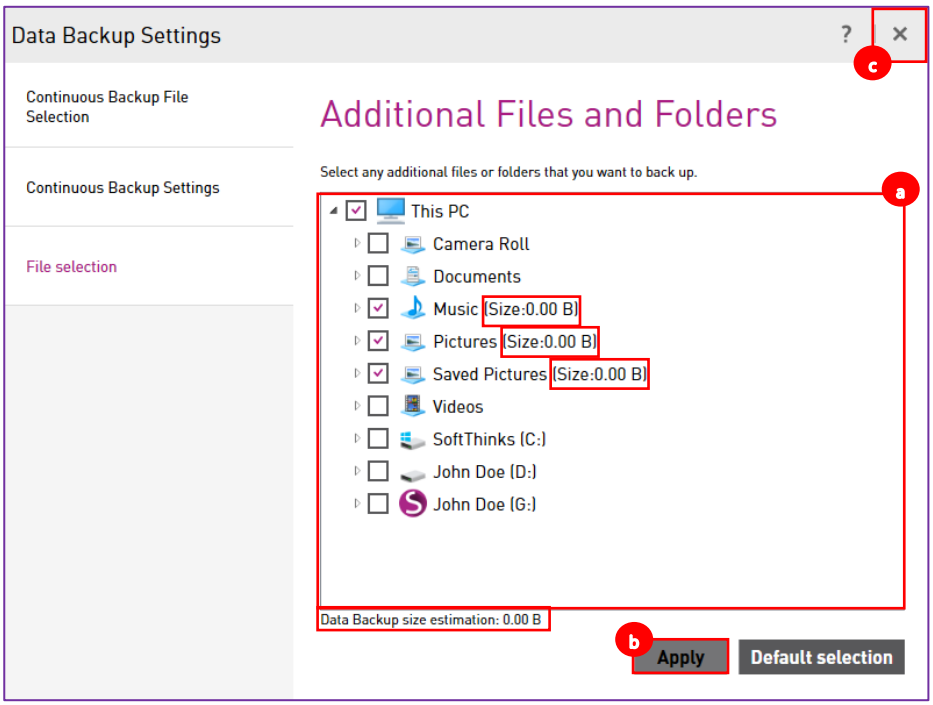
4. Select the data libraries (Documents, Pictures, Music, Video) you want to back up under the section "What" 4. Your Pictures and Music are selected by default to be backed up but you can change this selection.

   Note: Libraries are user-defined collections of folders. By default, your applications store your data in those libraries. You can check their contents in Windows Explorer (for example the Music library in the screenshot below):



5. To add specific files and/or directories in the backup, click on the "Add more files" button 5 and the pop-up dialog box below will appear:



   a. Browse to their location in the tree a and put a check mark next to their name
   b. When satisfied with your data selections, click on the "Apply" button b
   c. Then on the "X" c in the upper left corner

Note: Below the tree you have an estimation of the size of the backup. You can revert back the selection to the default by clicking on the "Default selection" button.

Note: Your selection for a manual / scheduled data backup is different than your selection for Continuous Data Protection so that you can apply the most appropriate protection depending on the type of data.

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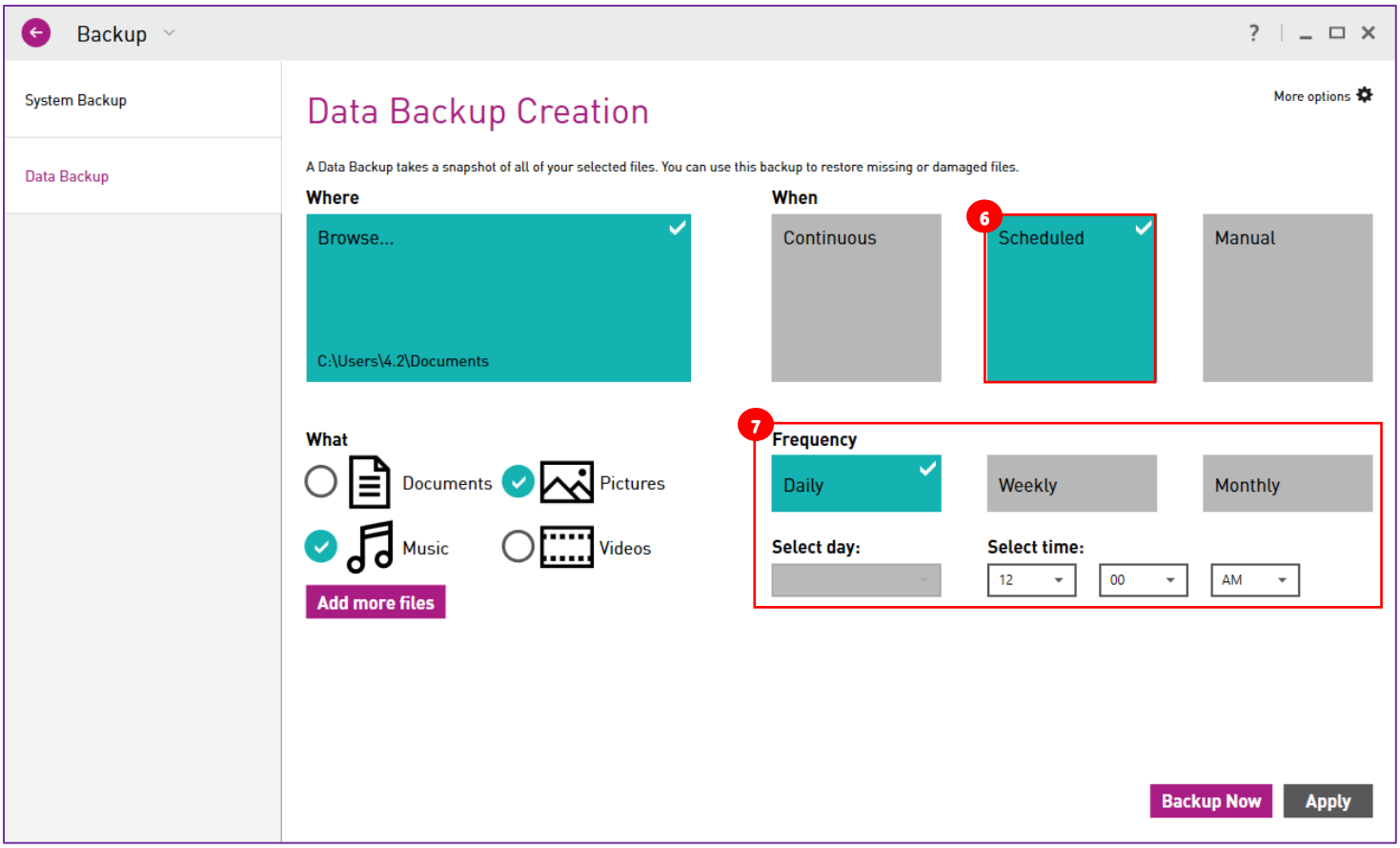
Scheduling a Data Backup

6. In the "When" section, click on the "Scheduled" tile 6:



7. Select the frequency you would like the backup to occur. In our example we decided to launch the Data Backup creation every day at 12:00 AM.

   Note: If the PC or the software isn't running, the next time SoftThinks Backup and Recovery will be launched it will create the backup

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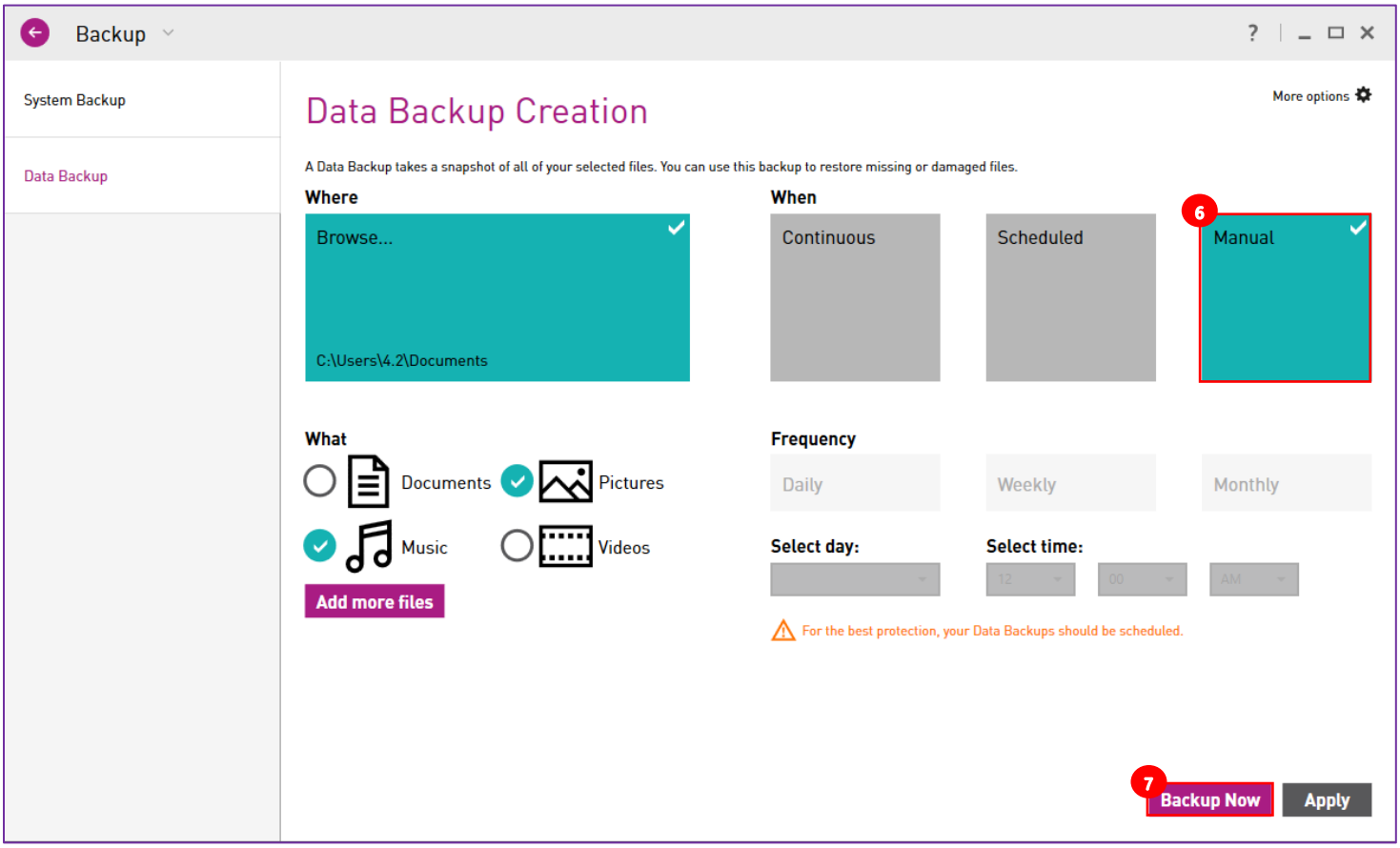
Backing up your data on demand

Even if you scheduled the creation of Data Backups you might need to force the backup of your data right now. Typically, this can be useful when you just imported photo from your camera whereas the next Data Backup is scheduled in several days or weeks.

6. Click on the “Manual” tile:



7. Click on the “Backup Now” button to save your data selected

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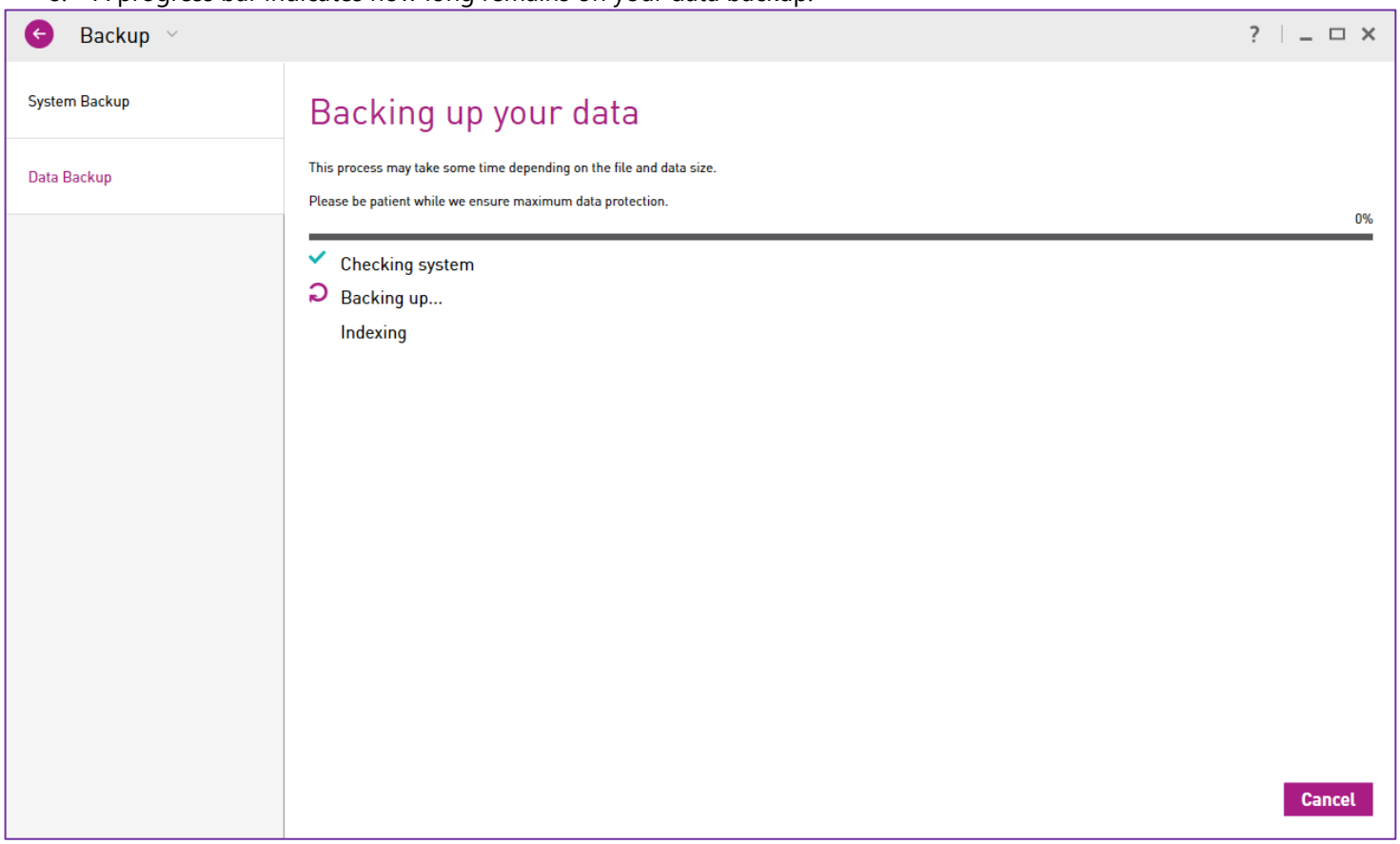
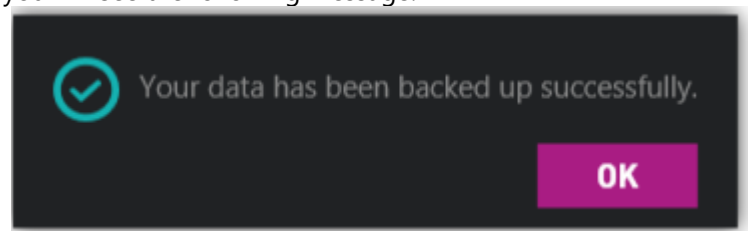
8. A progress bar indicates how long remains on your data backup:



Note: To cancel the backup process, click on the "Cancel" button at the bottom right.

9. When the backup completes you will see the following message:



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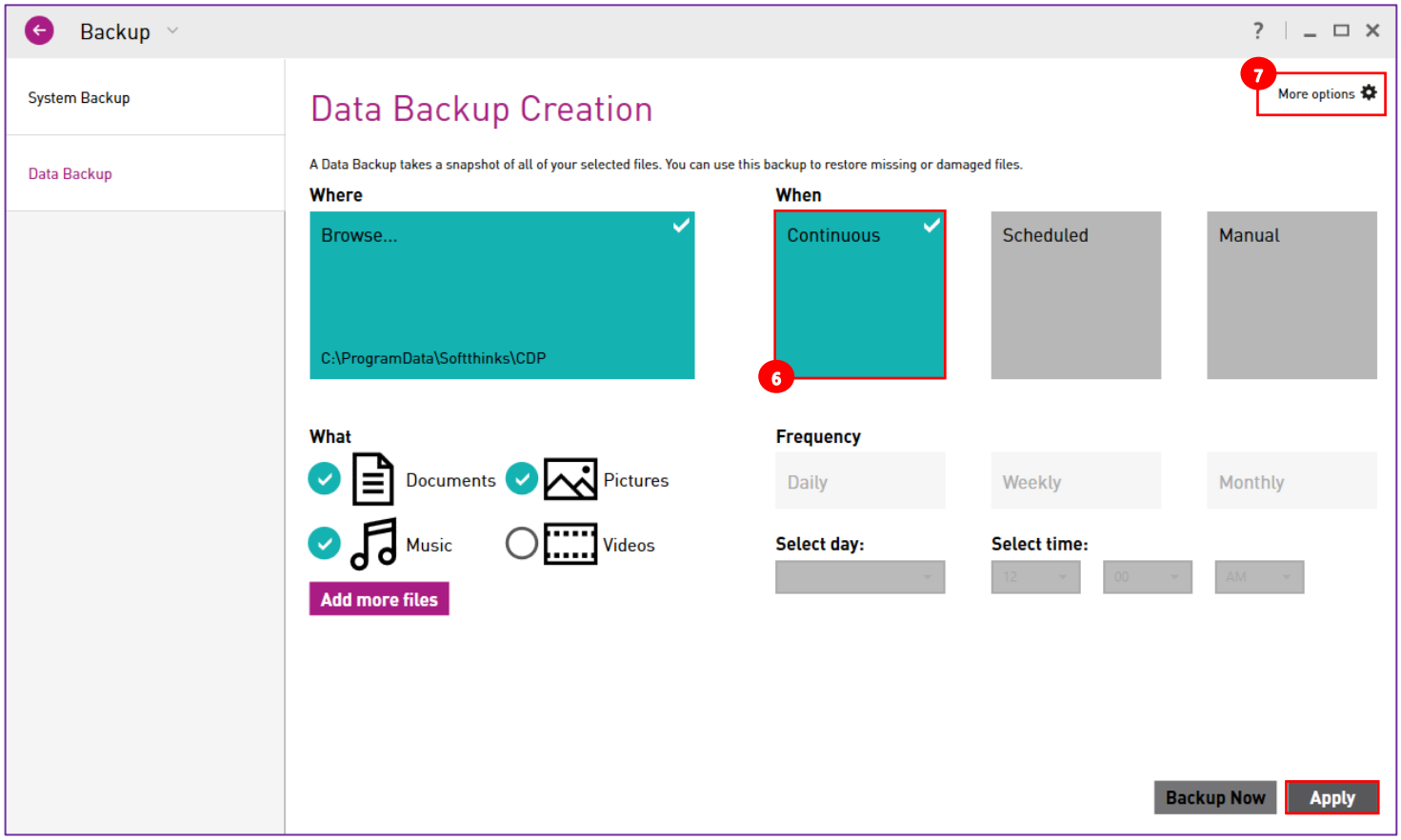
Protecting continuously your data

If you need to back up some specific files, typically your working documents you modify several times by day, as soon as they are saved, and to roll back to any recent version even some minutes ago, please follow the steps below to protect those critical data in real time:

6. In the “When” section, click on the "Continuous" tile 6:



Note: Even if your data are monitored in real time, we cannot capture the modifications you are making on your open documents until you save them.

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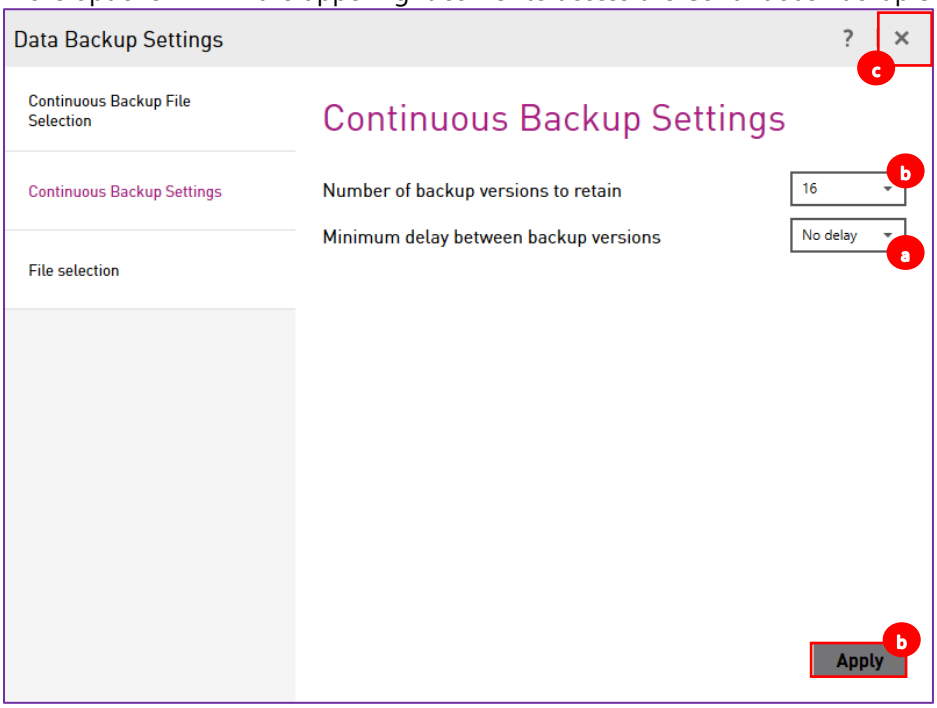
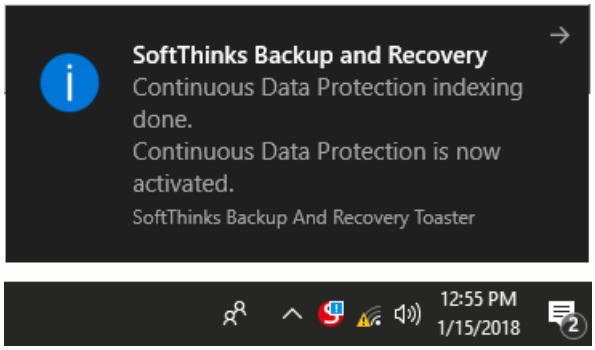
7. By default, your data selection is monitored in real time to capture any modification but you can change this setting by clicking on "More options" 7 in the upper right corner to access the Continuous Backup Settings:



a. Specify the minimum delay between backup versions:
   - "No Delay": we back up all versions
   - 2 / 4 / 6 / 8 / 12 / 24 hours: we don't backup the intermediate versions modified during this interval
     - ➢ If you save a document at 8:00 AM, 8:45 AM, 10:05 AM, 10:20 AM, 1:50 PM, 2:35PM, 4:34 PM, 6:00PM
       - ⇨ With 2h delay, we back up 8:00 AM, 10:05 AM, 1:50 PM and 4:34 PM versions
       - ⇨ With 4h delay, we back up 8:00AM, 1:50 PM and 6:00 PM version
       - ⇨ With 6h delay, we back up 8:00AM and 2:35 PM versions
       - ⇨ With 8h delay, we back up 8:00AM and 4:34 PM versions
       - ⇨ With 12h delay and more, we backup only 8:00 AM version

b. You can also change the number of versions of each file protected you want to keep. By default, we keep the 16 latest versions of each file but you can choose between 1, 3, 7, 16, 28 and 32 versions to keep.

c. When satisfied with your settings, click on the "Apply" button b and you will be notified that the Continuous Data Protection is now enabled:



d. Then on the "X" c in the upper left corner

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Repairing & Restoring your system

SoftThinks Backup and Recover allows you to repair or restore your device.
It will automatically detect most common software issues and guide you through the steps below to fix them.
All of the steps below may not be required. Only the steps required to resolve the issue will be performed.
Don't worry, the software will give you the opportunity to back up your data, applications and operating system settings if needed.

Repair & restore features

1. Smart Repair

Prior to any operation, a diagnostic of your system drive is made to ensure that there is no hardware issue that could prevent your device to be repaired or restored. If a problem is detected you will be invited to replace your drive. Before exiting the application, you will be offered to back up as much of your data as possible. Some data may not be accessible.

Next, a scan of your device is made to detect the most common errors by checking sequentially the following items:

1. Partition table
2. Master Boot Record
3. Volumes
4. Boot Files

If at least 1 error is detected in any of those 4 areas, a second phase will consist in fixing those errors. If all of them are fixed we will offer the user to restart your device to check if everything is fine or continue with Instant Restore or System Recovery features.

2. Instant Restore

Instant Restore repairs certain software issues that might arise during the Windows lifecycle without the need to restore a Data Backup, a System Backup, or Windows restore point. By default, it is protecting system files, boot files, and registry entries and doesn't impact other files.

By default, Instant Restore will repair your Operating System with the most recent Instant Restore snapshot. Don't worry, your data will not be affected.

Once the snapshot applied, you can try to restart your device to check if everything is fine or continue with System Recovery.

This feature is available in the recovery environment if you didn't disable it and if at least one snapshot has been created and is still accessible.

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3. User Data Backup

Right before recovering your system, your personal settings and data will be backed up. The files types pre-selected to be saved are:

Documents

Photo, Audio/Music, and Video Files

Emails, Calendars, Contacts and Favorites

Financial Data

You will be able to view the summary and add any additional file that you would like to save by clicking on "Select more" button.

The SoftThinks Backup and Recovery application and settings will be saved as well (except if you reset completely your device).

You might need to connect a USB drive or a SD Card if the data you want to back up cannot be retained on the internal storage or if you completely reset your device.

If for any reason your data has not been restored during the recovery process, you will be invited to restore them from the SoftThinks Backup and Recovery application under Windows. You will also be able to restore them if you run another System Recovery. If your backup has been stored on a USB drive or SD Card during the previous process, you will have to connect it.

You can skip the data backup creation but all the data you have created since the last System Backup will be lost.

4. System Recovery

The System Recovery will allow you to recover the entire disk contents including files, application settings and e-mail accounts to their state on when the latest System Backup was taken, or to its factory state if no System Backup has been made.

If your disk layout has changed and this prevents the system to be restored, we will offer you to completely reset your device and it will be exactly as it was when you first received it from the factory. This will require you to boot the device from an external recovery media.

You can manually select the System Backup you want to restore, or perform a Factory Refresh or a Reset of your device. Refresh will leave the disk layout, whereas Reset will completely recreate the disk layout as it was when it left the factory.

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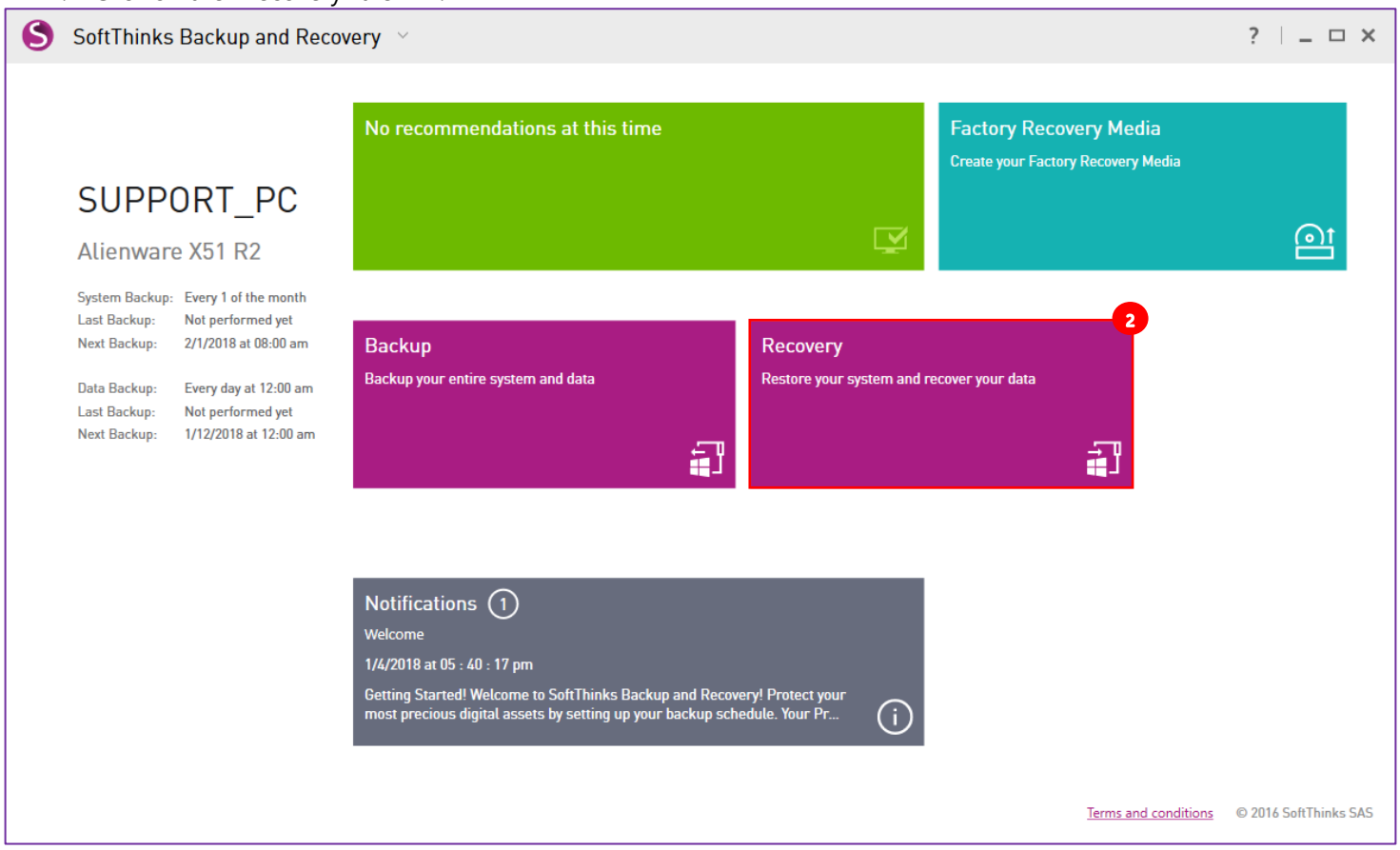
Accessing the Repair & Restore environment

You have several possibilities to initiate the reparation or restoration process:

- From the SBAR User Interface in Windows if your Operating System is functional
- From the Microsoft troubleshoot menu and, if implemented by the manufacturer of your device, from a specific boot key (typically if your Operating System is unreachable or unstable but your local recovery environment is safe)
- From your Recovery Media (typically if your internal Hard Disk has been replaced or if your local recovery environment is missing or damaged)

Initiating the Repair & Recovery process from the SBAR User Interface in Windows

1. Open SoftThinks Backup and Recovery user interface (See Opening SoftThinks Backup and Recovery)
2. Click on the "Recovery" tile 2:



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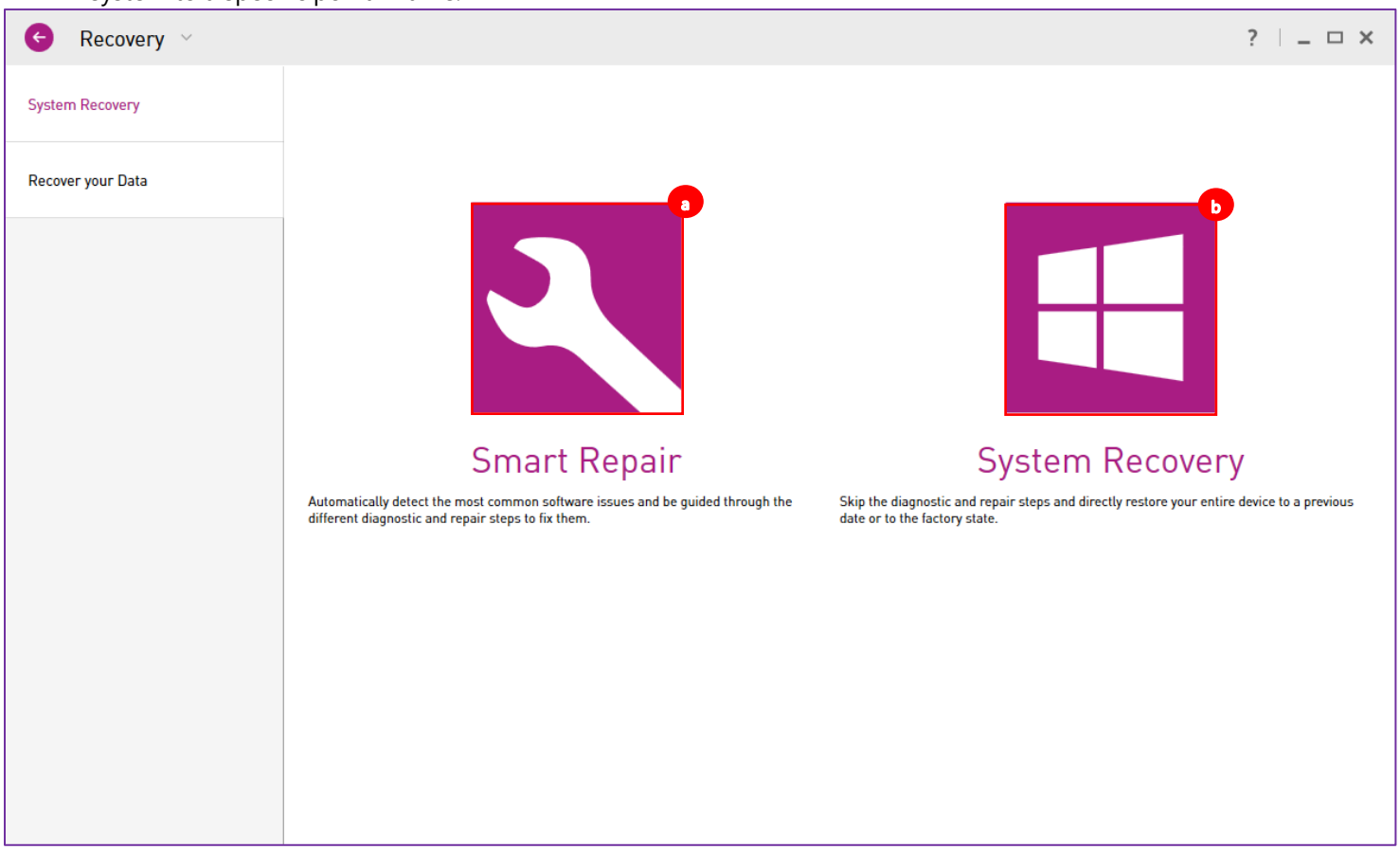
3. On the next screen, click on the “Smart Repair” tile (a) to diagnostic your system and repair the issues detected in an automatic and guided way, or on the “System Recovery” tile (b) to skip the diagnostics and directly restore your system to a specific point in time:



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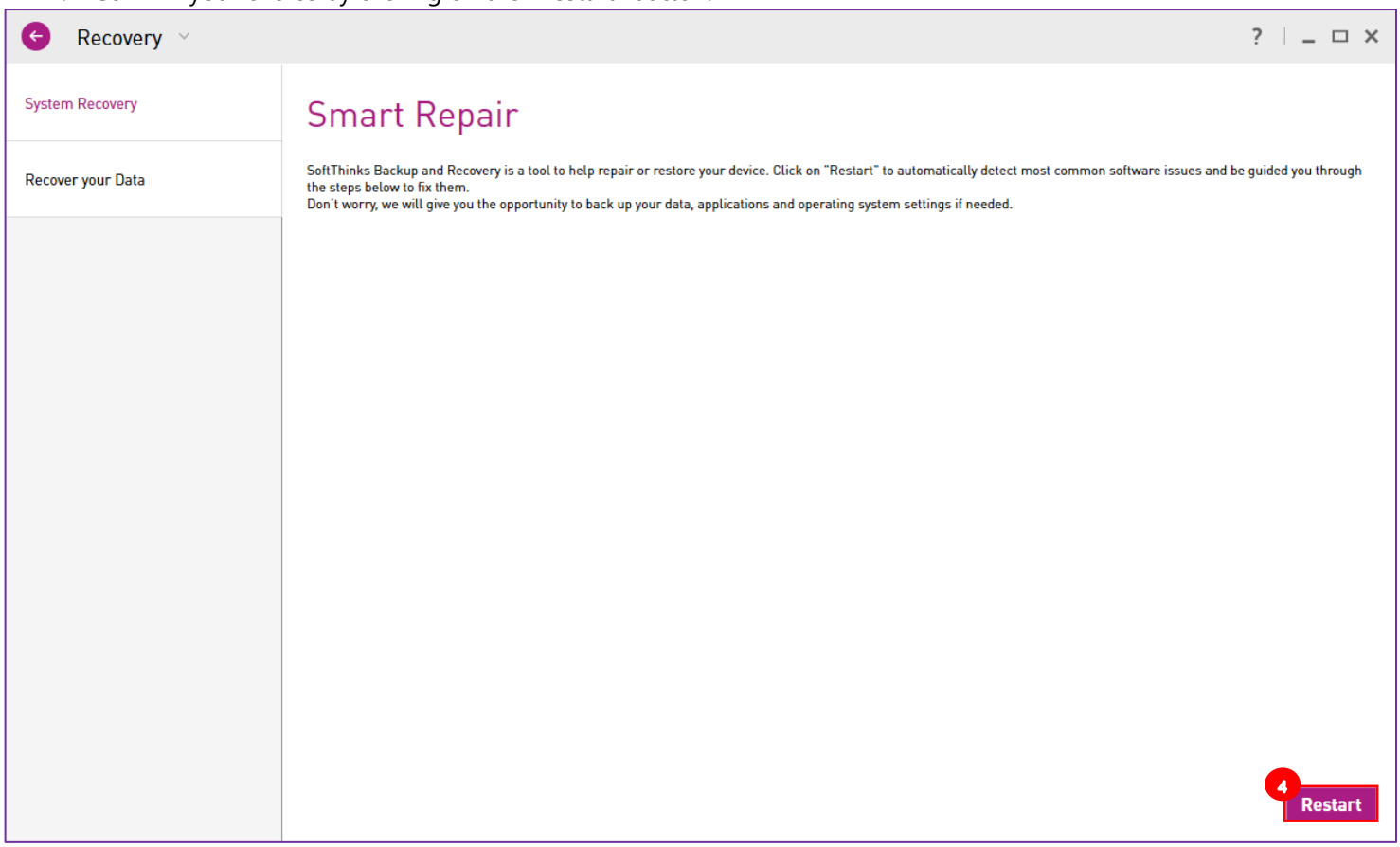
Smart Repair

4. Confirm your choice by clicking on the “Restart” button:



5. Your device will automatically restart and you will arrive to the screen described in step 6.

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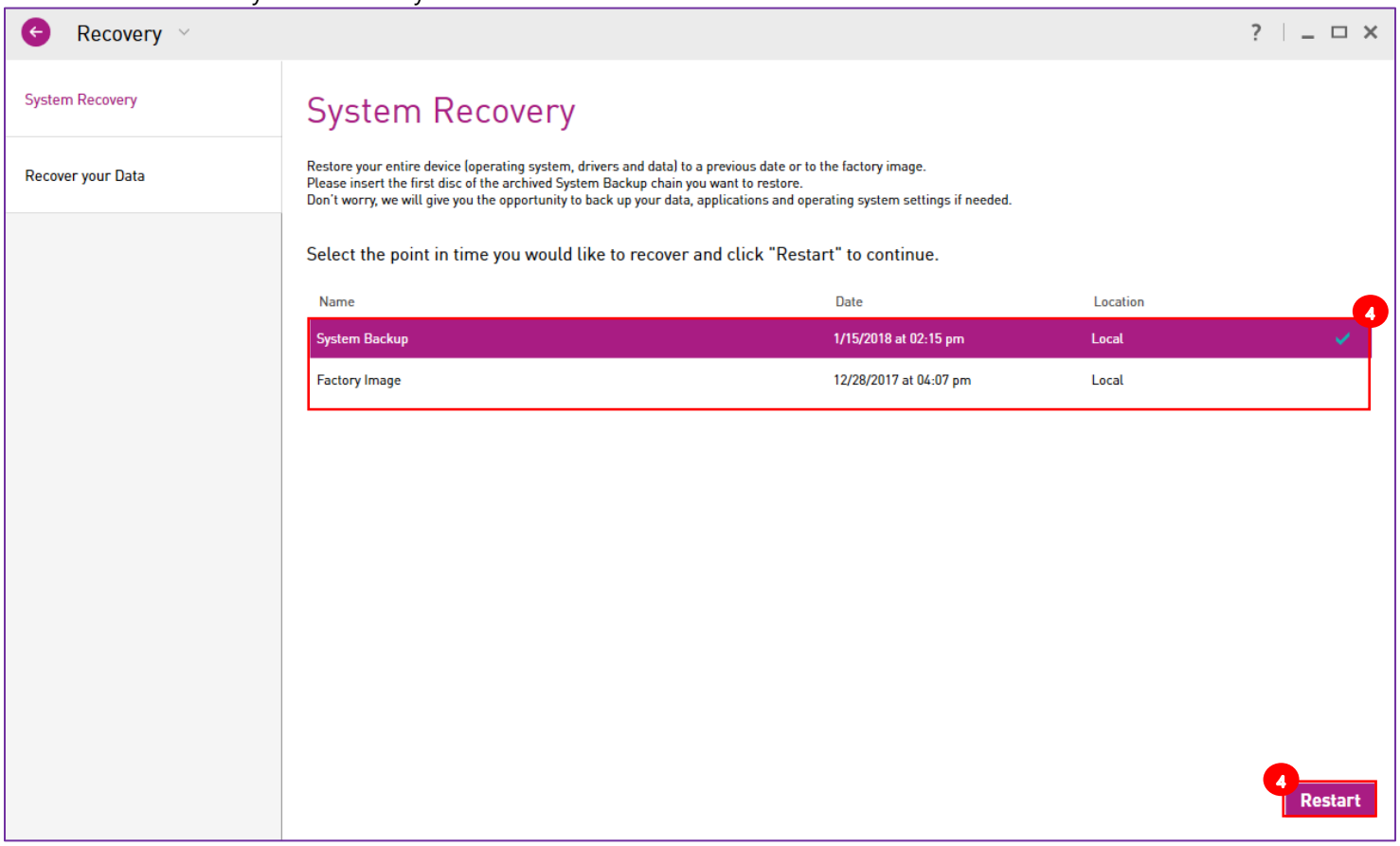
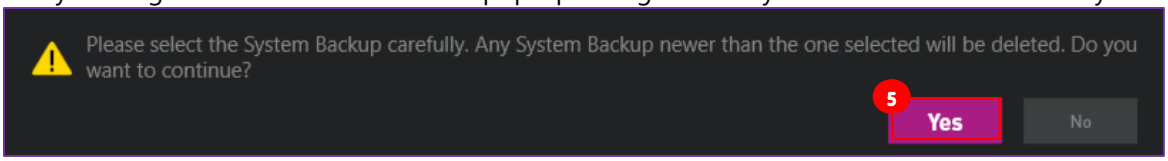
System Recovery

4. Select the Factory Image or any System Backup you want to restore and click on the "Restart" button to restart your device in the System Recovery environment:



5. Confirm by clicking on the "Yes" button in the pop-up dialog box and your device will automatically restart:



Note: We delete System Backups more recent than the one you select in order to keep your system integrity in the case of future system recovery. The System Backup are incremental and consequently the more recent ones will no more correspond the state when they have been captured if you restore an older one and then make some modifications. Using them later could result on a non-functional system and to prevent this we remove them.

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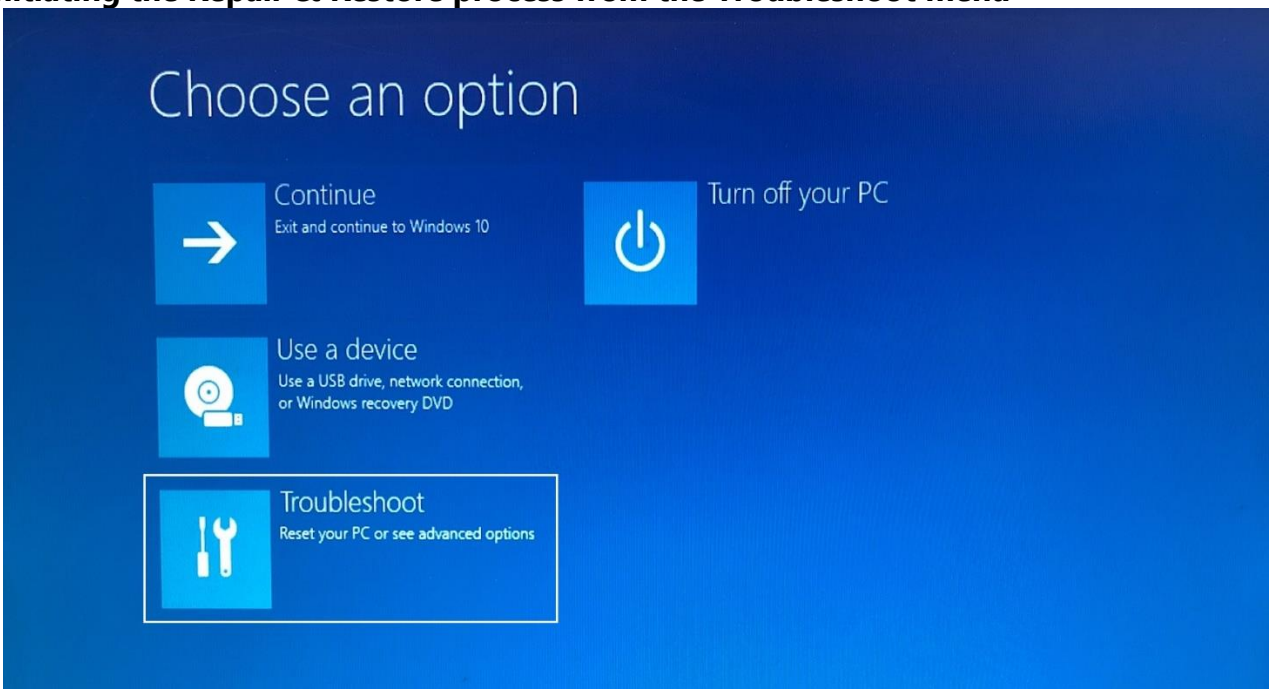
Initiating the Repair & Restore process from the Troubleshoot menu



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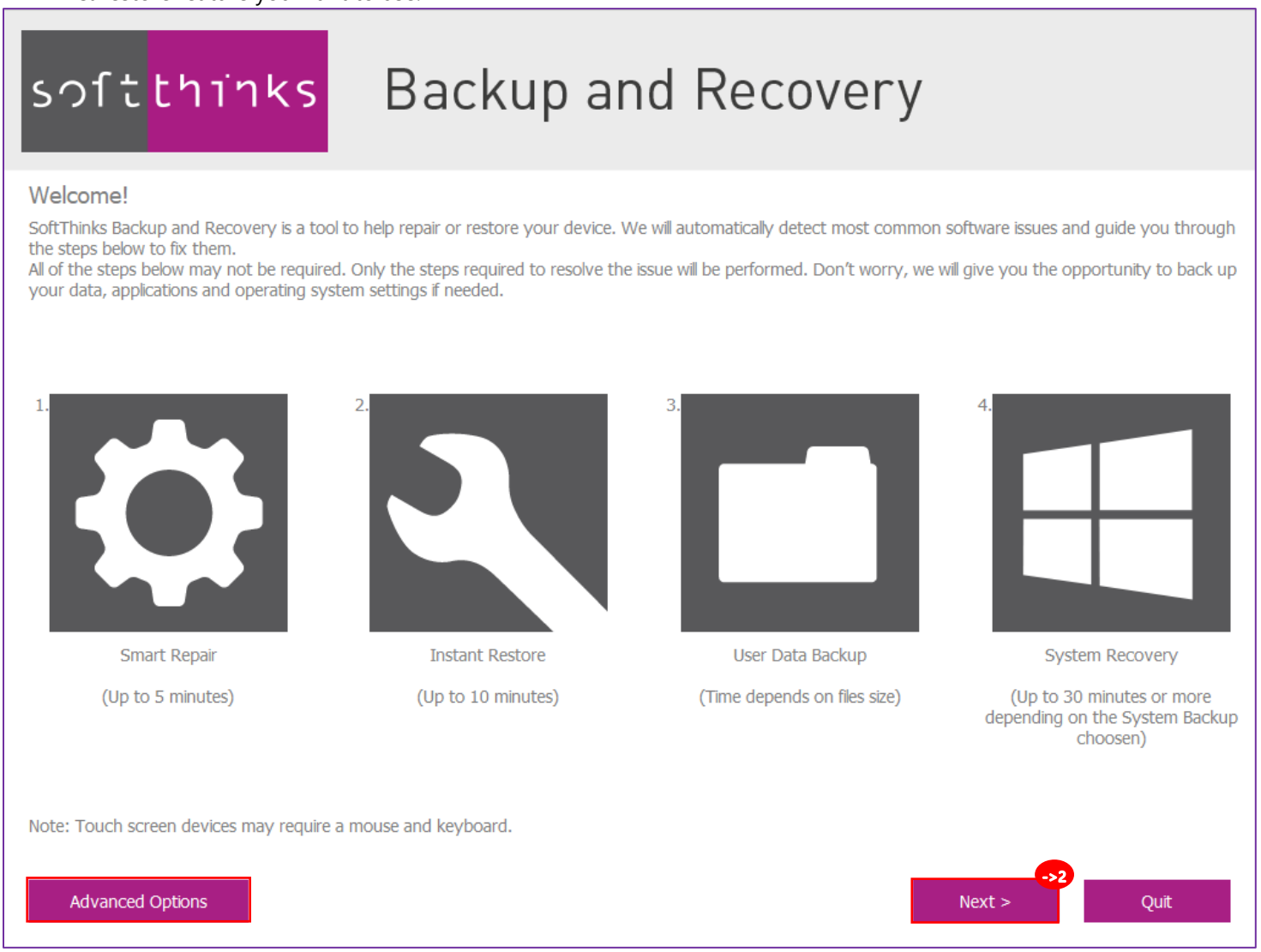
Repairing & Restoring your system from the local Recovery Partition

1. After your system will have rebooted into the recovery environment, you will arrive to the welcome screen below. Click on the "Next >" button to be guided through the steps required to repair or recover your system (see Repair & restore features), or click on the "Advanced Options" button in the bottom left corner to directly choose which repair & restore feature you want to use:



Note: If you are using a notebook or a tablet please ensure that it's plugged to the AC power or, for tablets without dedicated charging port, fully charged. Else you will be invited to plug your device to the AC power or charge it before continuing the process.

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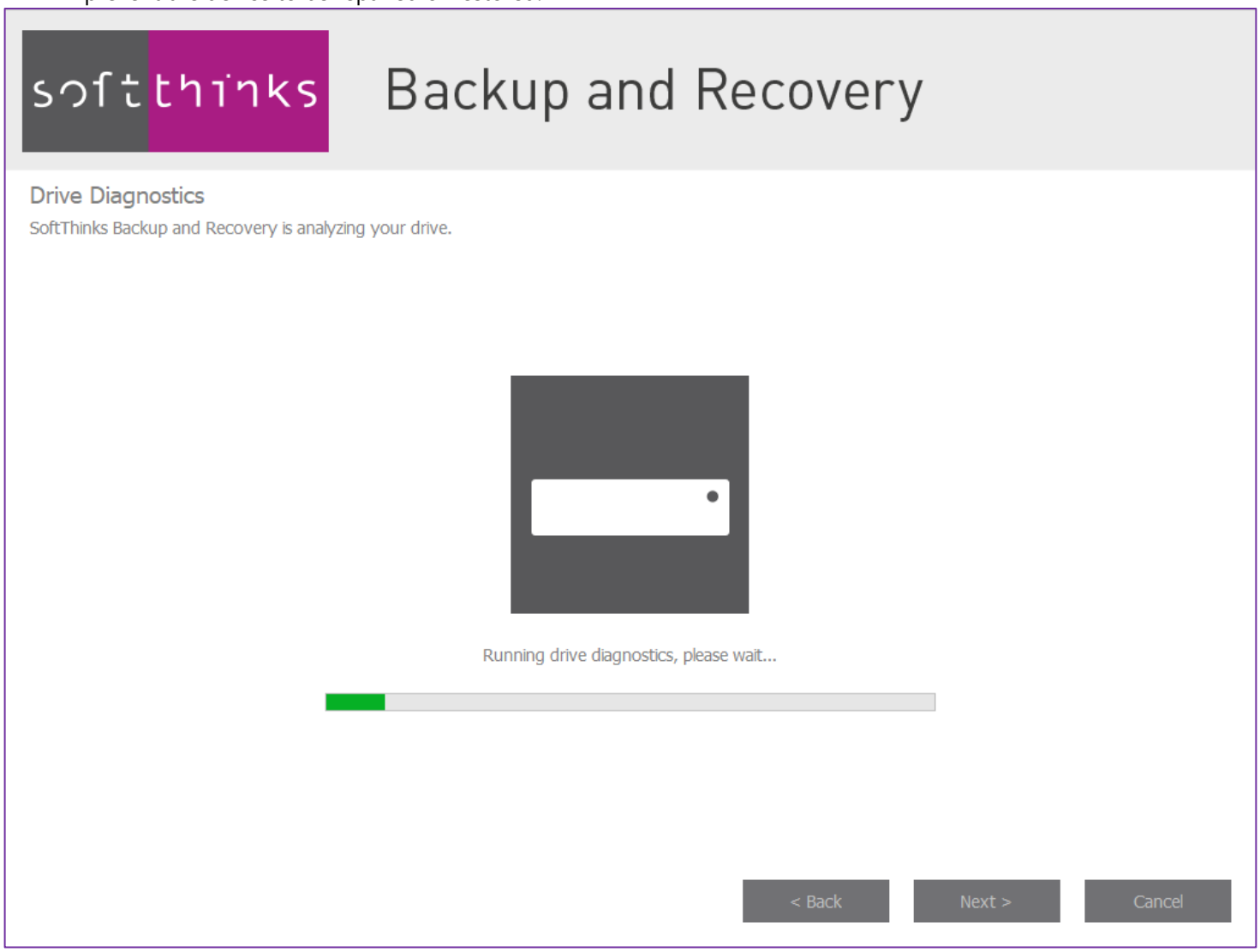
2. We first analyze the drive containing your operating system to ensure that there is no hardware issue that could prevent the device to be repaired or restored:



Note: If we already analyzed the drive during the last 24h we will skip this step.

If a problem is detected on our system disk you will be invited to replace it. Before exiting the application, you will be offered to back up as much of his data as possible. Some data may not be accessible.

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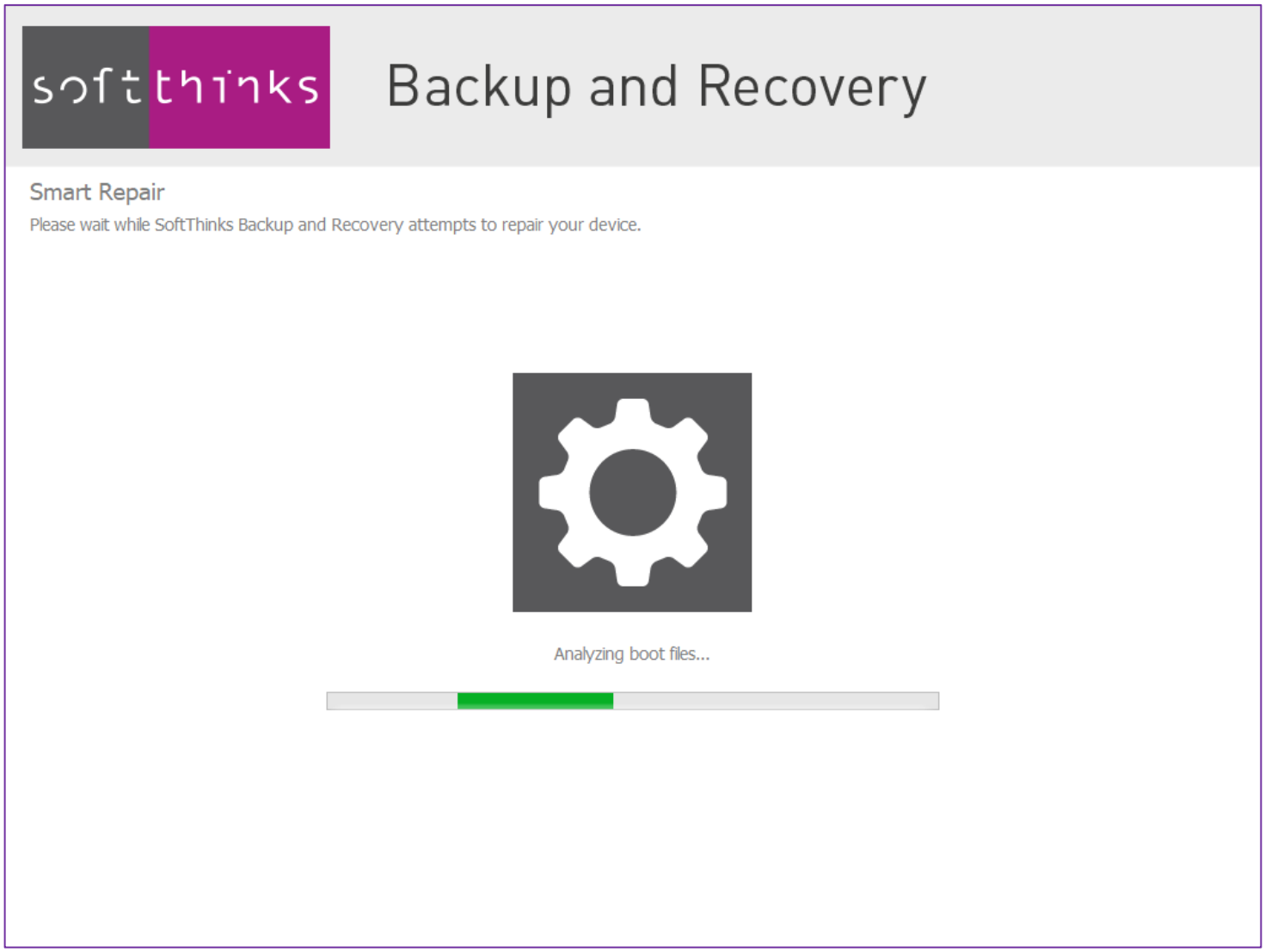
3. Once we ensured that your system disk has no hardware issue, our Smart Repair technology will scan the device to detect the most common issues which prevent your device to start by checking sequentially the following items:
    a. Partition table
    b. Master Boot Record
    c. Volumes
    d. Boot Files



Note: If we already ran Smart Repair during the last 24h, we will make a 2nde pass because by experience some complex and interdependent issues can be solved with a 2nd pass, but contrary to the 1st pass, even if the fix errors we will continue automatically with the next step.

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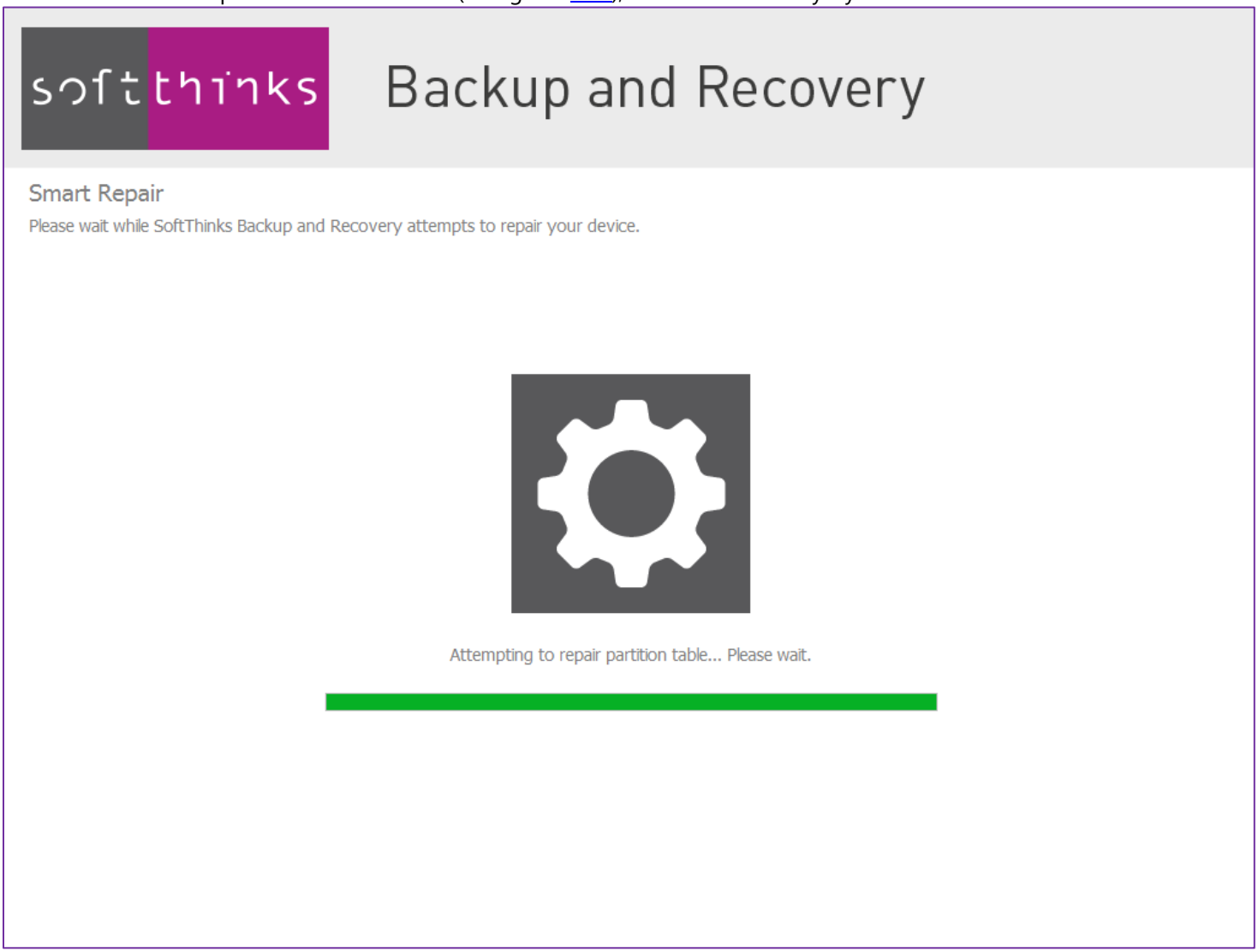
4. A. If Smart Repair found some issues (else go to 4. B.), it will automatically try to fix them:



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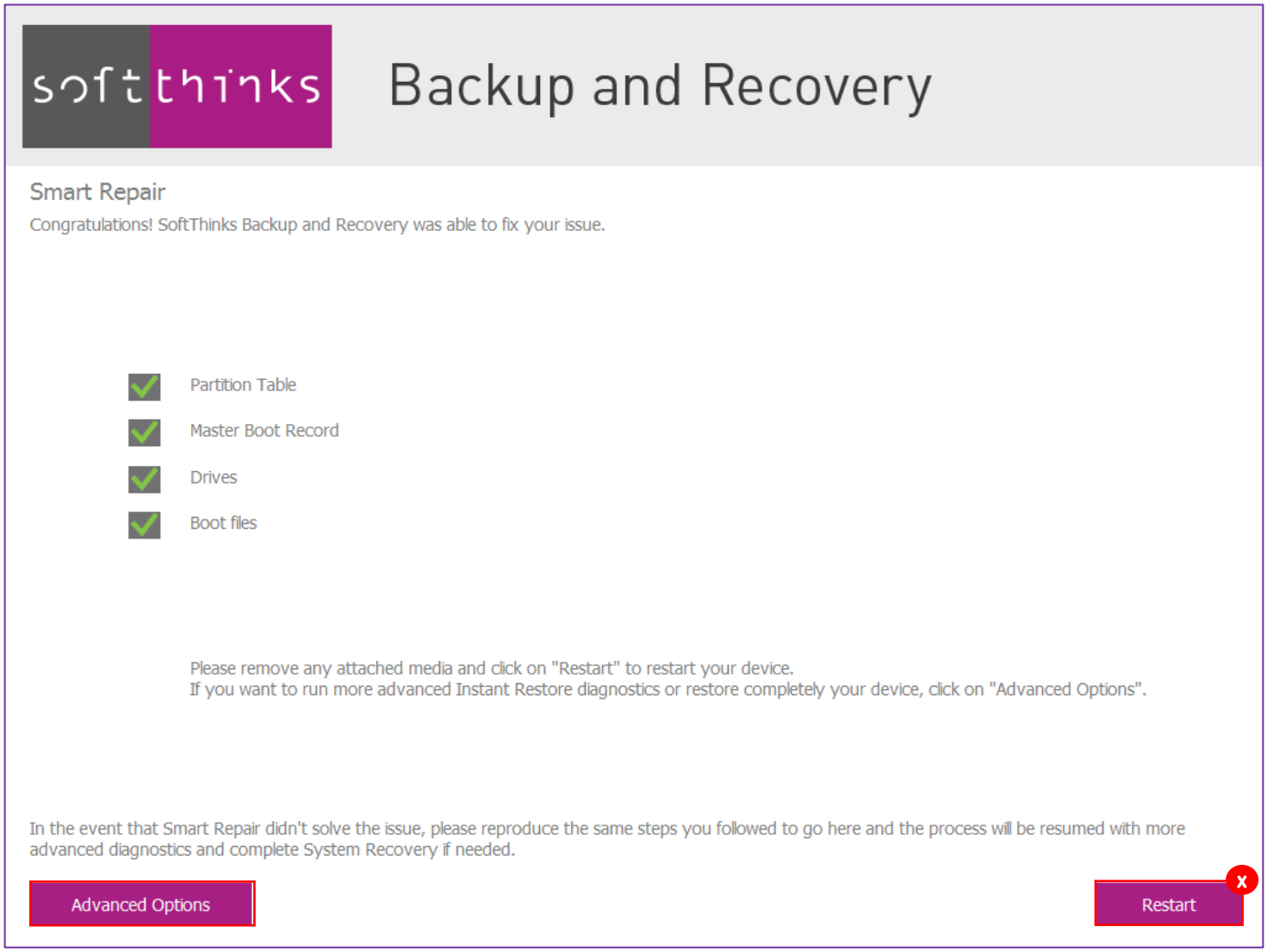
4. A. I. If Smart Repair was able to fix all the issues found, you will be invited to to restart your system to ensure that there are no more issues (you might have files corrupted or missing that would require to restore an Instant Restore snapshot or a complete System Backup):



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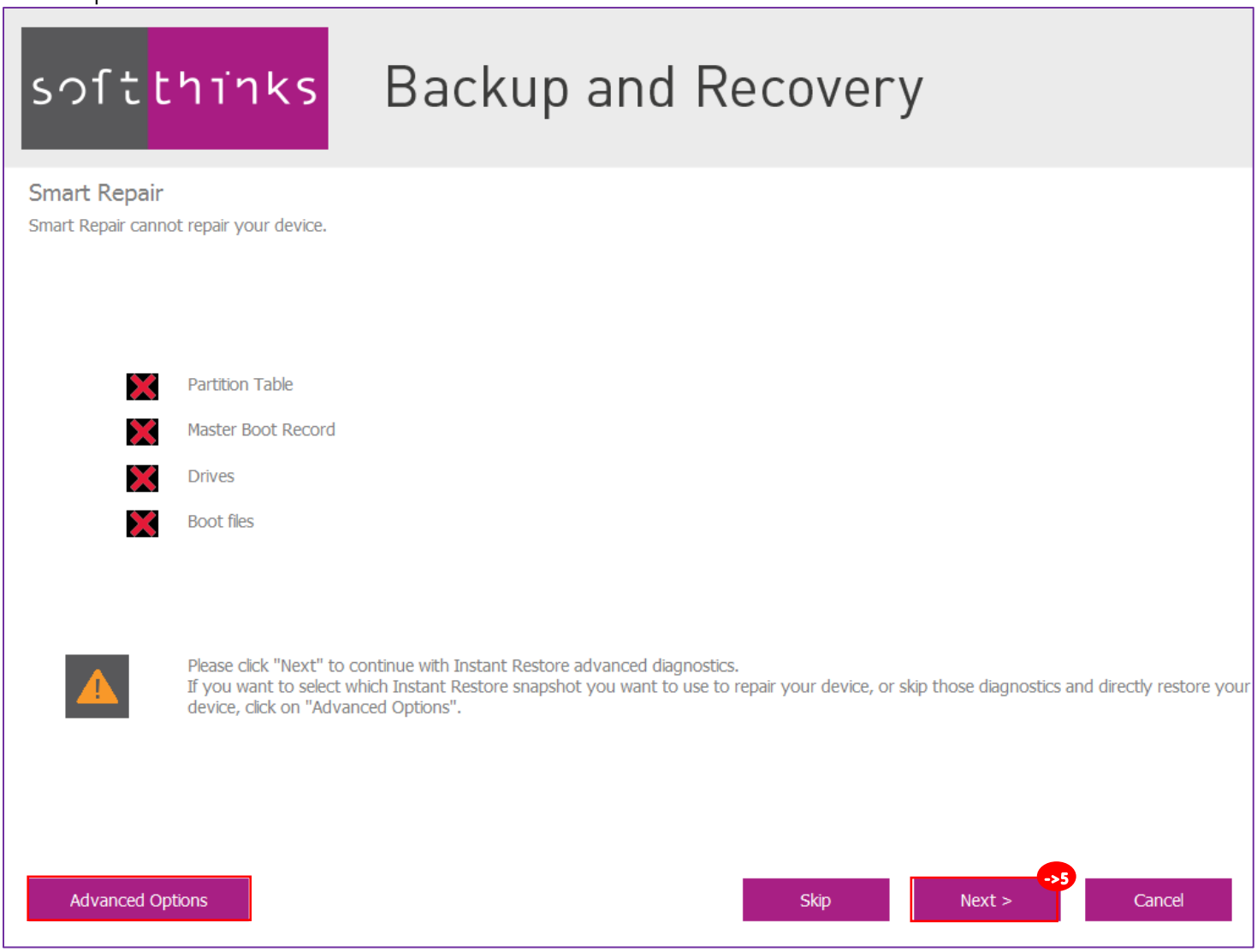
4. A. II. If Smart Repair was not able to fix all the issues found, a red mark will indicate which element has not been fixed. Click on the "Next >" button to restore the latest Instant Restore snapshot (go to the step 5). If you want to select another Instant Restore snapshot or prefer skipping this step to restore directly your device, click on the "Advanced Options" button:



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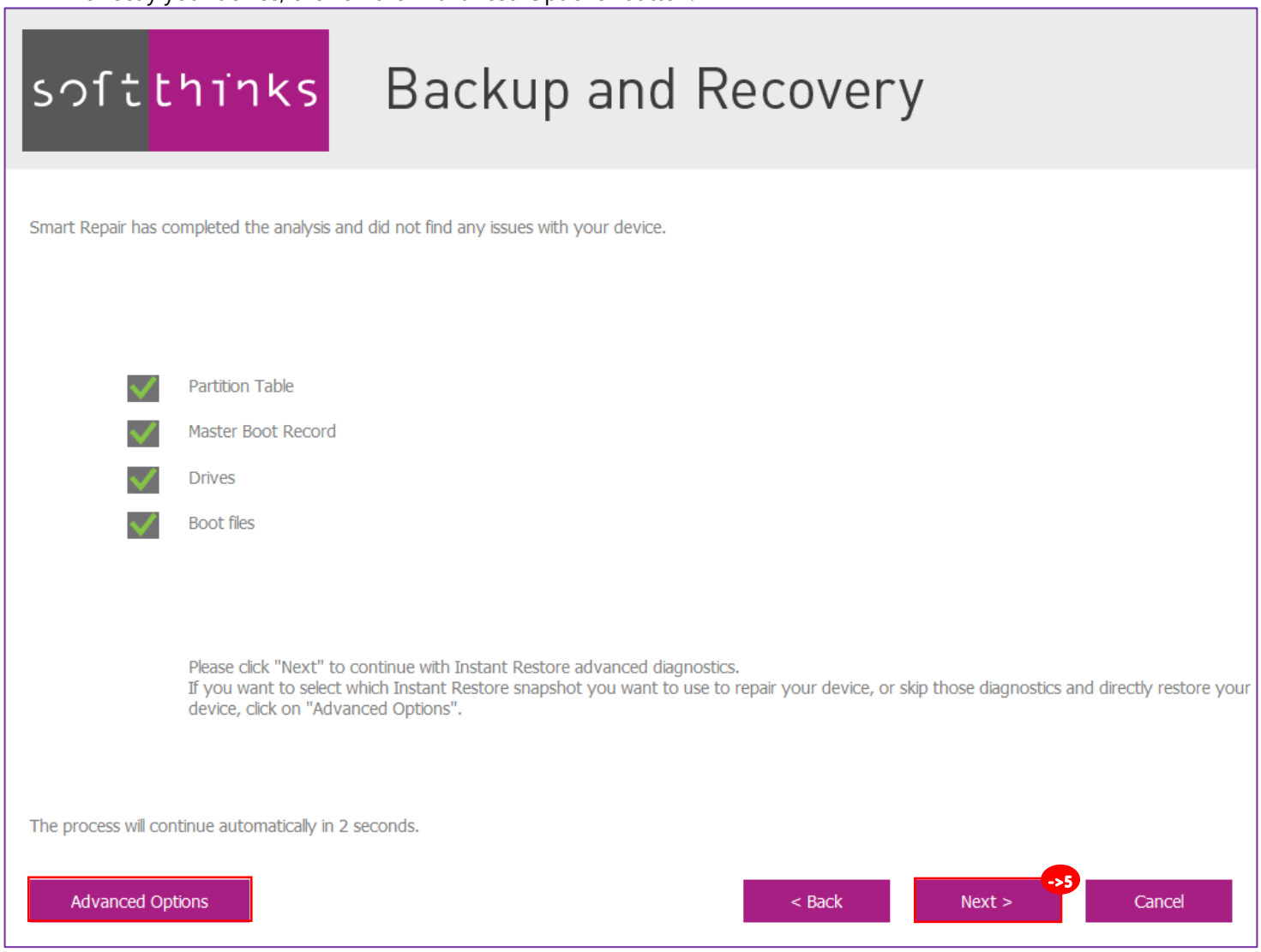
4. B. If Smart Repair didn't find any issue, click on the "Next >" button to restore the latest Instant Restore snapshot (See Instant Restore). If you want to select another Instant Restore snapshot or prefer skipping this step to restore directly your device, click on the "Advanced Options" button:



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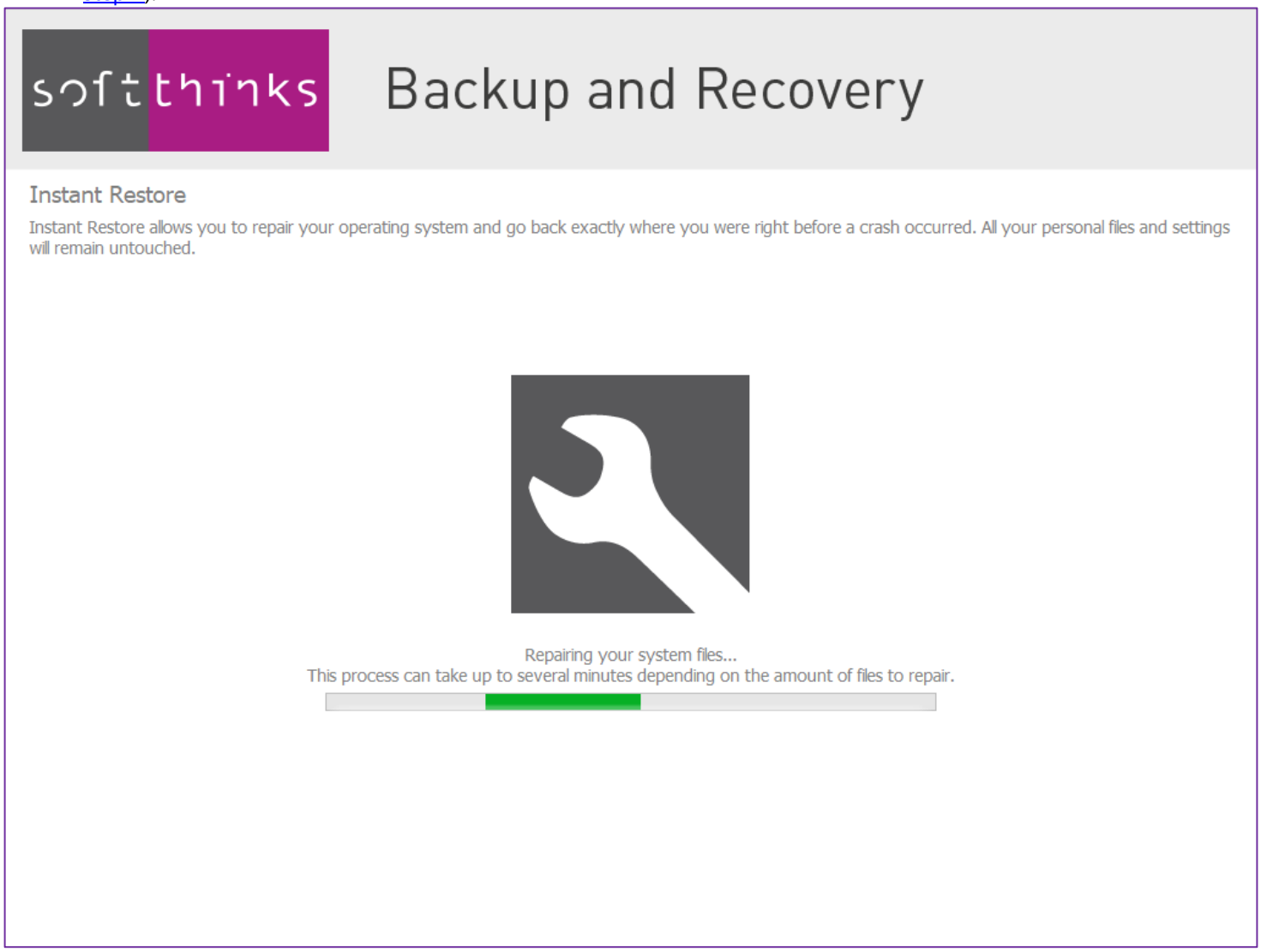
5. If we can find Instant Restore snapshots, we will restore automatically the latest one after having ensured that it is not damaged (See Instant Restore) as shown below, else, we will continue directly with the system restoration (go to the step 7):



Note: If we already restored the latest Instant Restore snapshot during the last 24h, we will use the previous one.

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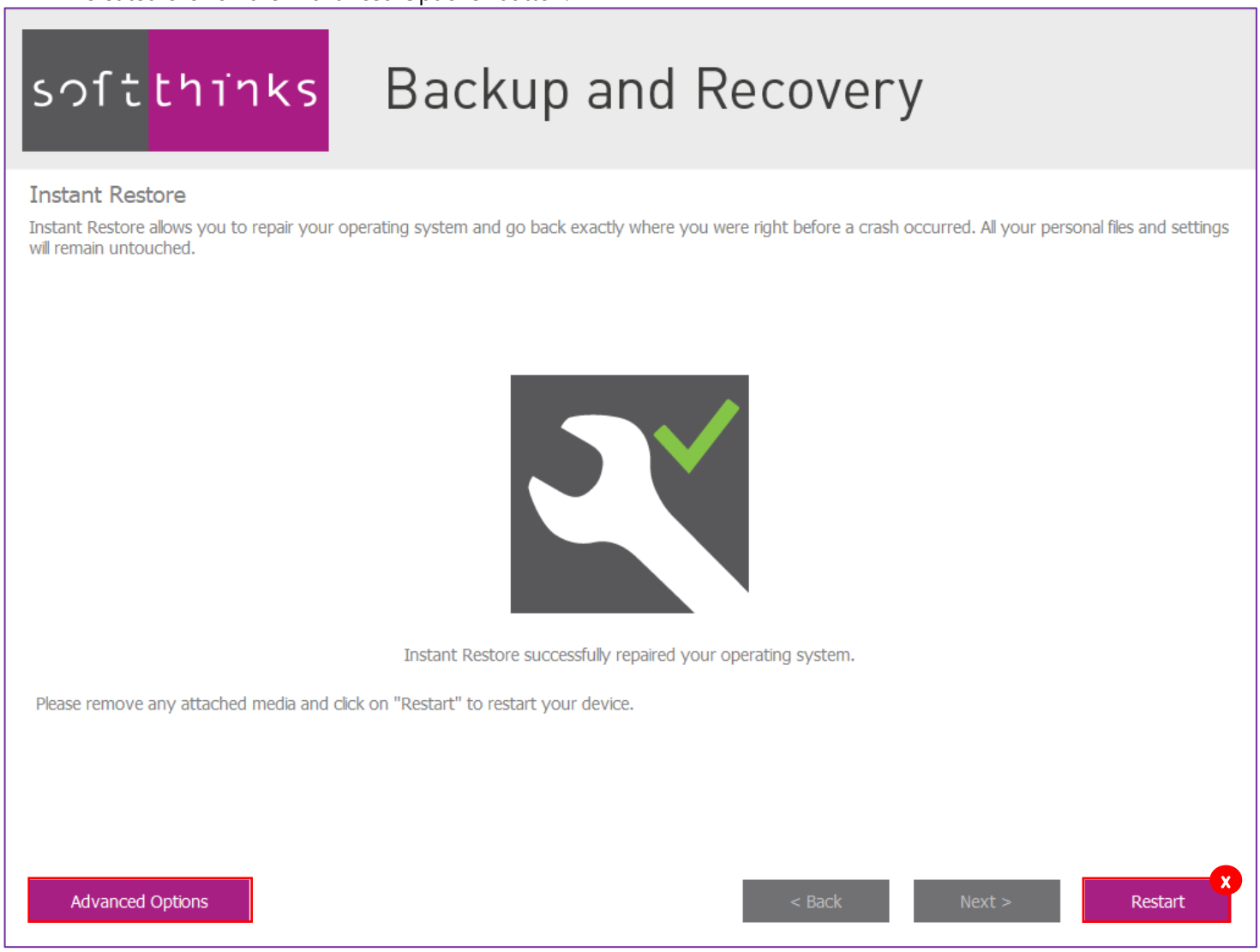
6. You will be notified once the Instant Restore snapshot has been successfully applied, and you will be invited to restart your system. If you prefer restoring your system with the Factory Image or any other System Backup you might have created click on the "Advanced Options" button:



Note: You will be notified if we were not able to restore the Instant Restore snapshot and invited to continue with the restoration of your system with the most recent System Backup.

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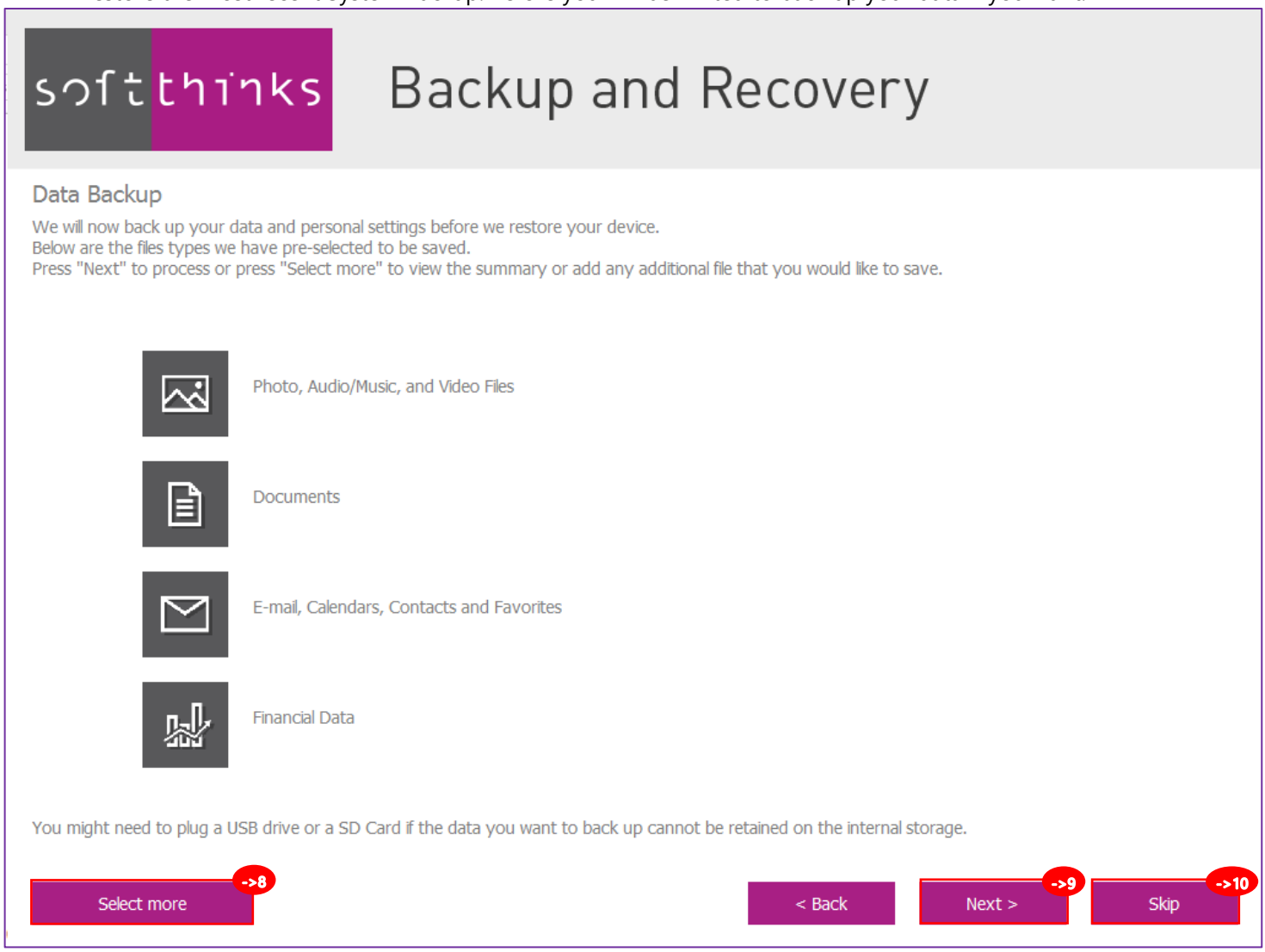
7. If Smart Repair and Instant Restore were not usable or were not able to detect and fix issues, we will automatically restore the most recent System Backup. Before you will be invited to back up your data if you want:



By default, all you photo, music, video, documents, e-mails, calendars, contacts, favorites and financial data will be pre-selected to be saved (we will backup files with an extension matching those type of data). Depending on the current version of Windows and the version you will restore we will keep some of your system settings, as well as SoftTthinks Backup and recovery files and settings.

- You can review and adapt this selection (removing or adding files and folders) by clicking on the “Select More” button in the bottom left corner (go to the step 8).
- You can backup the default data selected by clicking on the button “Next >” (go to the step 9).
- If you don’t want to backup any data, click on the “Skip” button (go directly to the step 10) but all the data you have created since the last System Backup will be lost.

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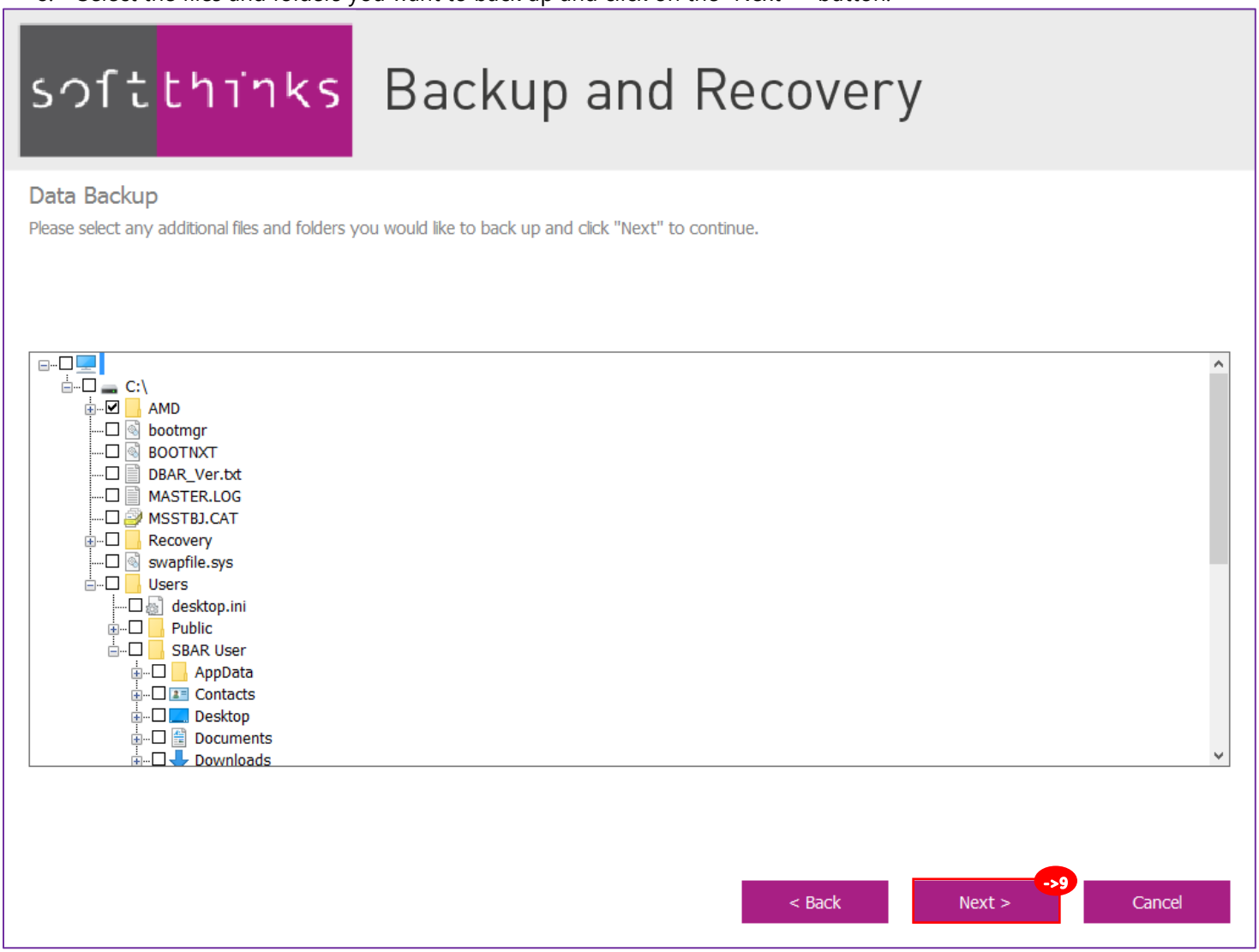
8. Select the files and folders you want to back up and click on the “Next >” button:



Note: System files are filtered out to prevent the corruption of the system restored.

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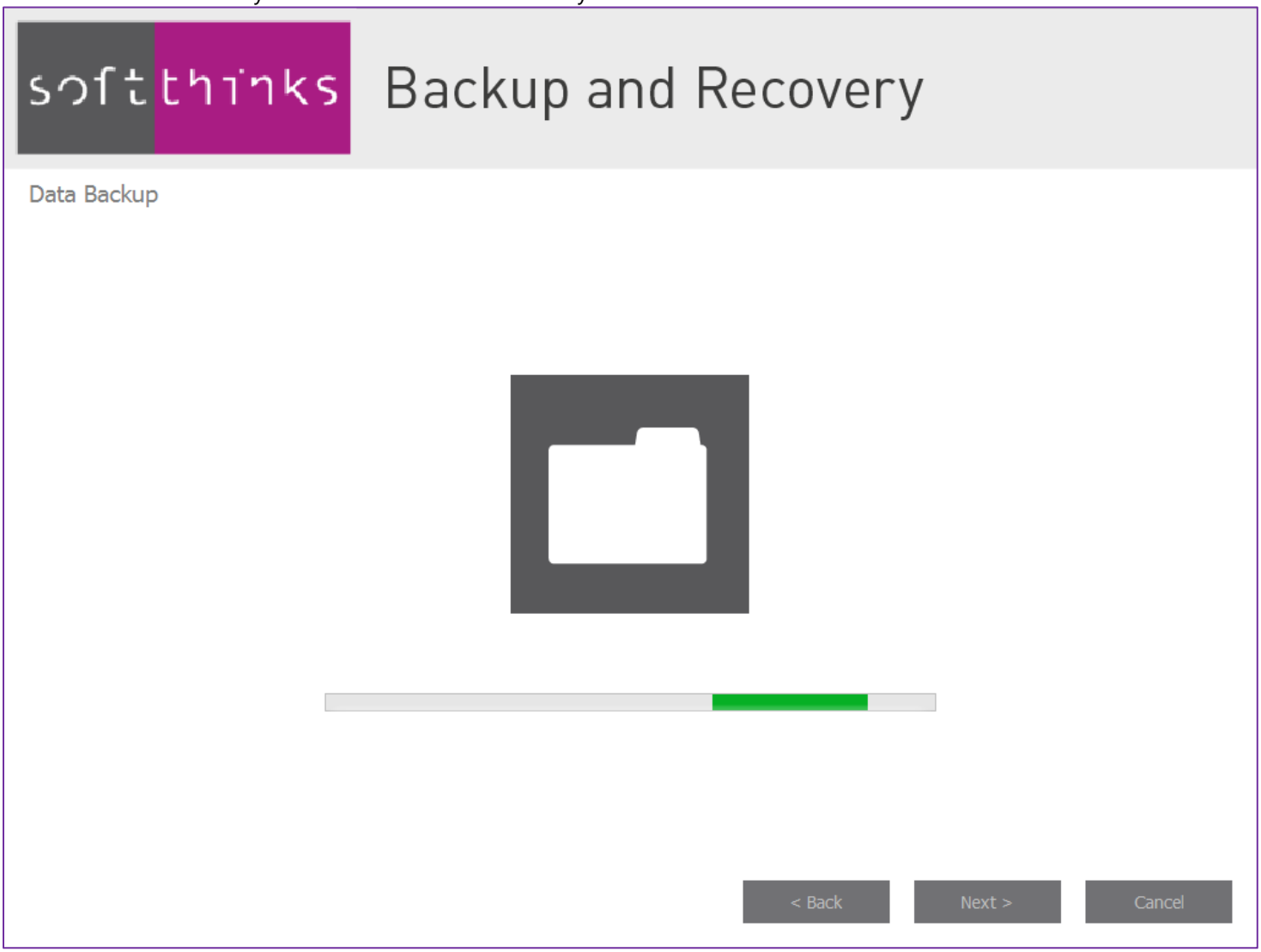
9. Please wait while your hard disk is scanned to list your data:



You might need to connect a USB drive or a SD Card if the data you want to back up cannot be retained on the internal storage or if you completely reset your device.

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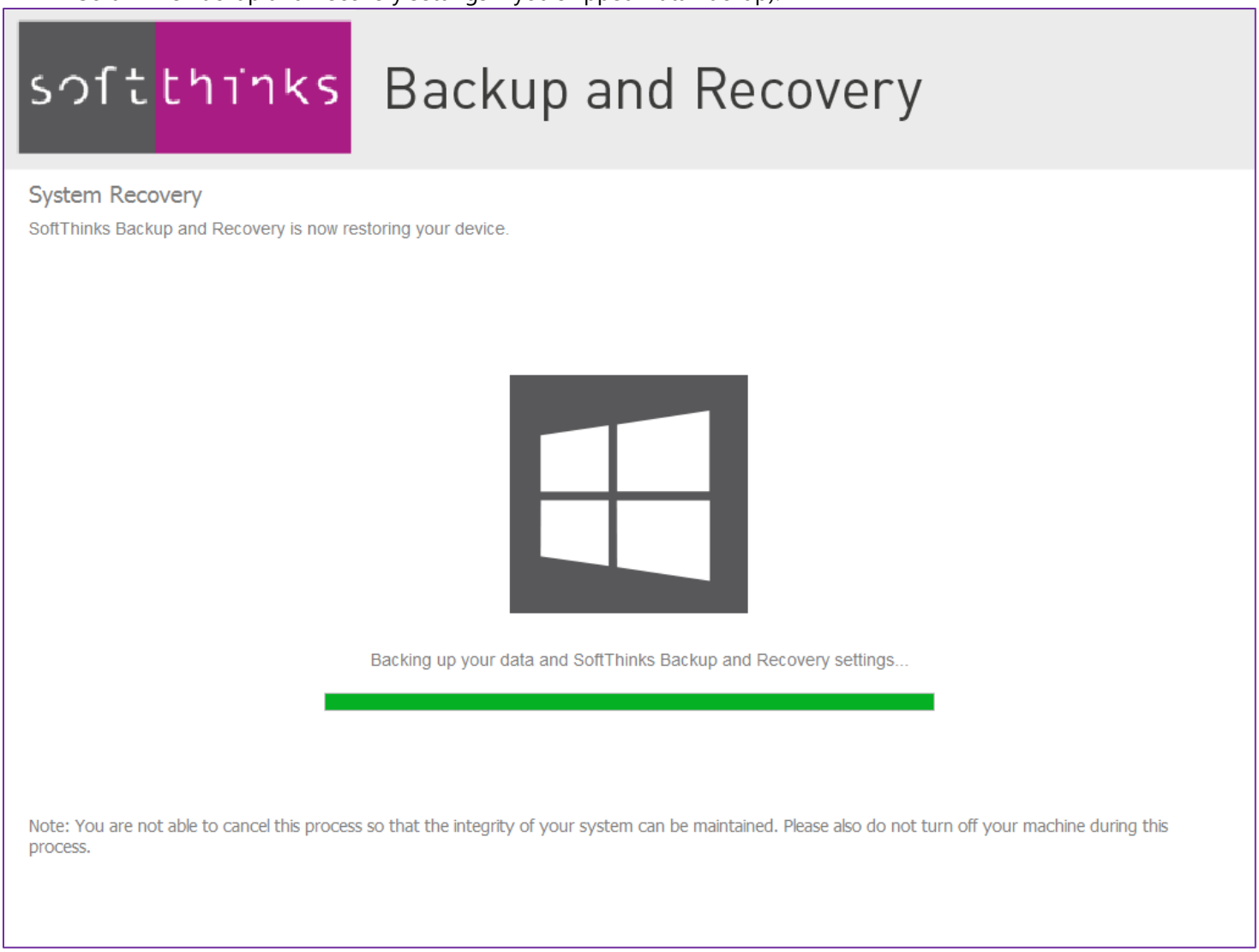
10. The files and folder your selected and SoftThinks Backup and Recovery settings are now being backed up (only SoftThinks Backup and Recovery settings if you skipped Data Backup):



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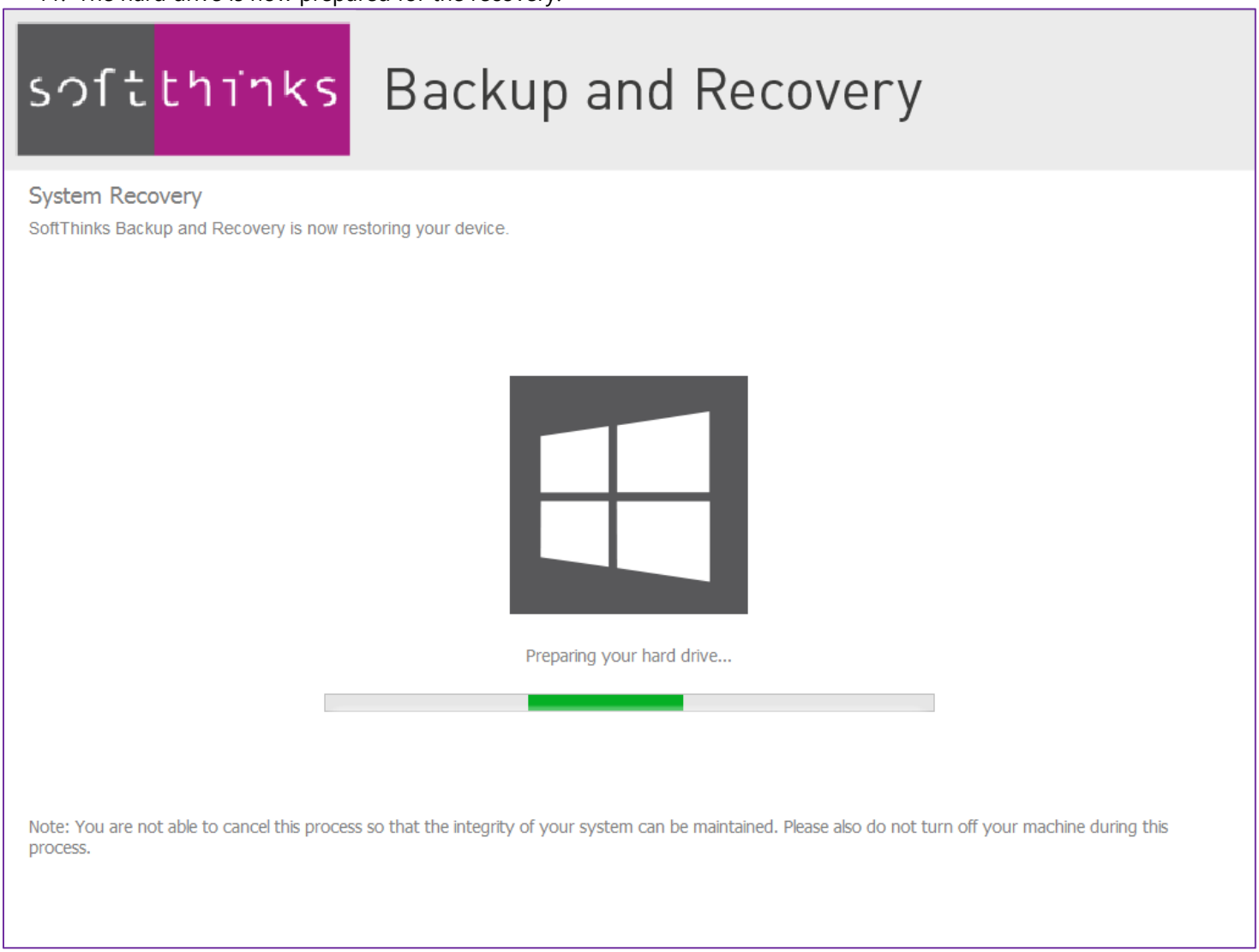
11. The hard drive is now prepared for the recovery:



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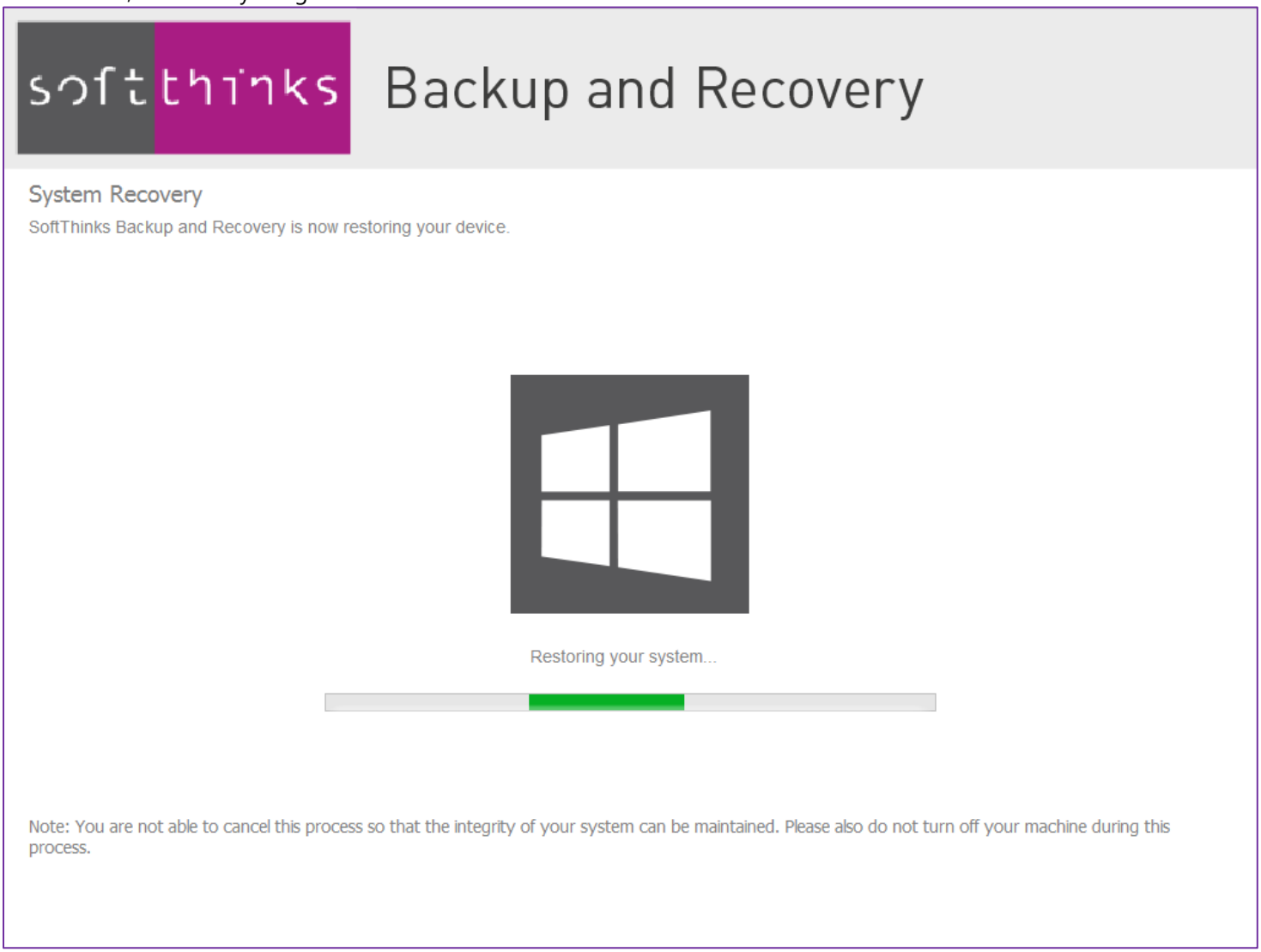
12. Then, the Factory Image is extracted:



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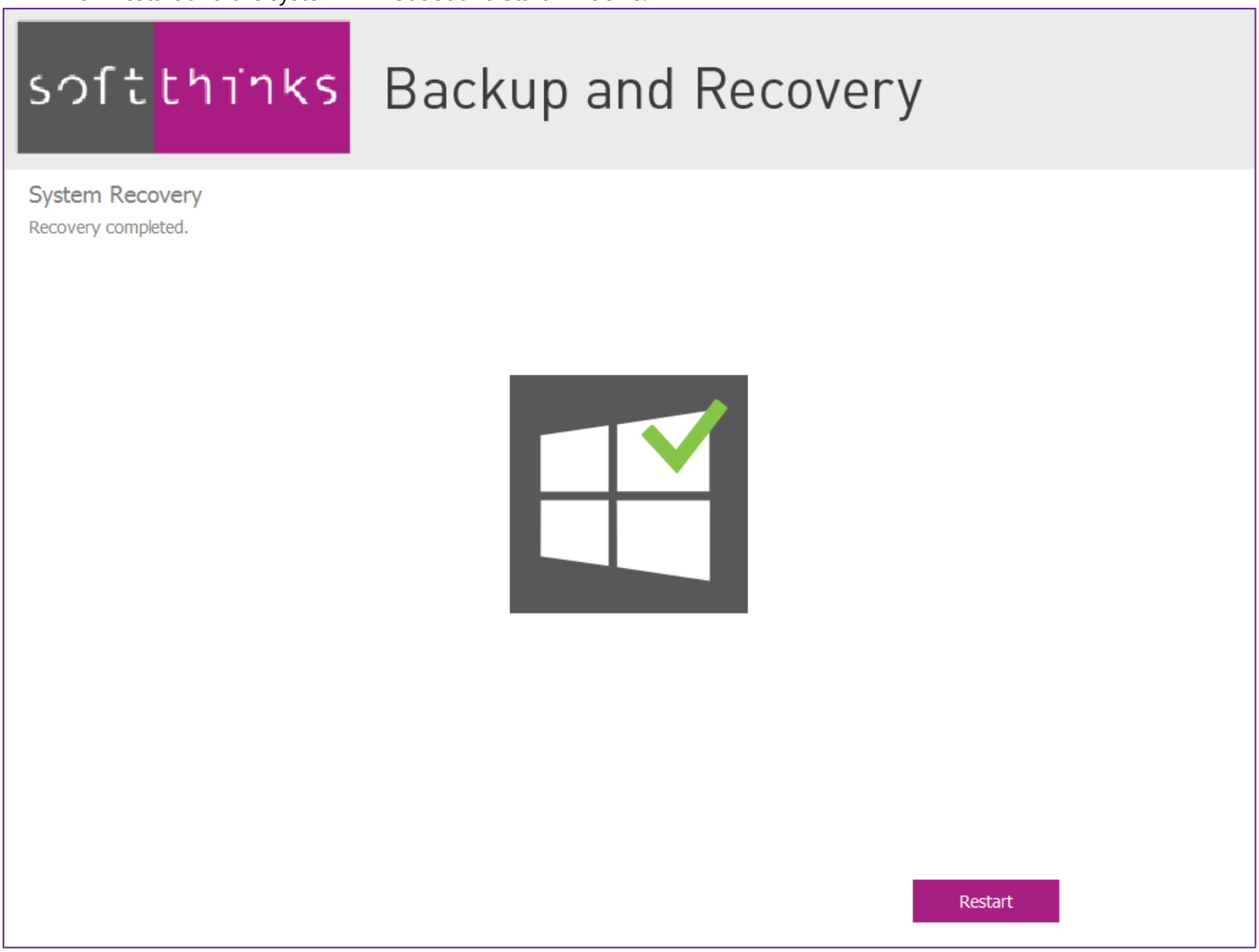
13. Once the Factory Image has been restored to your hard drive and is complete you will see the below screen. Just click on Restart and the system will reboot and start windows:



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Restoring your system with a pre-selected System Backup

1. If you pre-selected the Factory Image as in this example, or any other System Backup, in Windows User Interface you will arrive to the screen below when you will have booted into the SoftThinks recovery environment:

- If you want to back up your data and then recover your device with the System Backup you pre-selected, click on the "Next >" button and go to step 2.

- If you don't want to back up your date and recover directly your device with the System Backup you pre-selected, click on the "Ignore" button and go directly to step 4.

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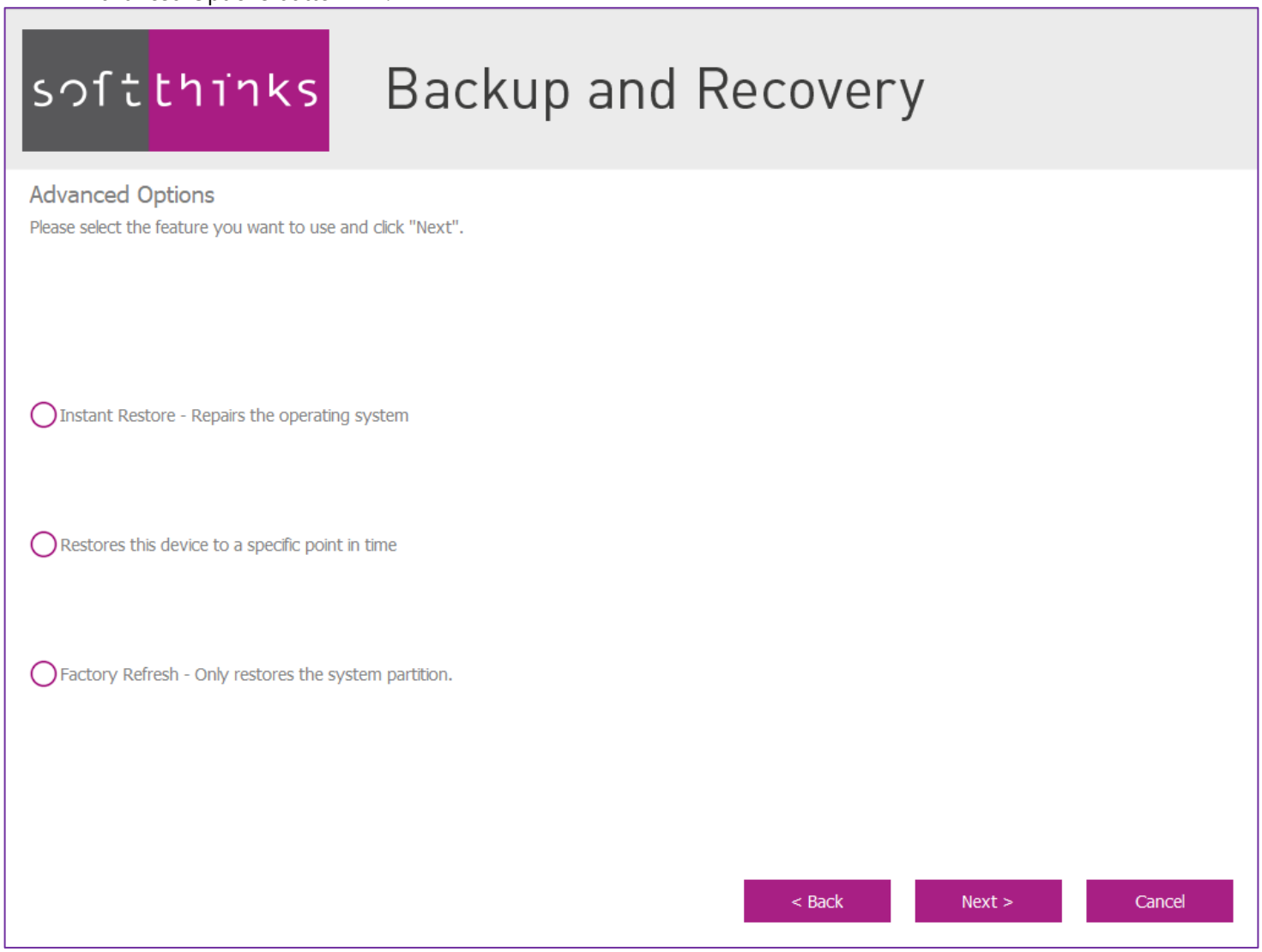
- To ignore your preselection and restore your system to another point in time, or use repair functions, click on the Advanced Options button (C):



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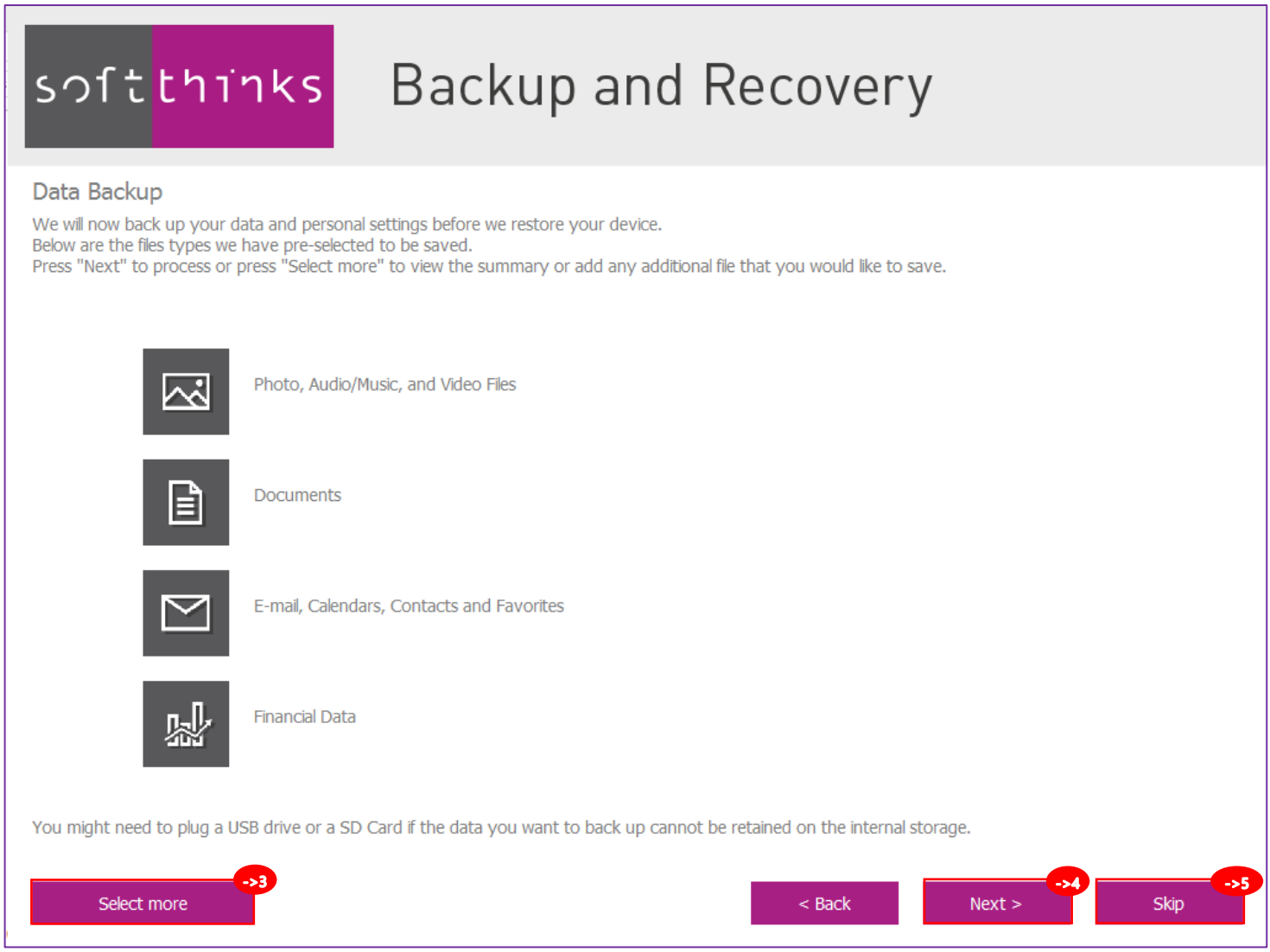
2. Before restoring your system with the System Backup you pre-selected, you will be invited to back up your data if you want:



By default, all you photo, music, video, documents, e-mails, calendars, contacts, favorites and financial data will be pre-selected to be saved (we will backup files with an extension matching those type of data). Depending on the current version of Windows and the version you will restore we will keep some of your system settings, as well as SoftTthinks Backup and recovery files and settings.

- You can review and adapt this selection (removing or adding files and folders) by clicking on the “Select More” button in the bottom left corner (go to the step 3).
- You can back up the default data selected by clicking on the button “Next >” (go to the step 4).
- If you don’t want to backup any data, click on the “Skip” button (go directly to the step 5) but all the data you have created since the last System Backup will be lost.

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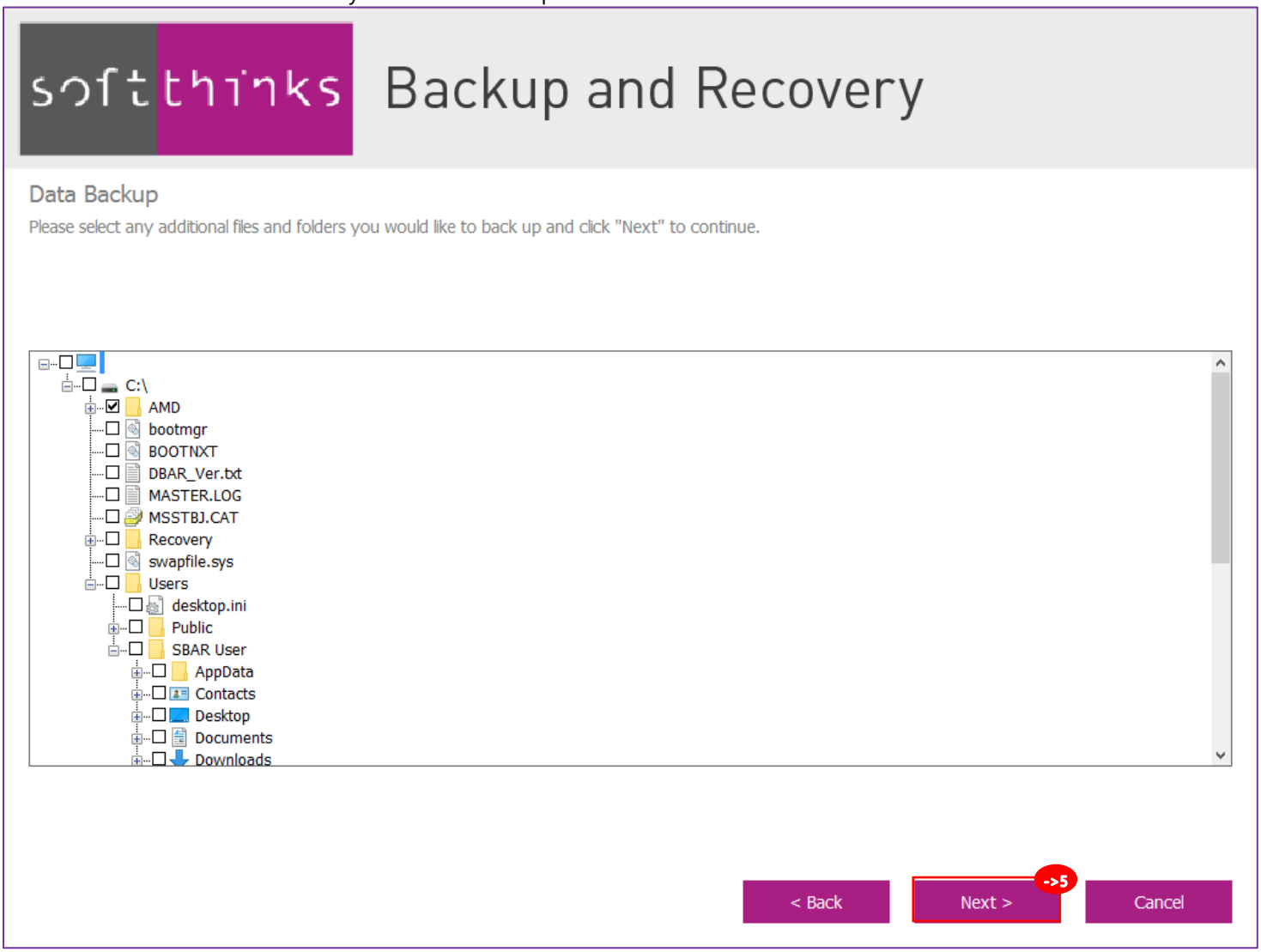
3. Select the files and folders you want to back up and click on the “Next >” button:



Note: System files are filtered out to prevent the corruption of the system restored.

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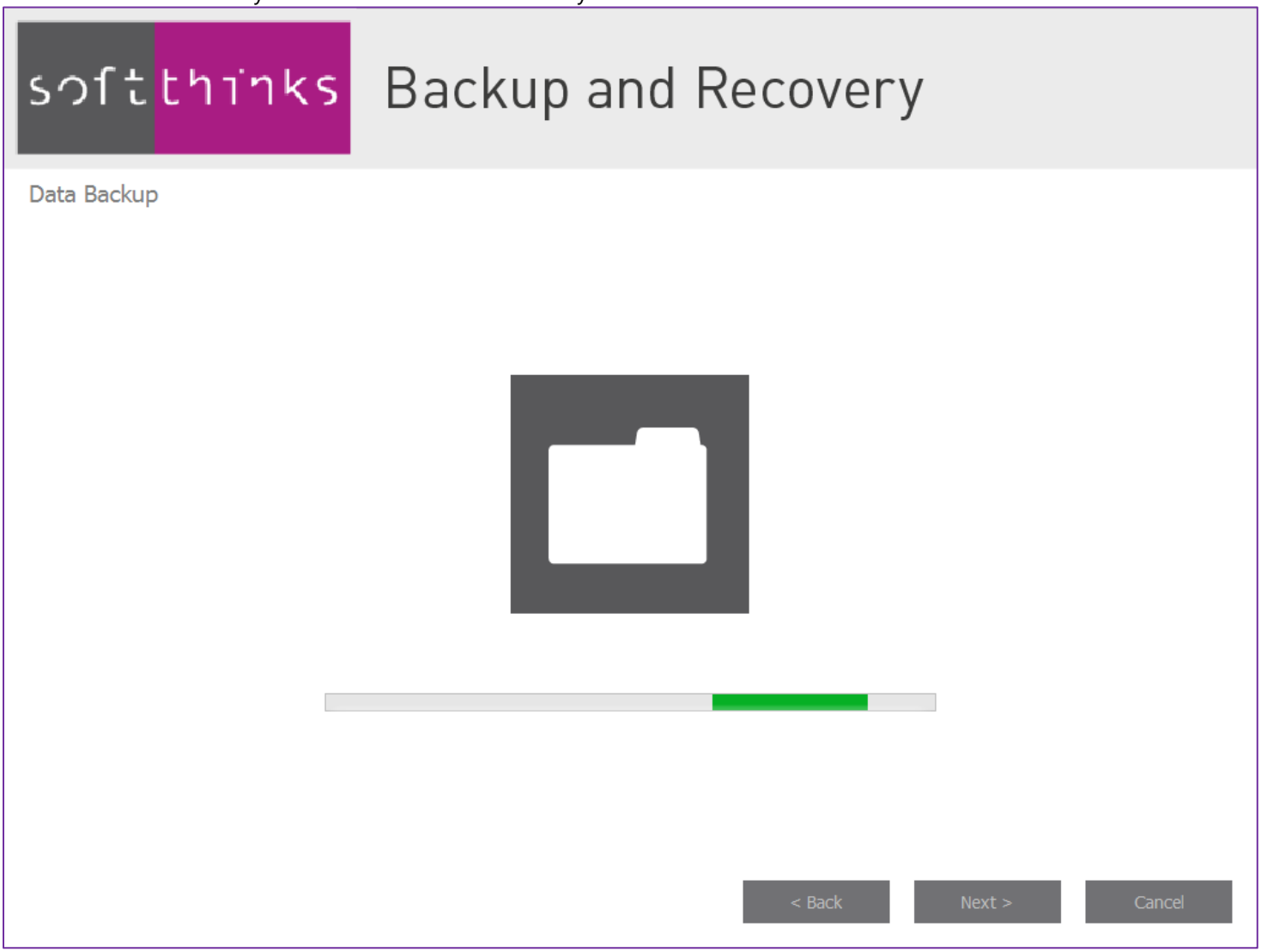
4. Please wait while your hard disk is scanned to list your data:



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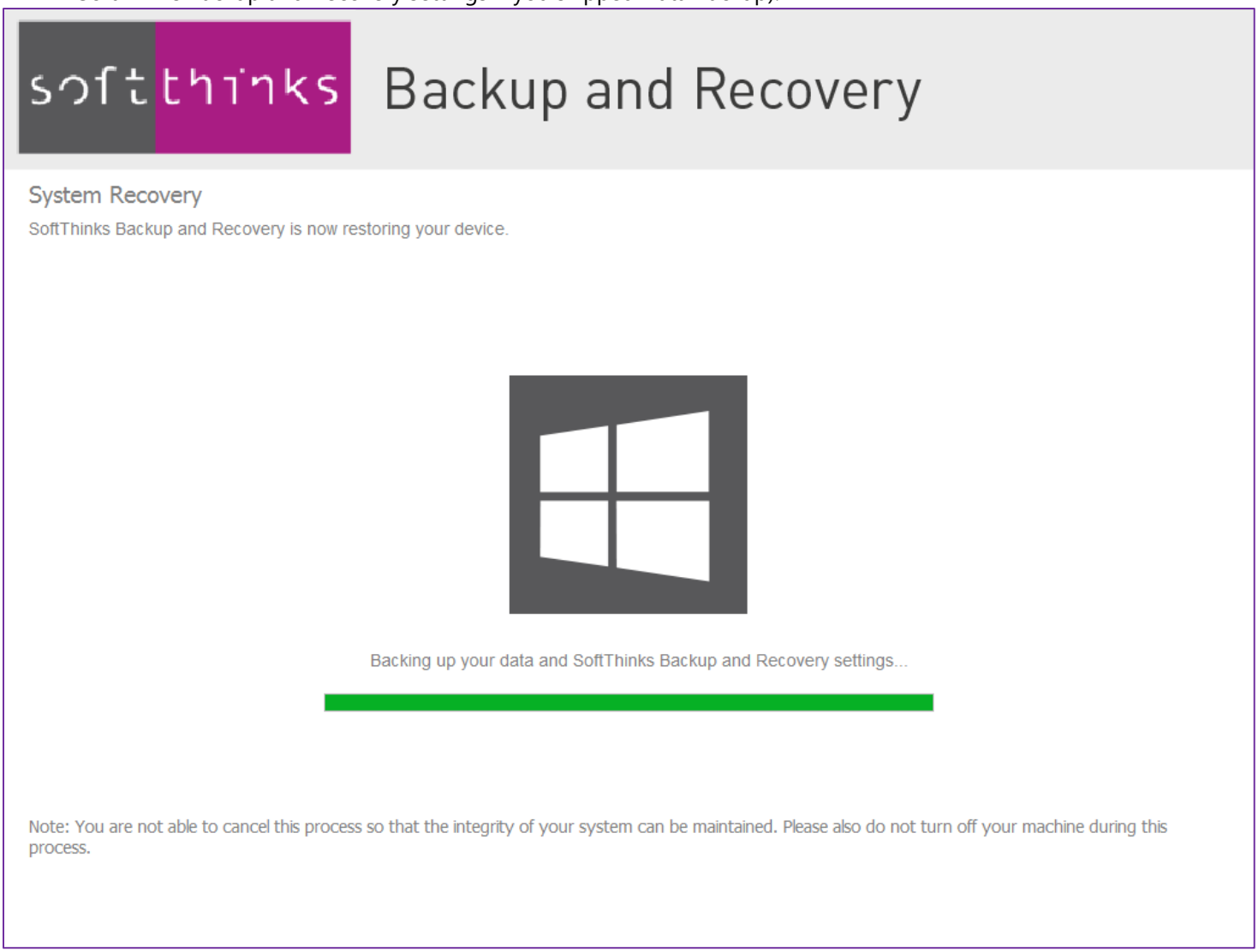
5. The files and folder your selected and SoftThinks Backup and Recovery settings are now being backed up (only SoftThinks Backup and Recovery settings if you skipped Data Backup):



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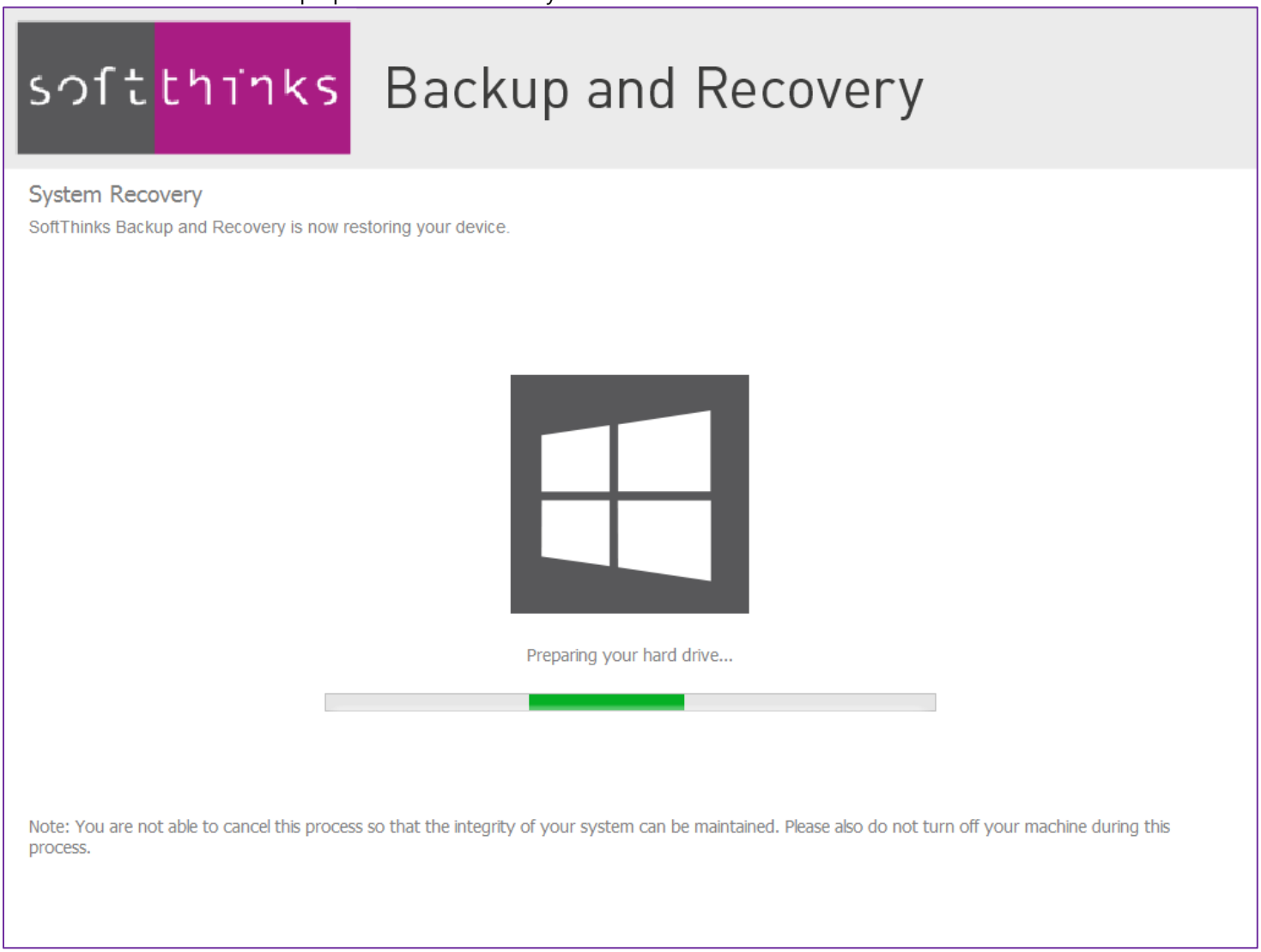
6. The hard drive is now prepared for the recovery:



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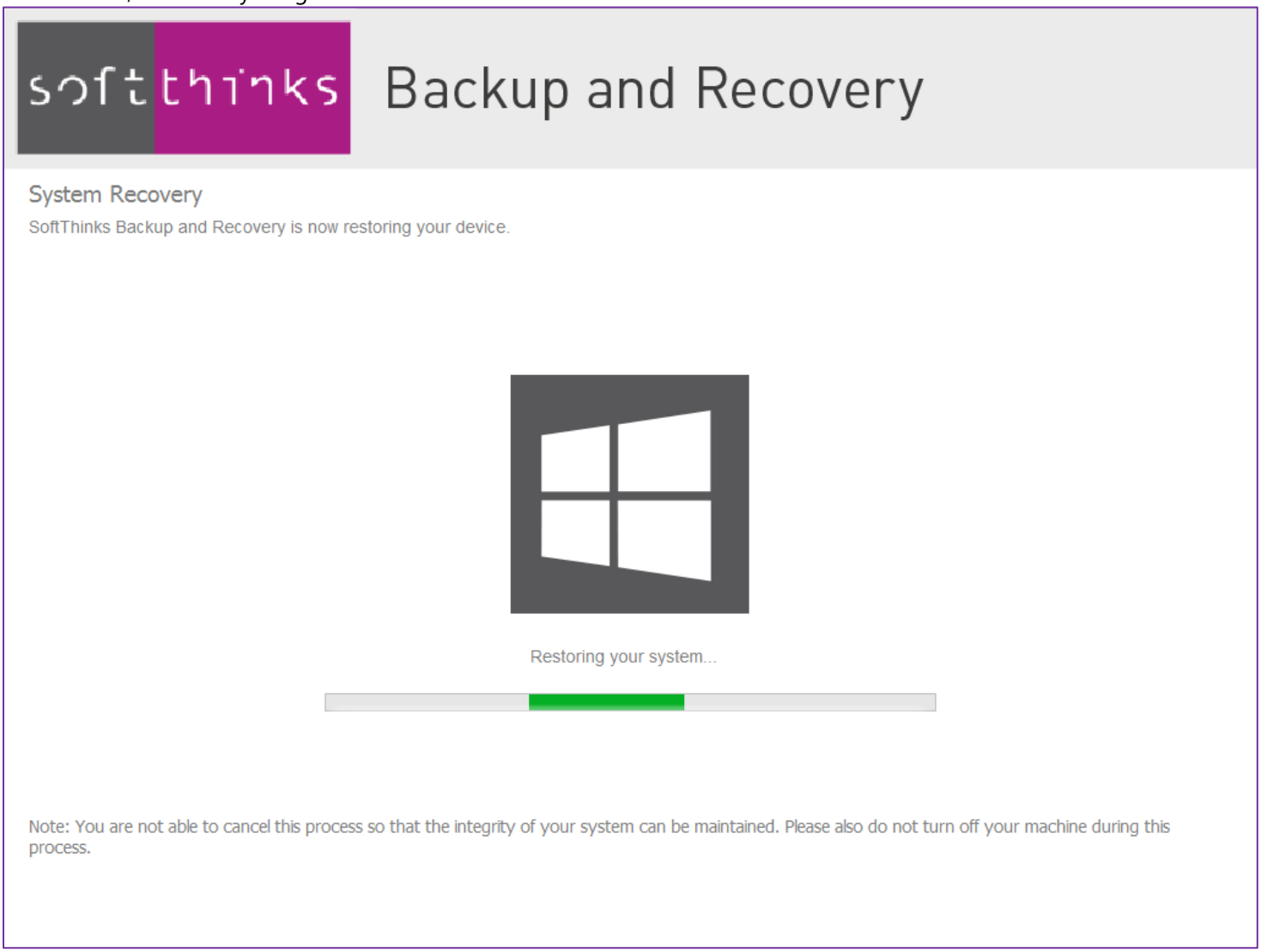
7. Then, the Factory Image is extracted:



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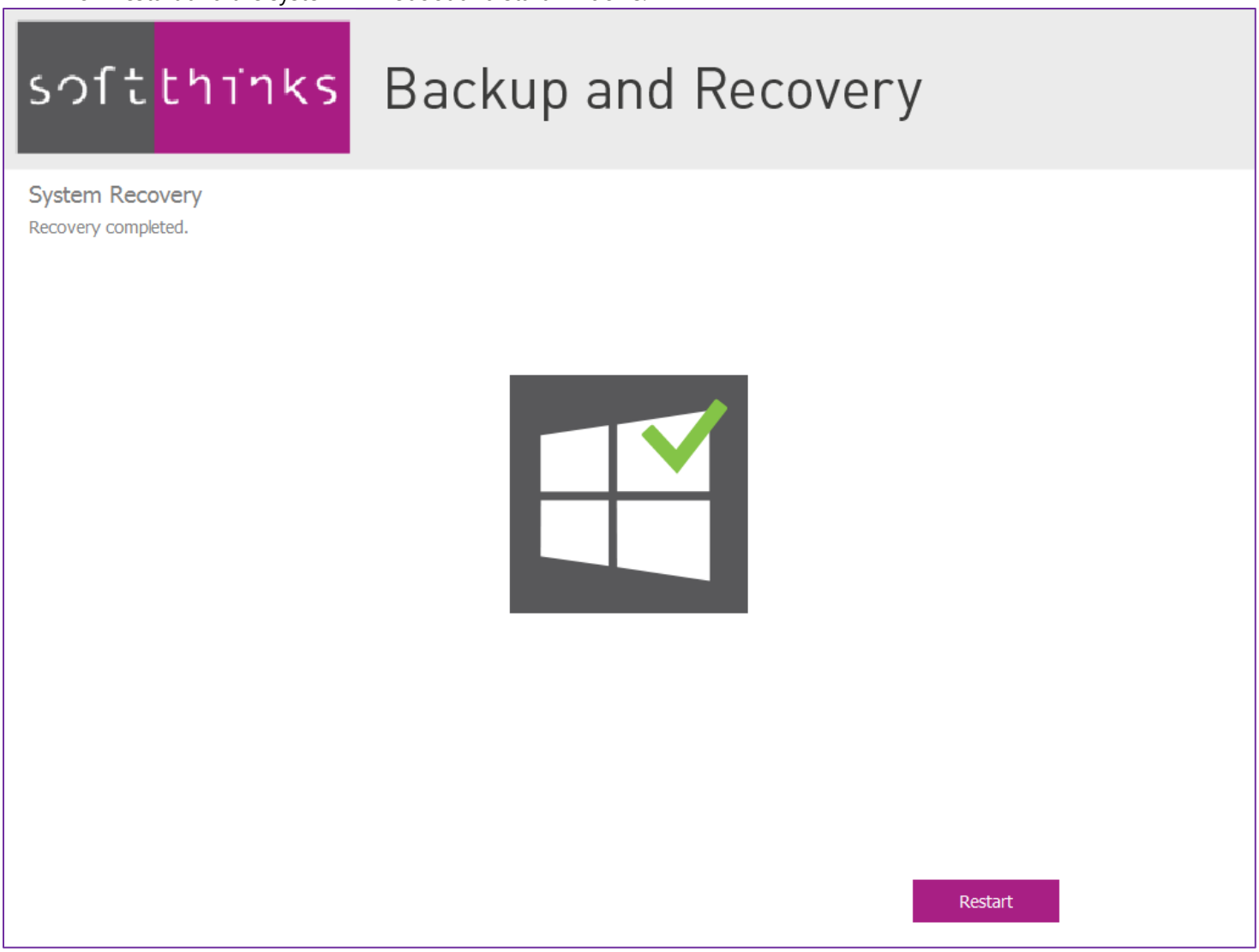
8. Once the Factory Image has been restored to your hard drive and is complete you will see the below screen. Just click on Restart and the system will reboot and start windows:



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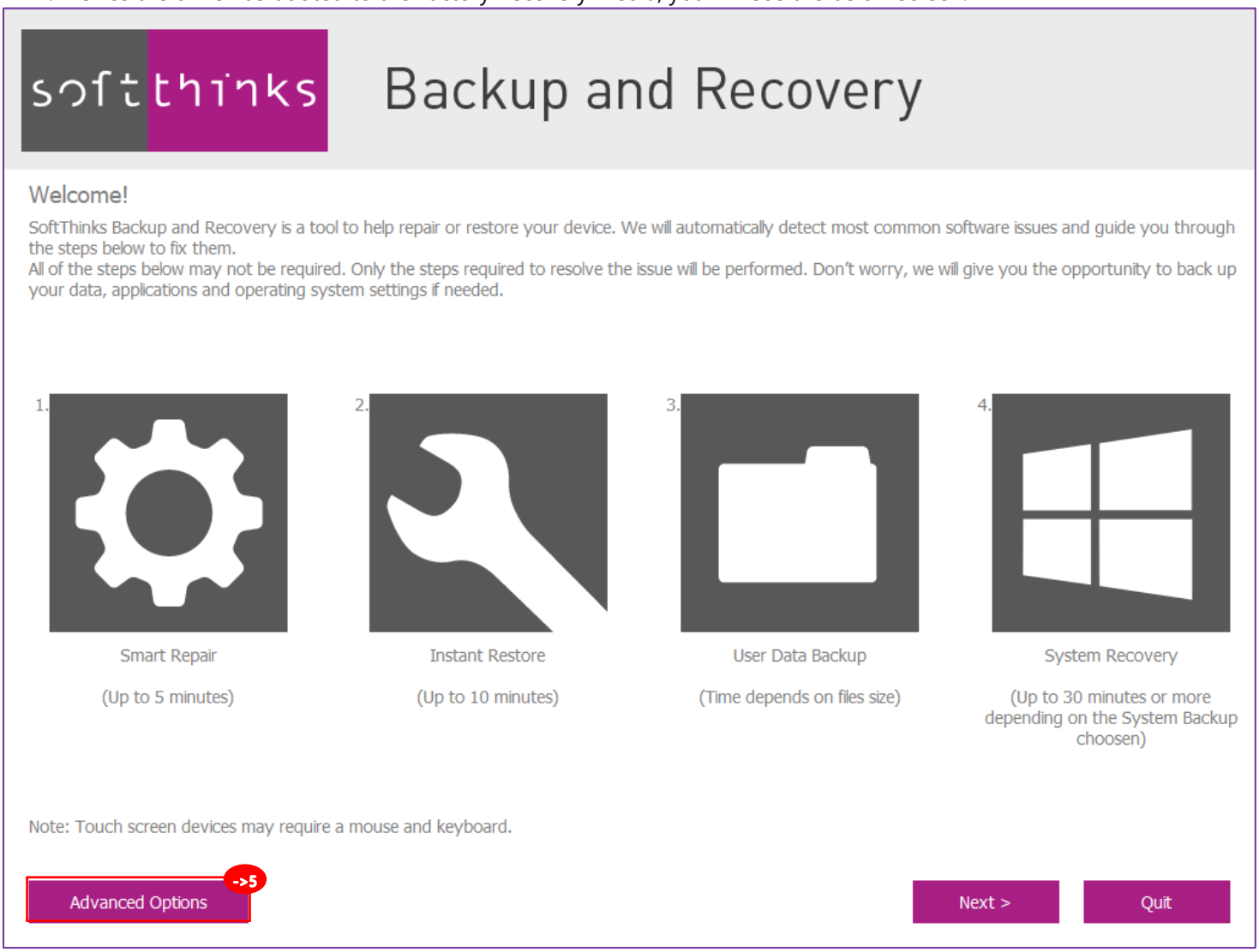
Restoring your system from your Recovery Media

To Restore your system hard drive back to the Factory Image from your Recovery Media please follow those instructions:

1. Boot to the Recovery Media drive you created
2. Reboot your system to the BIOS boot screen, check your user's manual to find the proper key to press during boot
3. Select to boot to the drive your Factory Recovery Media was created on

System Recovery on non-blank disk

4. Once the drive has booted to the Factory Recovery Media, you will see the below screen:



Note: The flow is similar to the one observed when you boot locally (See Repairing & Restoring your system from the local Recovery Partition) except for a new option called "Factory Reset" which is reachable through the "Advanced Options" button on the bottom left and we that we will now describe.

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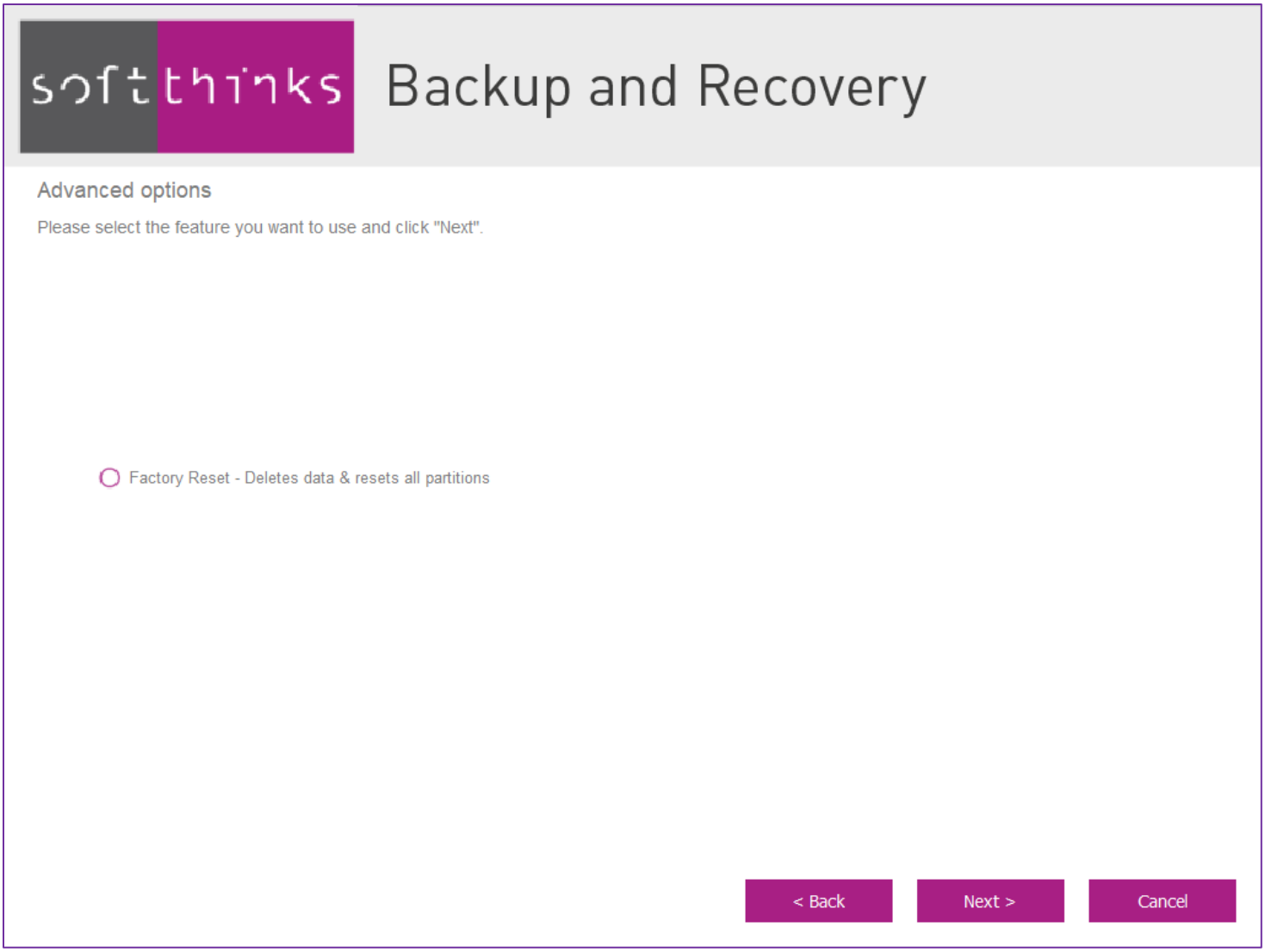
Factory Reset

5. After having clicked on the “Advanced Options” button you arrive on the screen below which allows you to delete data and reset all partitions as they were in Factory. Select the option “Factory Reset” and click on the “Next >” button:



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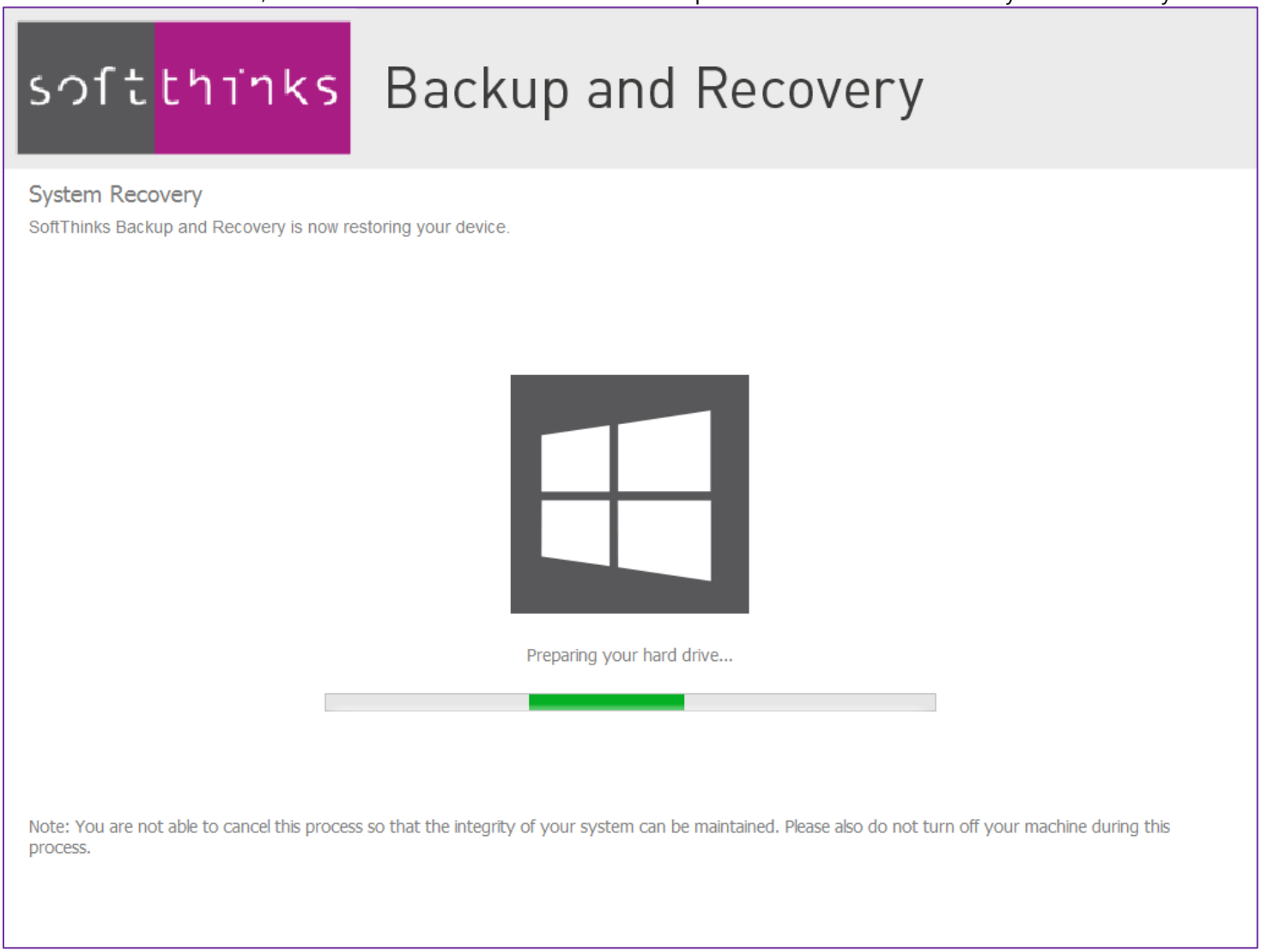
6. After confirmation, the disk contents are now erased and the partitions are re-created as they were in factory:



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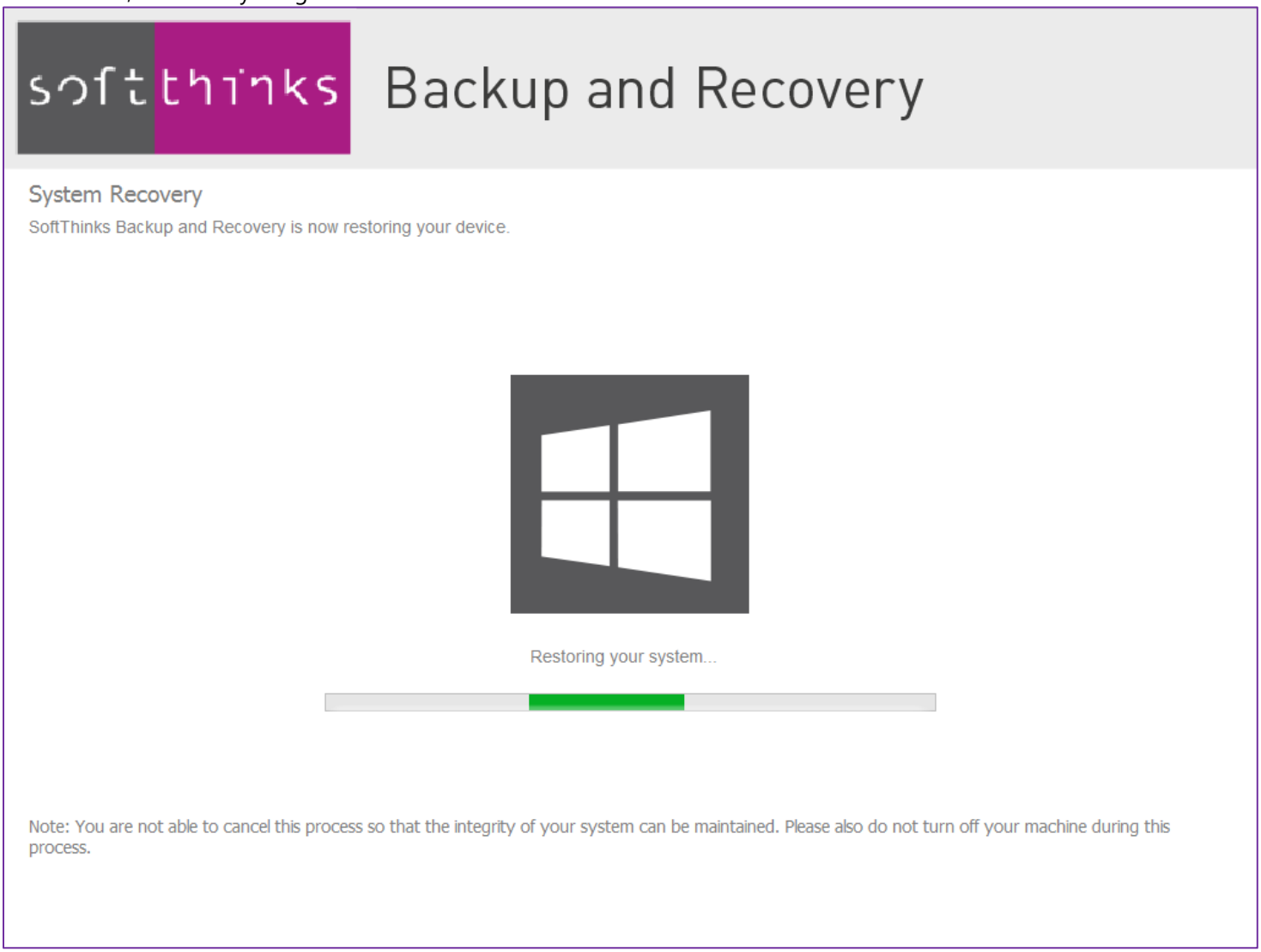
7. Then, the Factory Image is extracted:



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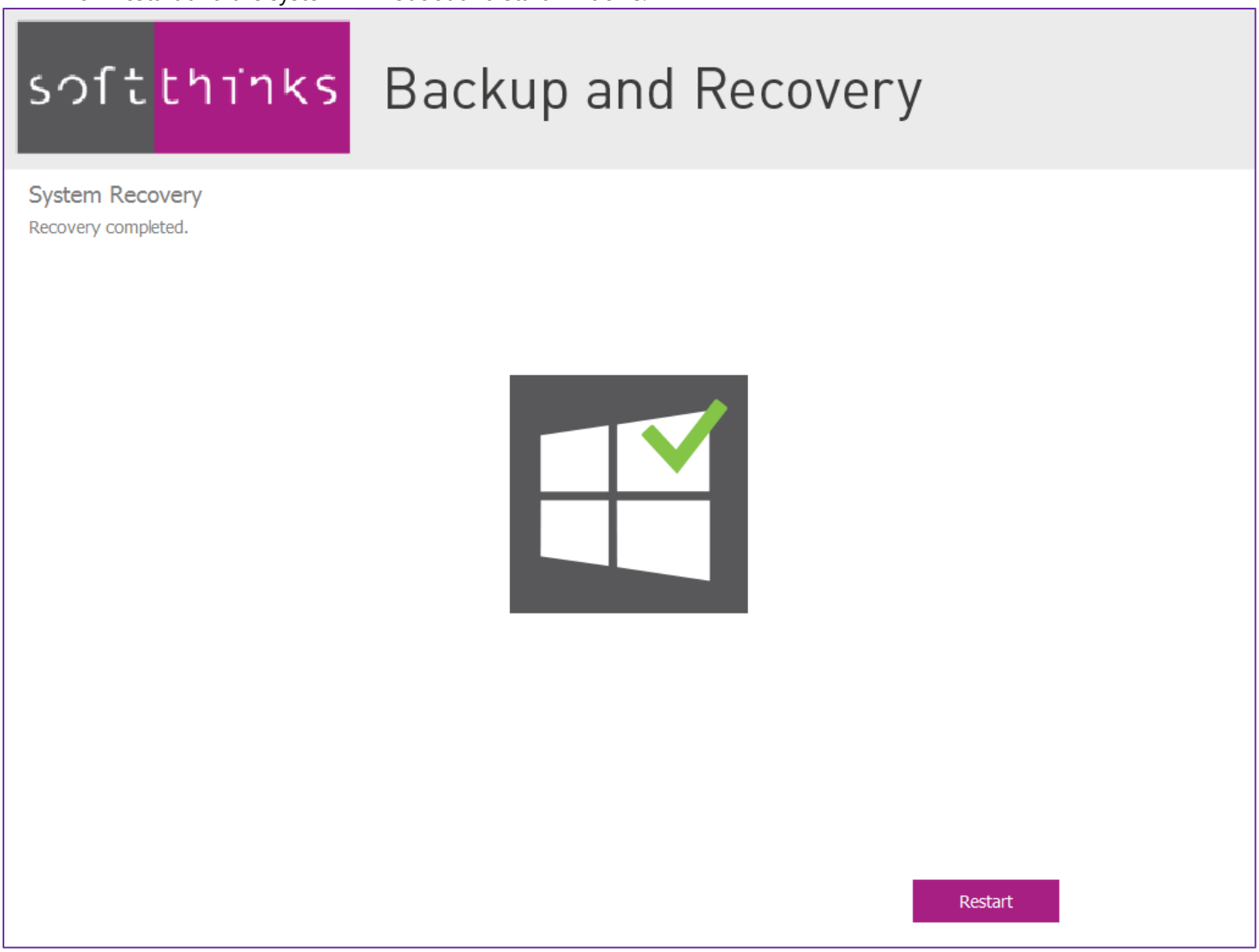
8. Once the Factory Image has been restored to your hard drive and is complete you will see the below screen. Just click on Restart and the system will reboot and start windows:



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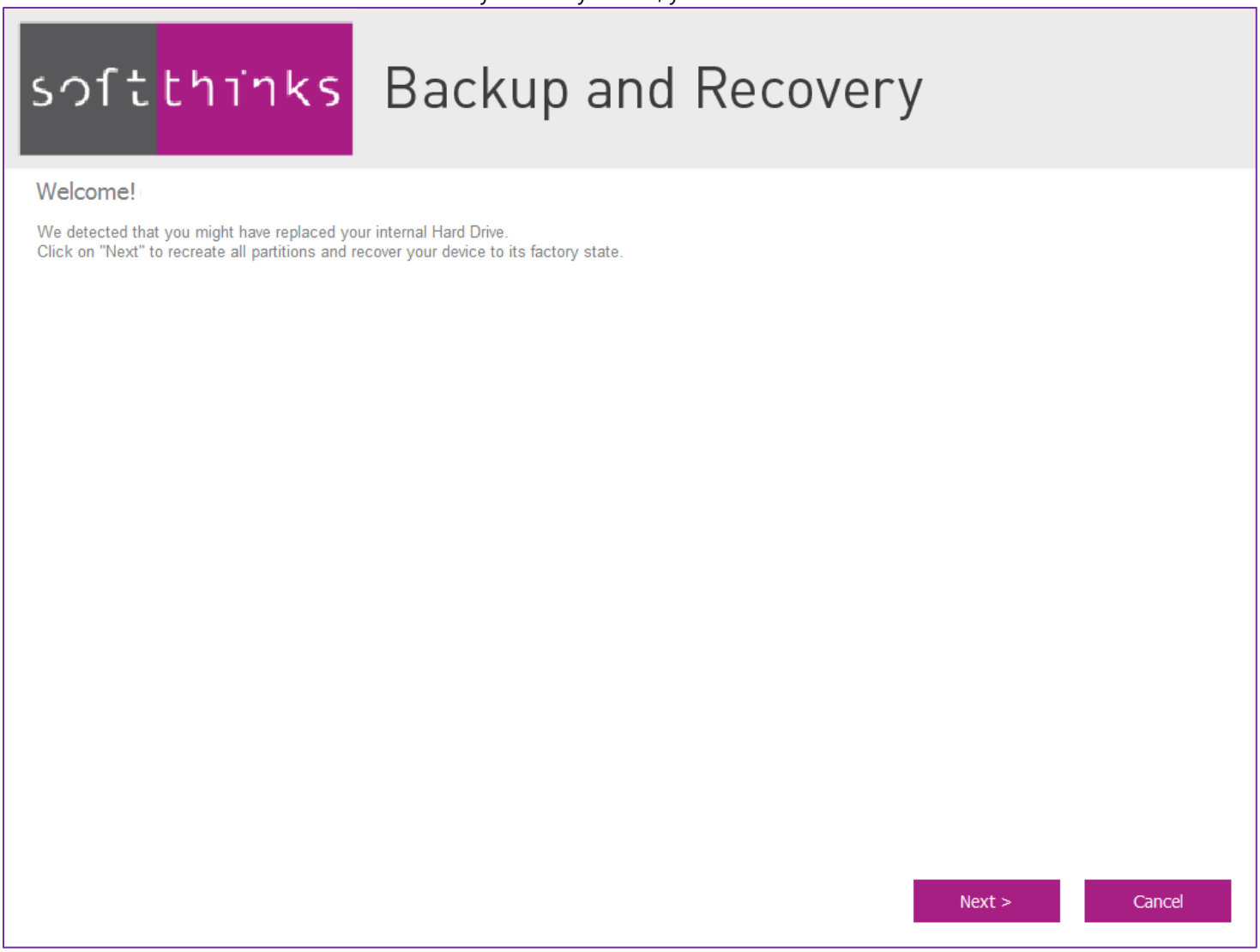
System Recovery on blank disk (typically replacement HDD)

Note: If the drive size is different than the original disk size the partitions will be resized accordingly to use all the space available.

4. Once the drive has booted to the Factory Recovery Media, you will see the below screen:



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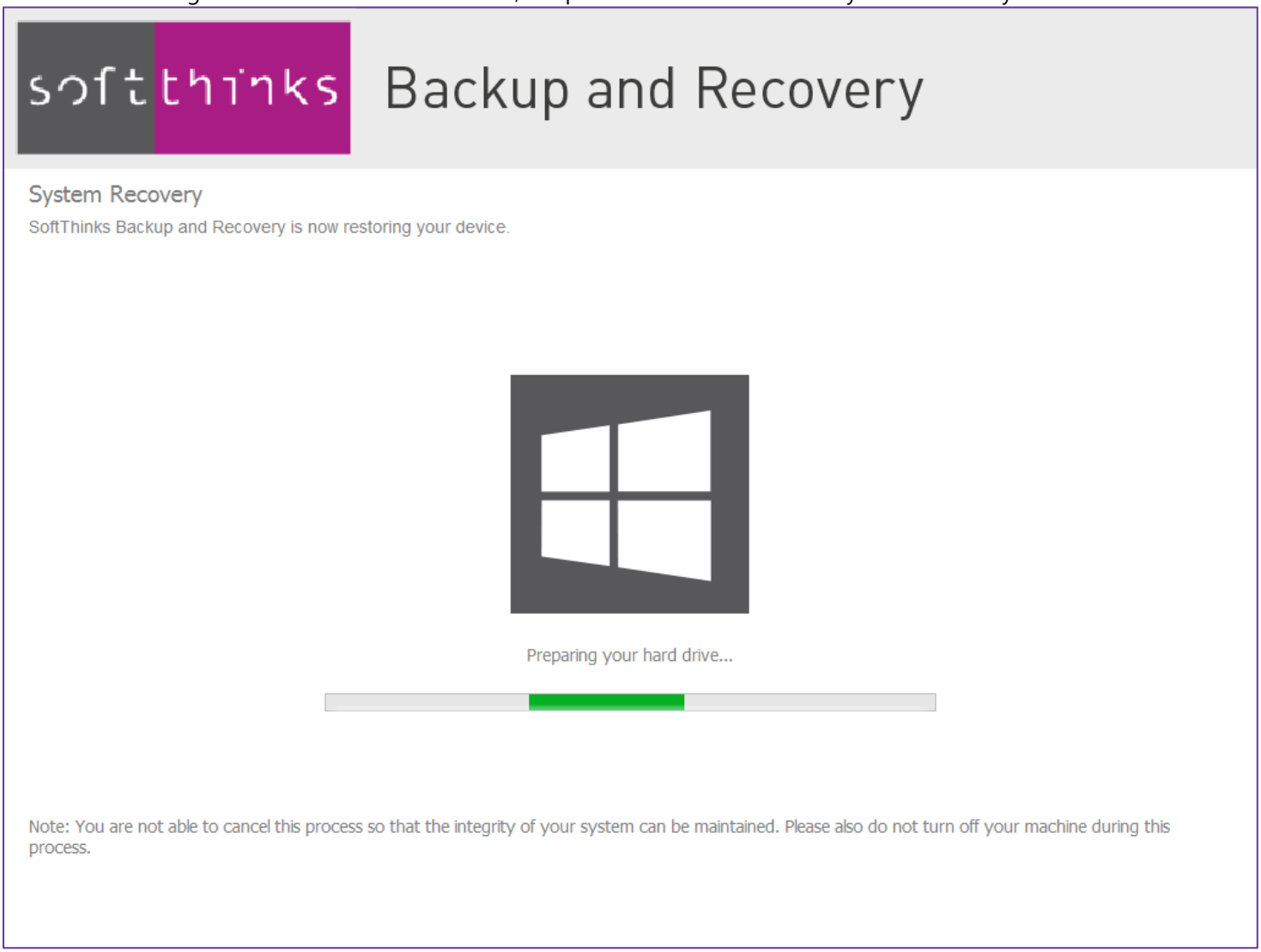
5. After having clicked on the “Next >” button, the partitions are created as they were in factory:



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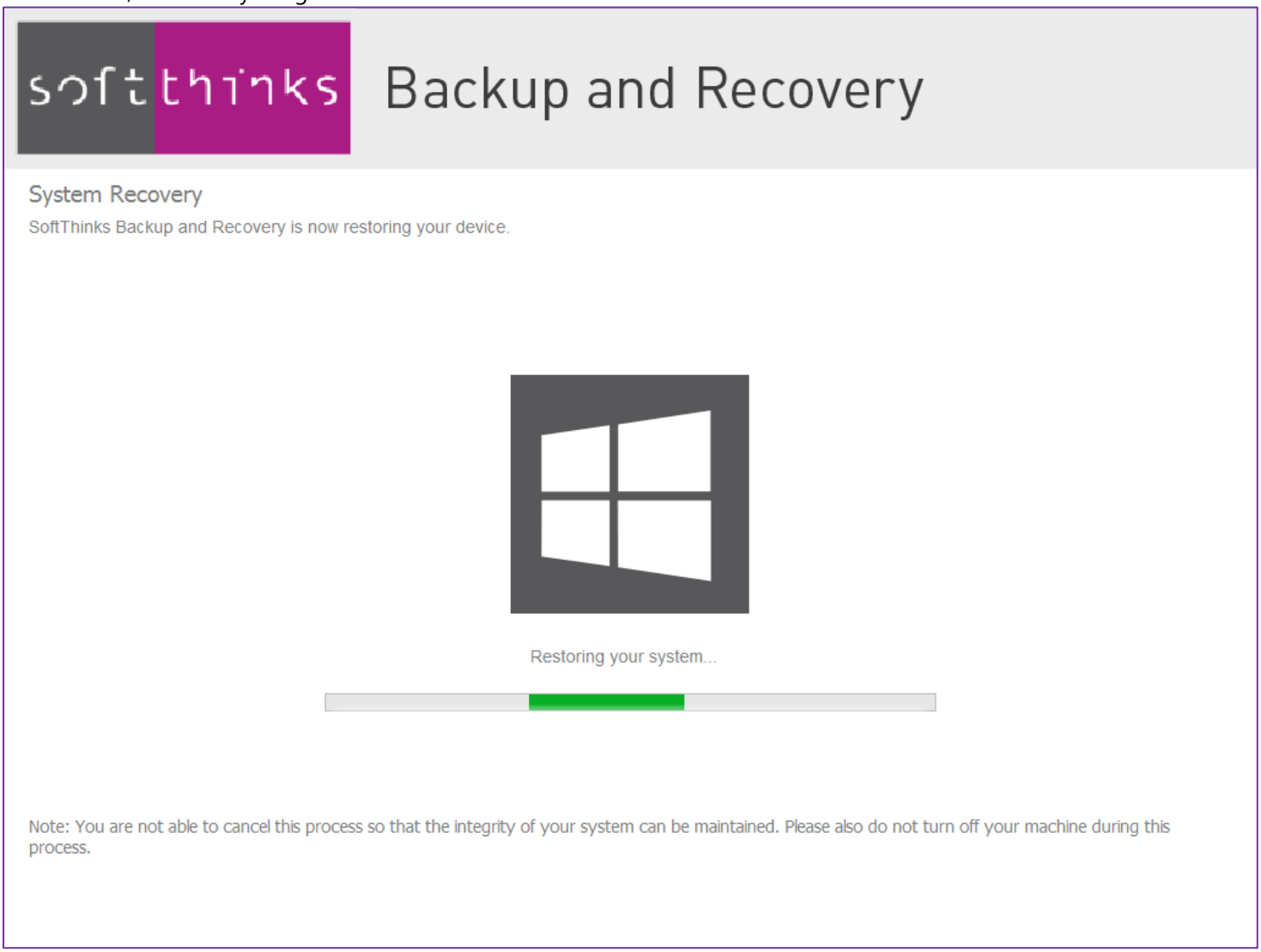
6. Then, the Factory Image is extracted:



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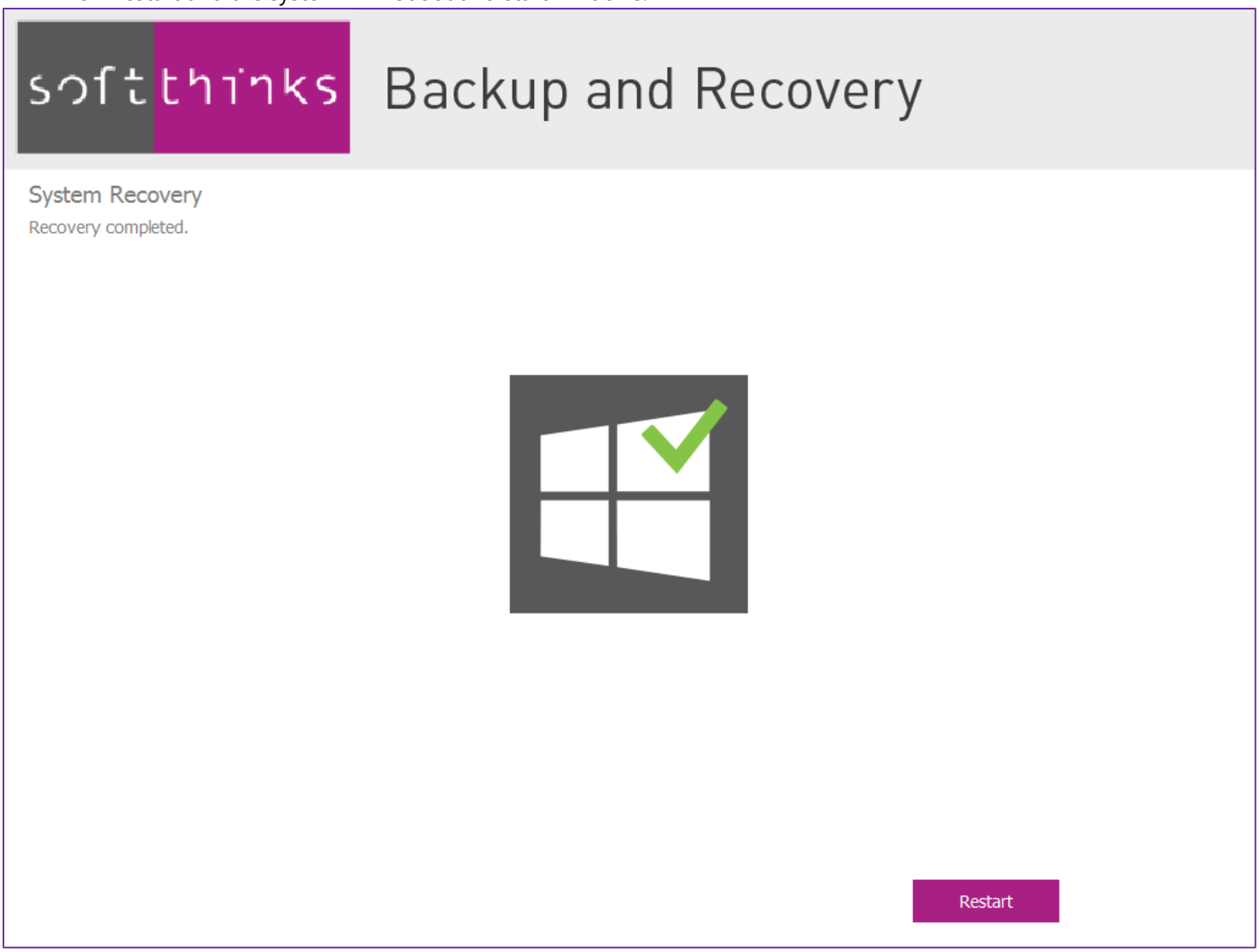
7. Once the Factory Image has been restored to your hard drive and is complete you will see the below screen. Just click on Restart and the system will reboot and start windows:



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Recovering your data

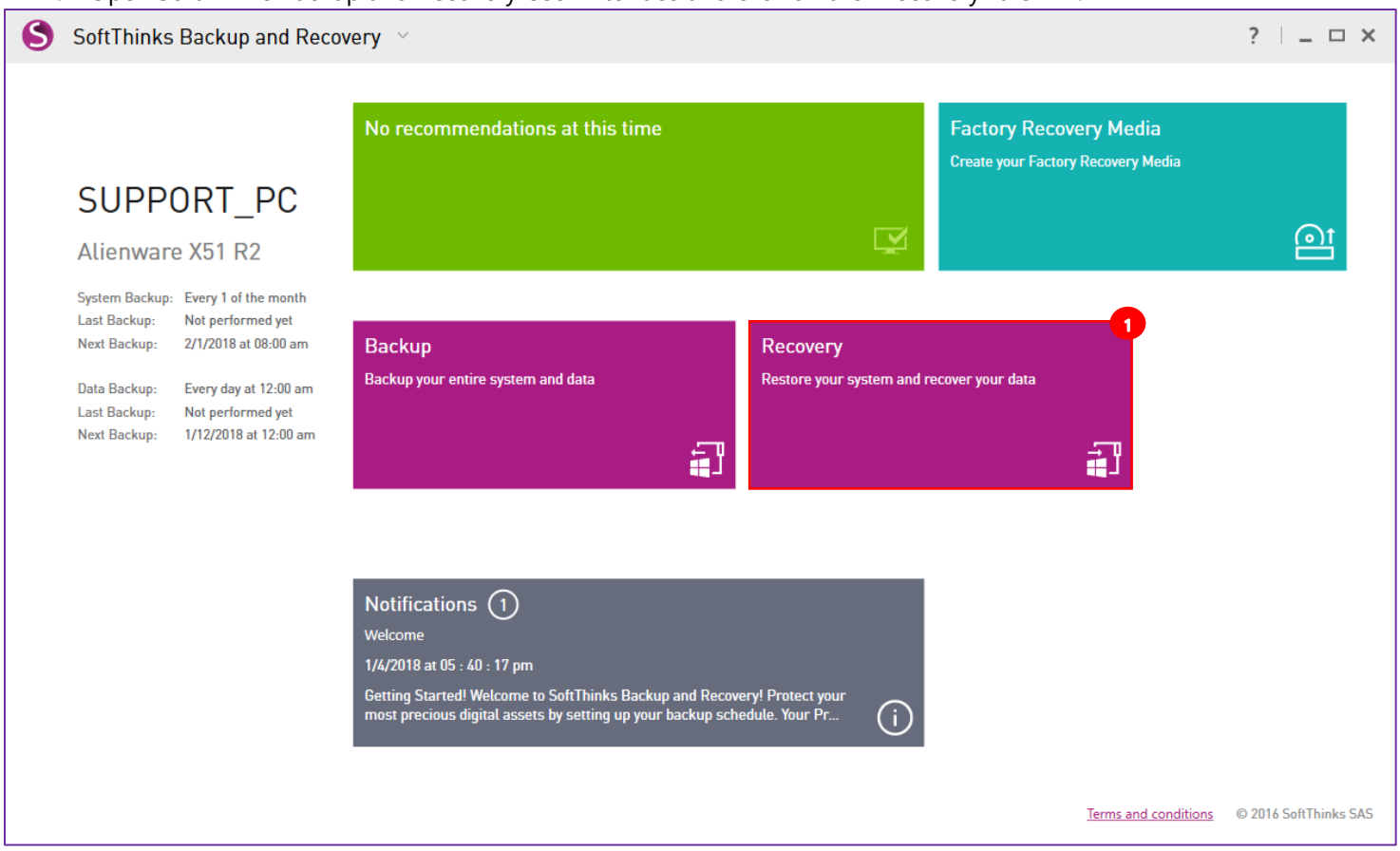
Lost files can be easily recovered from either System Backups or Data Backups. You can also rollback to a previous version with the versioning feature of the Premium Edition.

You have 2 ways to recover your data:

- From SoftThinks Backup and Recovery User Interface
- From Windows Explorer

Recovering your data from the main application

1. Open SoftThinks Backup and Recovery User Interface and click on the "Recovery" tile 1:



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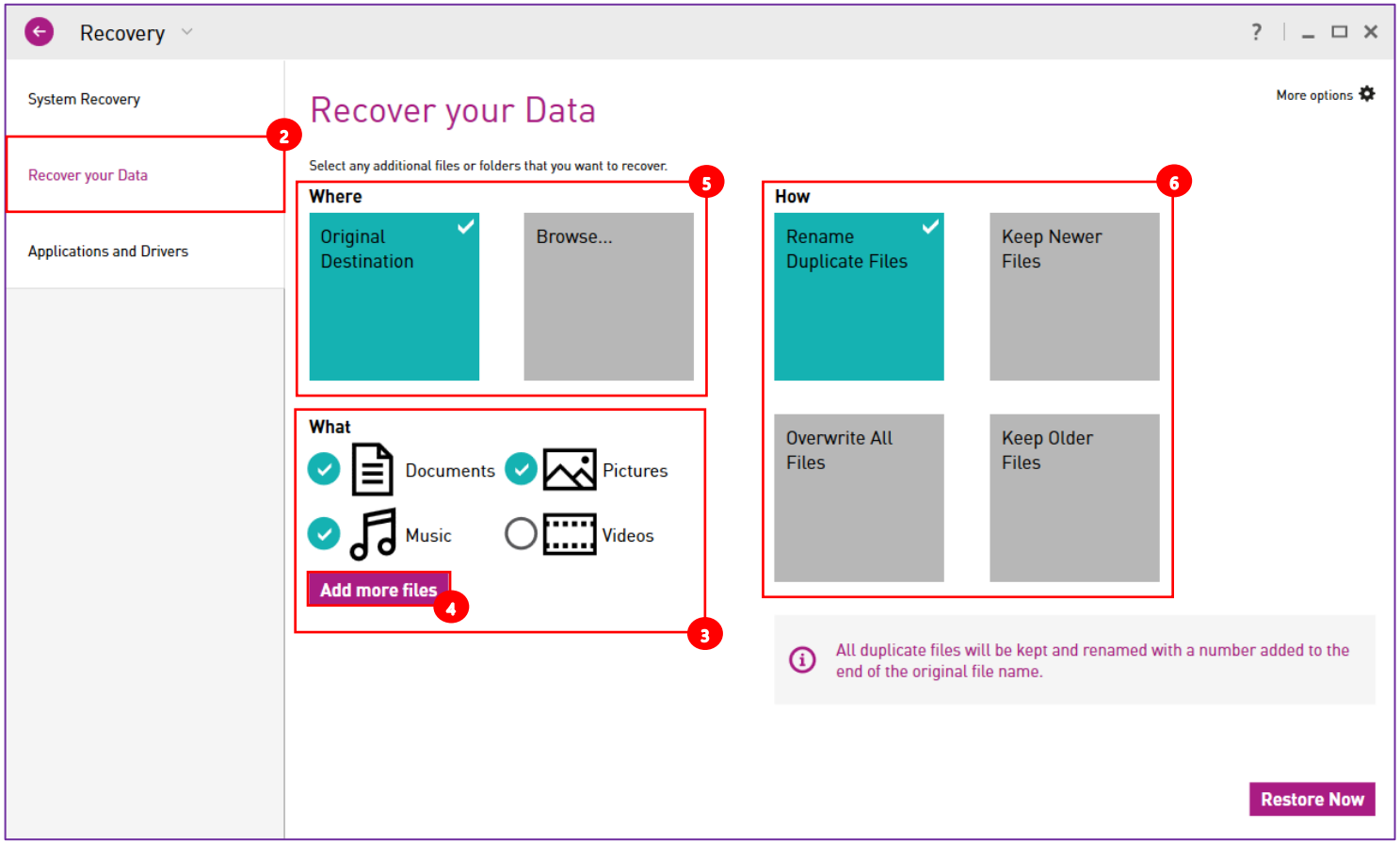
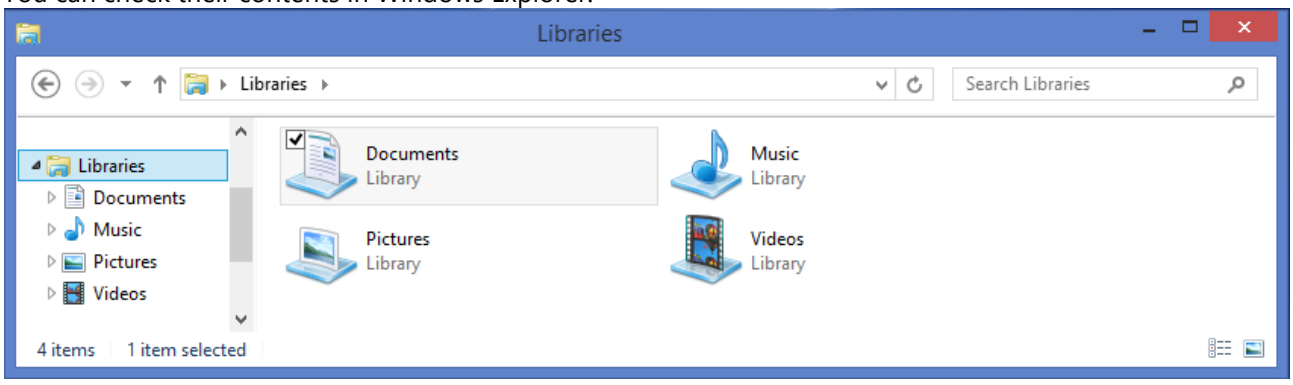
2. Select "Recover your data" tab (2) in the left menu:



3. Select the data you want to recover (3): you can select data libraries as Documents, Pictures, Music and Video but also specific files and folders as described in the next step

Note: Libraries are user-defined collections of folders. By default, your applications store your data in those libraries. You can check their contents in Windows Explorer:



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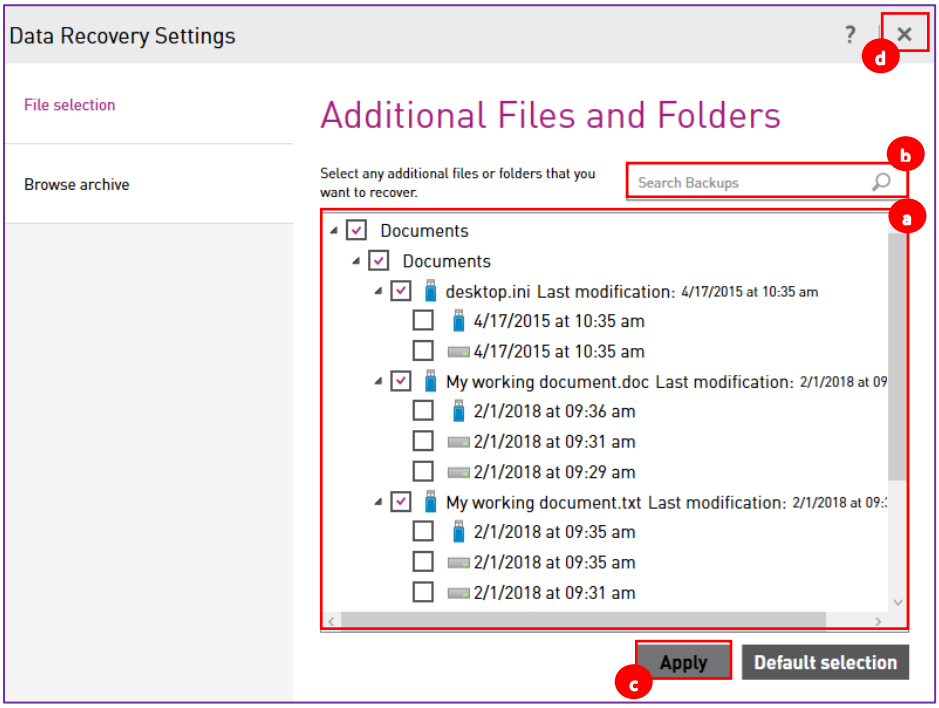
4. Click on the "Add more files" button (4) to review and complete your selection, and to specify which version of your data you want to recover (by default we will recover the last version of each file matching your selection):



a. You will see in the treeview (a) all the versions of all the files backed up whatever is the method used (System Backup, Manual / Scheduled / Continuous Data Backup) and wherever they are stored (locally, on external drive, on network), even if the storage is not reachable at this time. All versions of the files will be displayed and you can choose which file or files to restore.

   In our example above the "Documents" library was selected and so the files in Documents as "My working document.txt" and "My working documents.doc" are pre-selected. As show in the screenshot, if you click on the arrow on the front of each file you will see all the versions backed up for this file and a pictogram indicates you if the file version is stored locally or on USB drive: the versions of "My working document.doc" saved at 9:29 and 9:32 have been backed up on the local drive (through a Data Backup or Continuous Data Protection) and the version saved at 9:36 has been backed up on external drive (through a System Backup).

   Note: The dates displayed are the dates when the files have been saved, meaning the file version date, and not the date when the backup has been made.

b. You have also the ability to search for a specific file or folder thanks to the field (b) above the treeview: enter the file name and click on the magnifying glass

c. If you found the files you want to recover, click on the "Apply" button (c), else go directly to the step e

d. Close the window by clicking on the "X" (d) in the upper right corner of the dialog box

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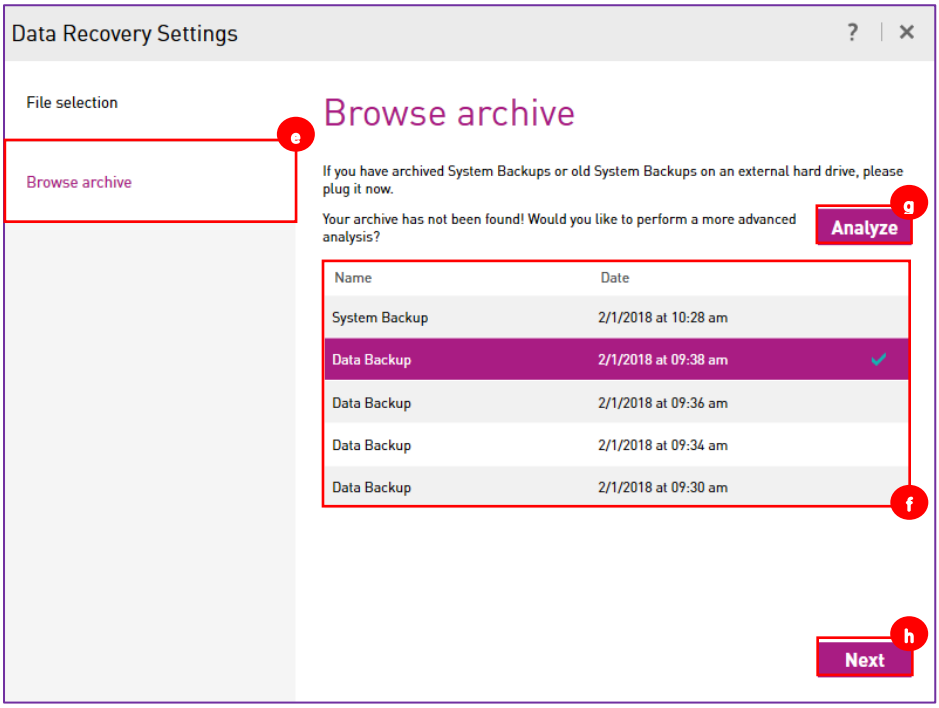
e. If you din't find what you are looking for, you can also browse for a specific archive and display its contents and restore the files you want from this archive by clicking on the "Browse archive" tab (e) on the left side:

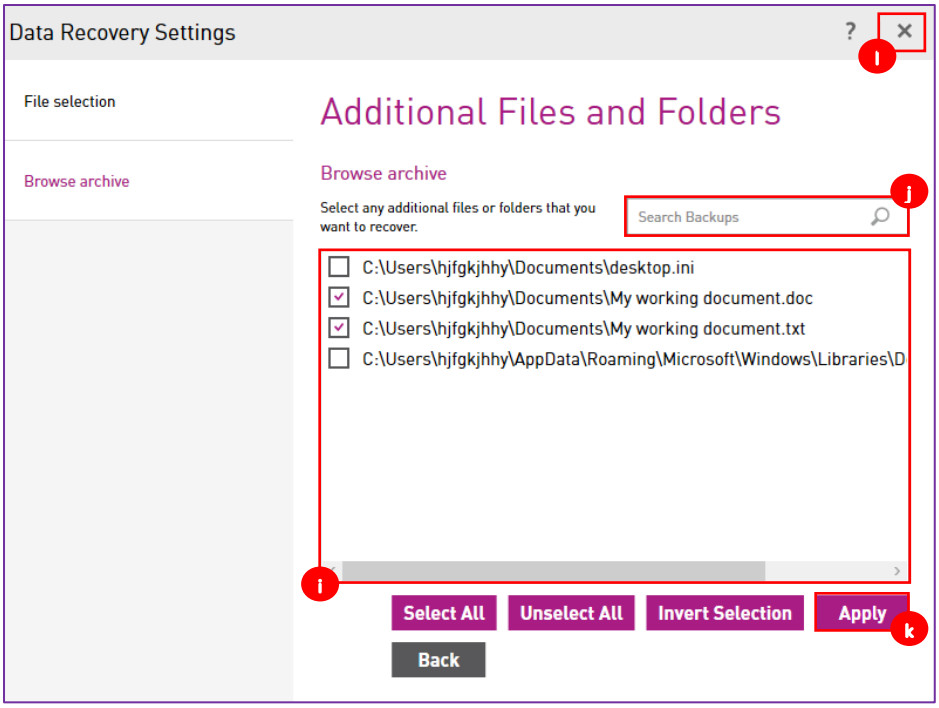


f. Select the archive you want to explore in the list (f) of the Data Backups and System Backups captured.

g. If you don't find it, please plug the media where it is stored and click on the "Analyze" button (g)

h. Once the archive selected click on the "Next" button (h)

i. Select the files you want to recover in the archive contents displayed in the list (i):



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j. Since the archive contents can be important you can directly search for specific files and folders for the dedicated field (j) above the list

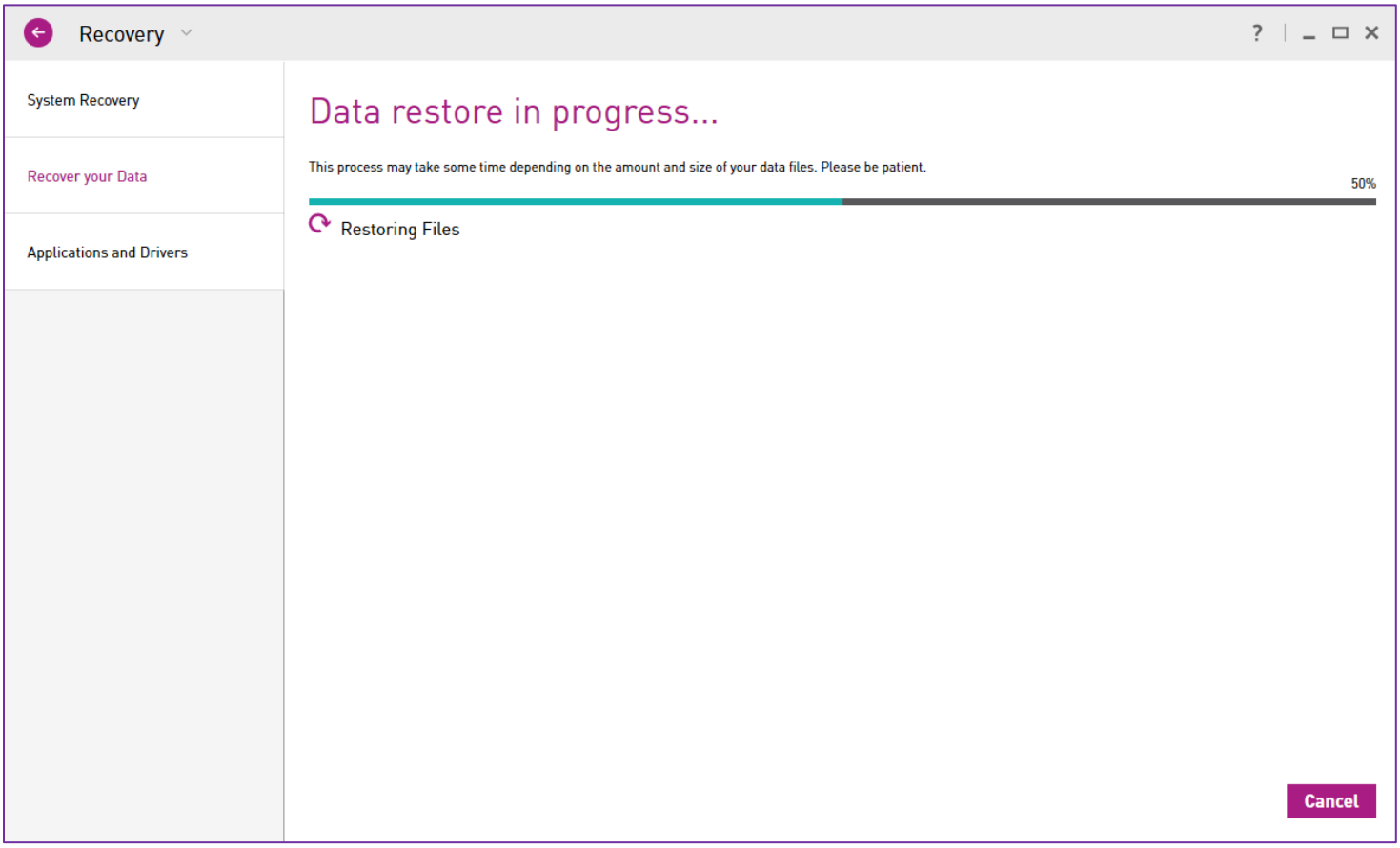
k. Once all the files selected click on the “Apply” button (k)

l. Close the window by clicking on the "X" (l) in the upper right corner of the dialog box

5. In the “Where” section (5), choose where you want your data to be recovered. By default, they will be restored to their original location but you can click on the “Browse…” tile to browse for another location.

6. Decide what to do if the files you want to recover already exist on the target location (typically when you restore them to their original location) in the “How” section (6):
   - Keep Newer Files (default option): Keep the most recent files
   - Rename Duplicated Files: Existing files will be renamed with a number added to the end of the original file name (Example: “My Working Document (1).doc”)
   - Overwrite All Files: Overwrite systematically existing files by the ones being restored
   - Keep older files: Keep the oldest files

7. Click on “Restore Now” button (7) to restore the files you selected:



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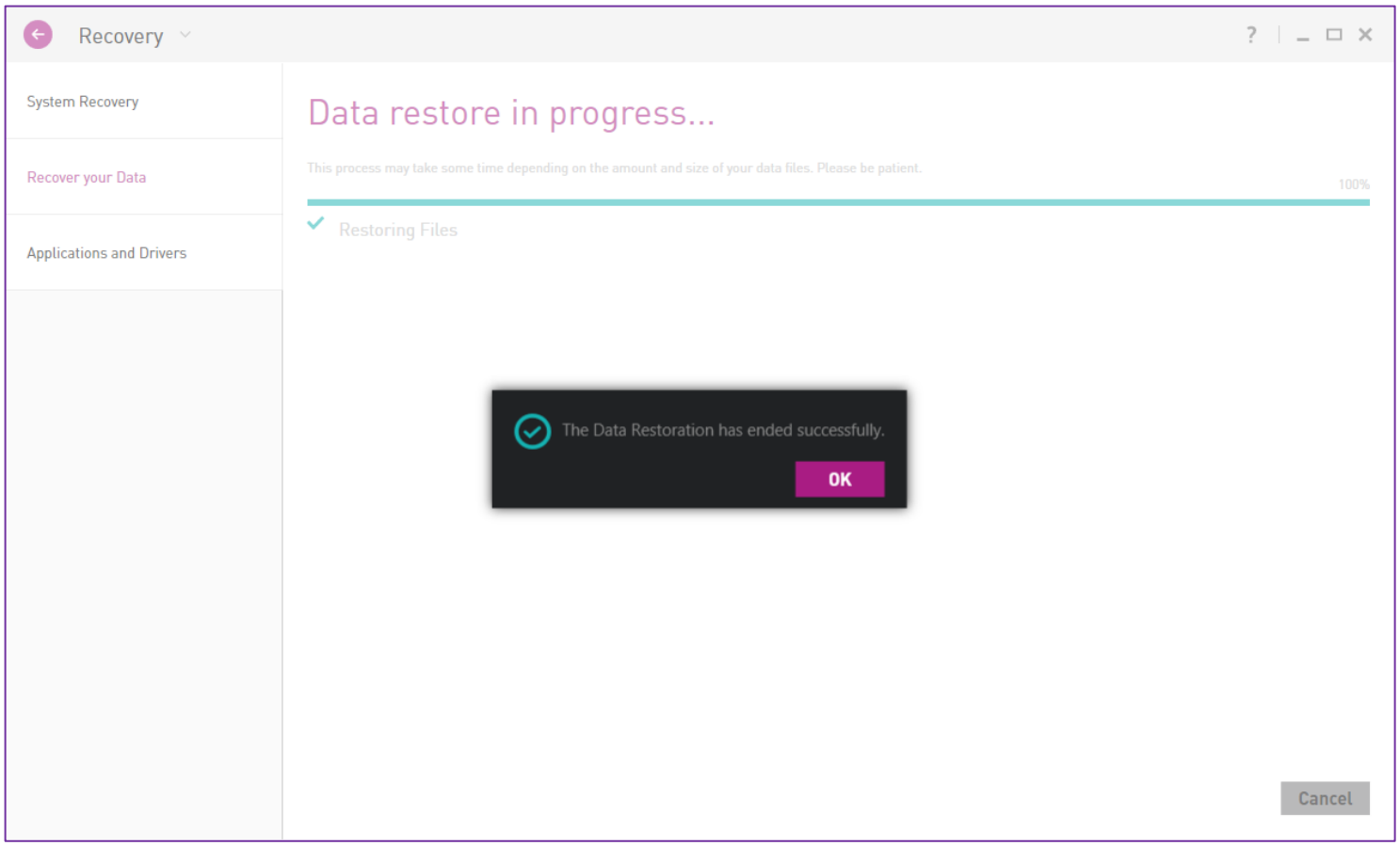
8. You will be notified when all your data will have been restored:



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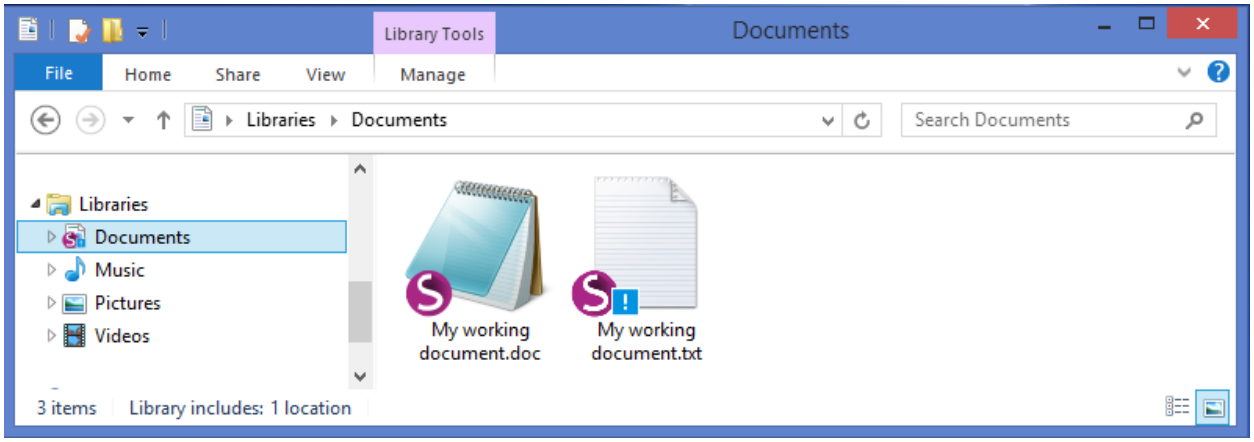
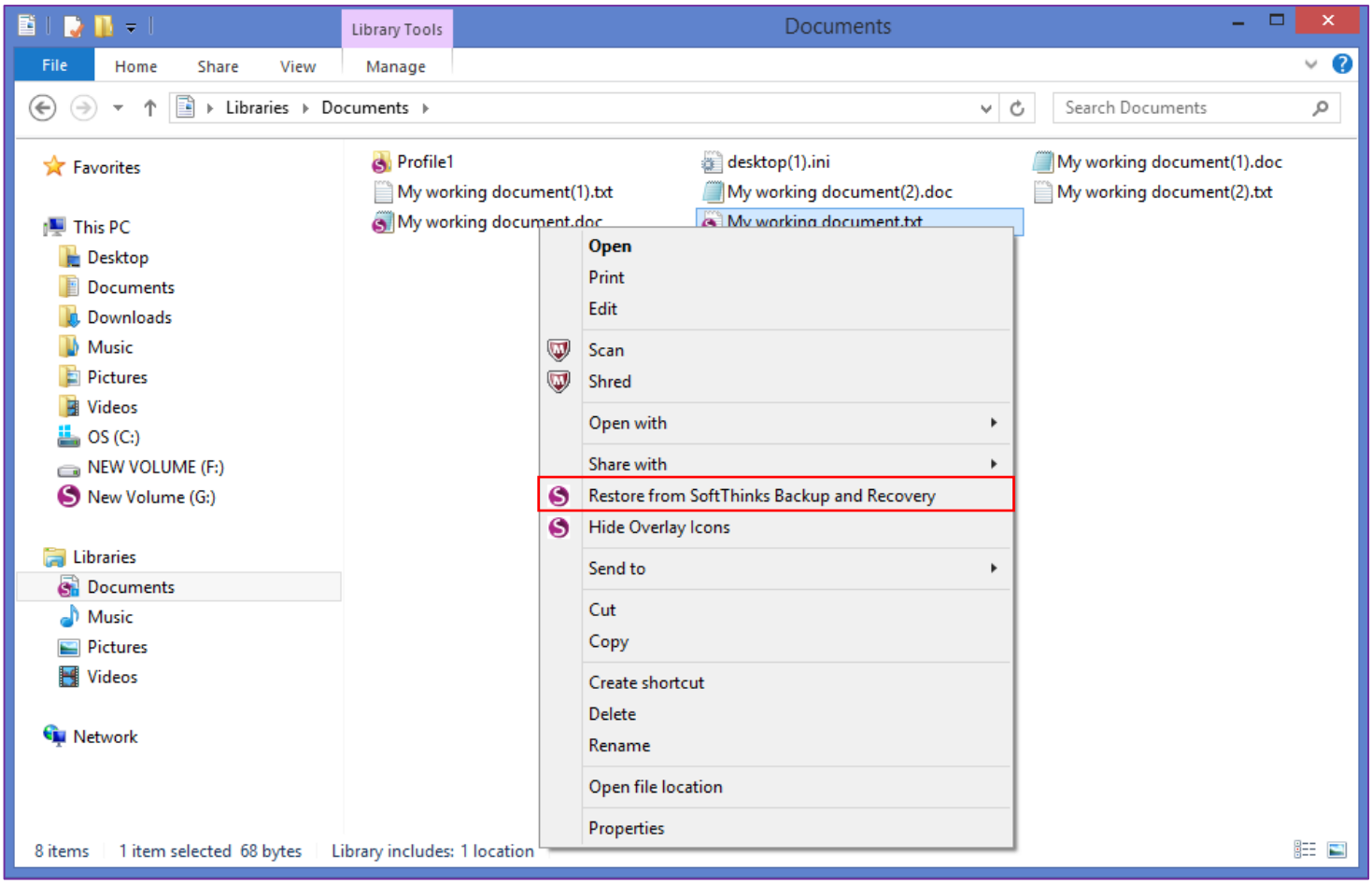
Recovering your data from Windows Explorer

Thanks to the Windows Explorer integration you can easily see which files are protected, whatever is the technology to protect them (Scheduled/Manual Data Backup, Continuous Data Protection, System Backup): if a folder contains some files that are backed up by any backup method, an overlay icon with SoftThinks Backup and Recovery logo appears on folder icon. In the same way, the icons of the files backed up have also the overlay, into which an exclamation mark is added for the files modified since the latest backup:



If you right click on files or folders with SoftThinks Backup and Recovery logo, an item “Restore from SoftThinks Backup and Recovery” is added in the context menu and it will open the application directly into Recovery screen:



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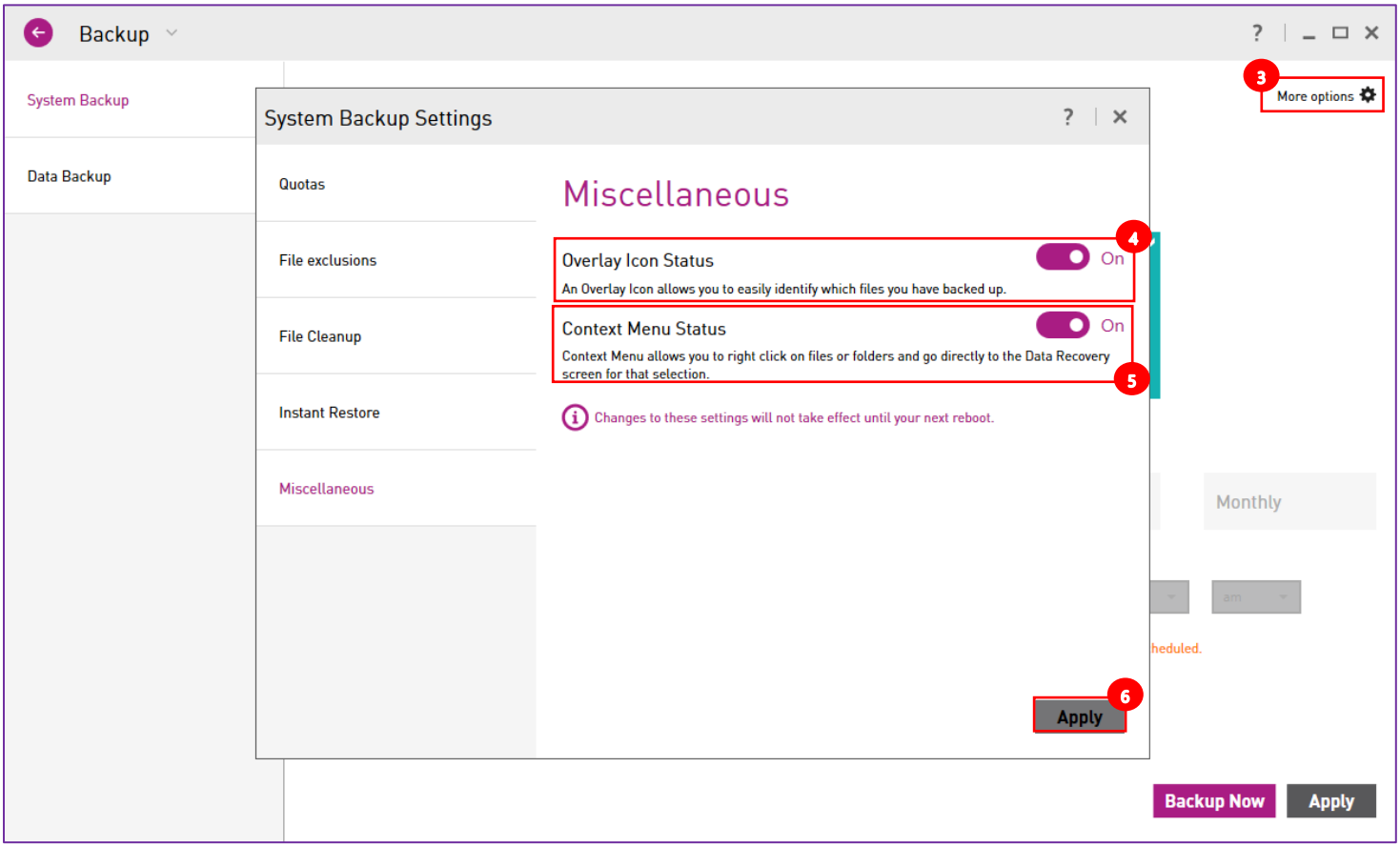
To achieve that operation, SoftThinks Backup and Recovery user interface will be opened in the Recovery screen (See Recovering your data from the main application).

You will notice in the context menu a switch to hide / show overlay icons. This setting can also be modified from SoftThinks Backup and Recovery User Interface, as well as the context menu behavior as described below:

1. Open SoftThinks Backup and Recovery User Interface
2. Click on the "Backup" tile



3. Click on "More options" 3
4. Switch the "Overlay Icon Status" slider 4 to "Off" to remove the overlay icon within the Windows Explorer
5. Switch the "Context Menu Status" slider 5 to "Off" to remove the option to restore files backed up from the Windows Explorer context menu
6. Click on the "Apply" button 6 to save your modifications
7. Your modifications will take effect once you will have restarted your device

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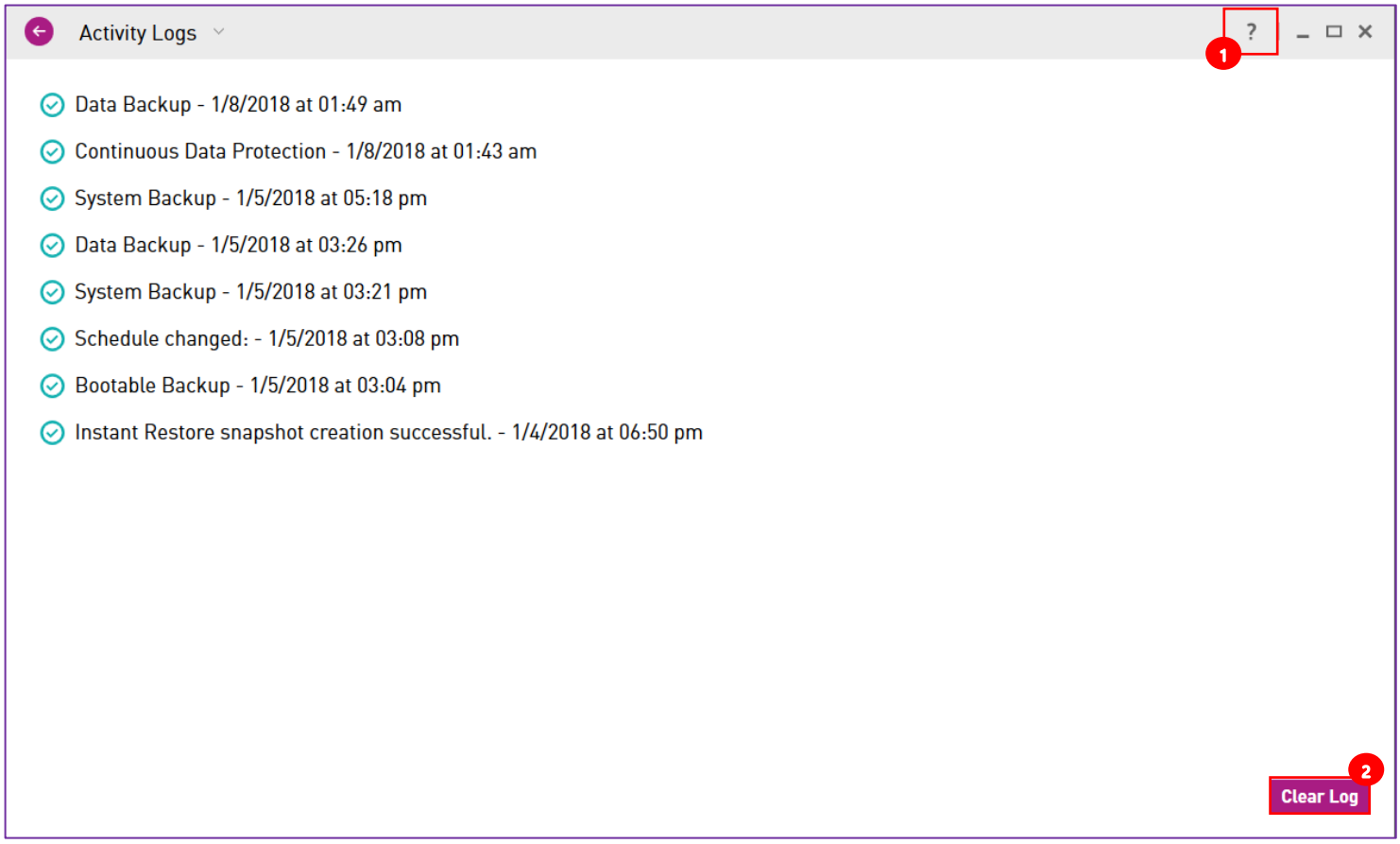
Checking the activity of your product

You can check your activity logs for actions that have been completed or that were missed in SoftThinks Backup and Recovery. This feature is located in the Help Menu displayed when clicking on the "?" icon at the top of the application 1.



You can also clear the activity log 2.
Once the activity log has been cleared, the change cannot be undone.

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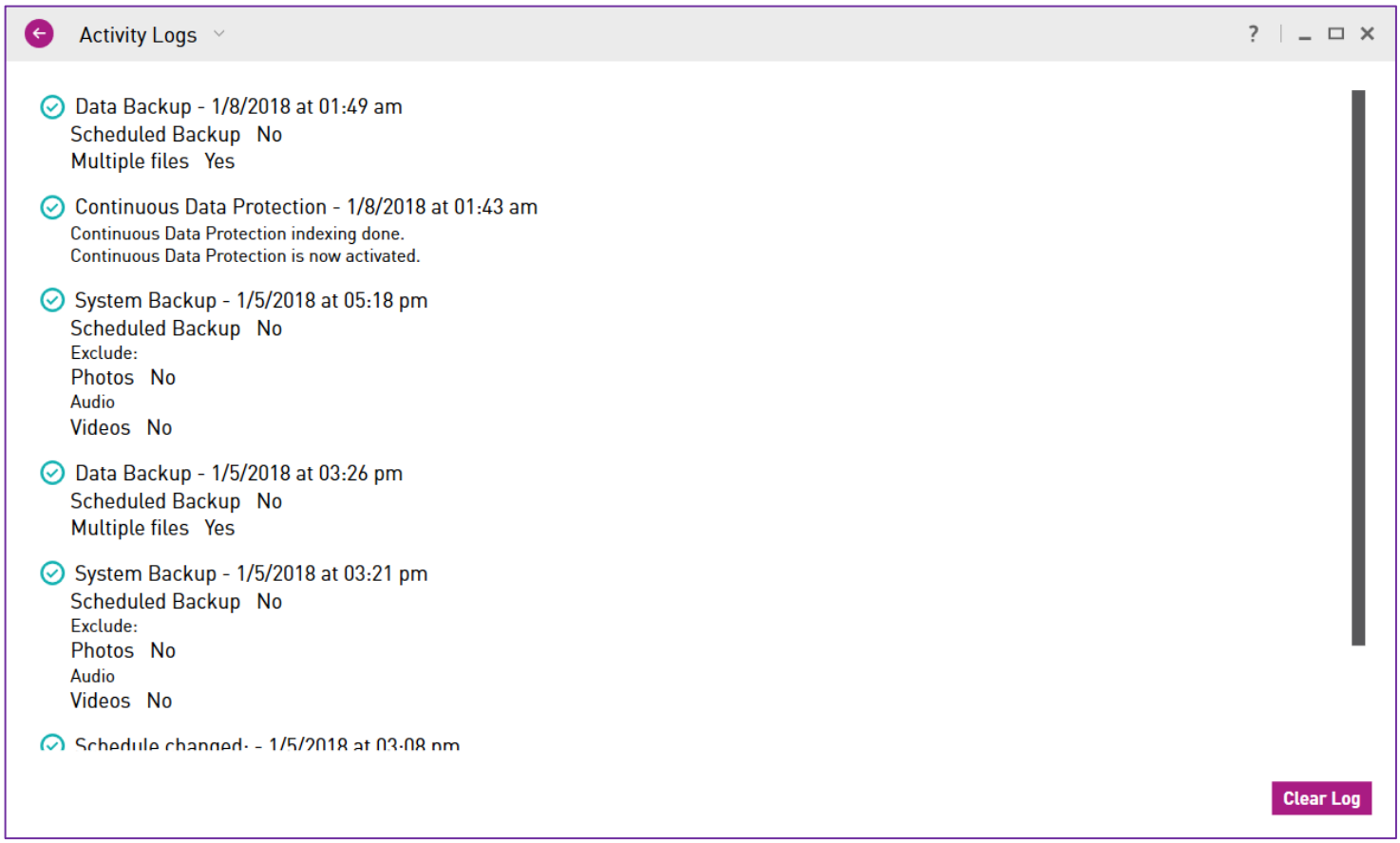
Click on any item to expand it and obtain more details:



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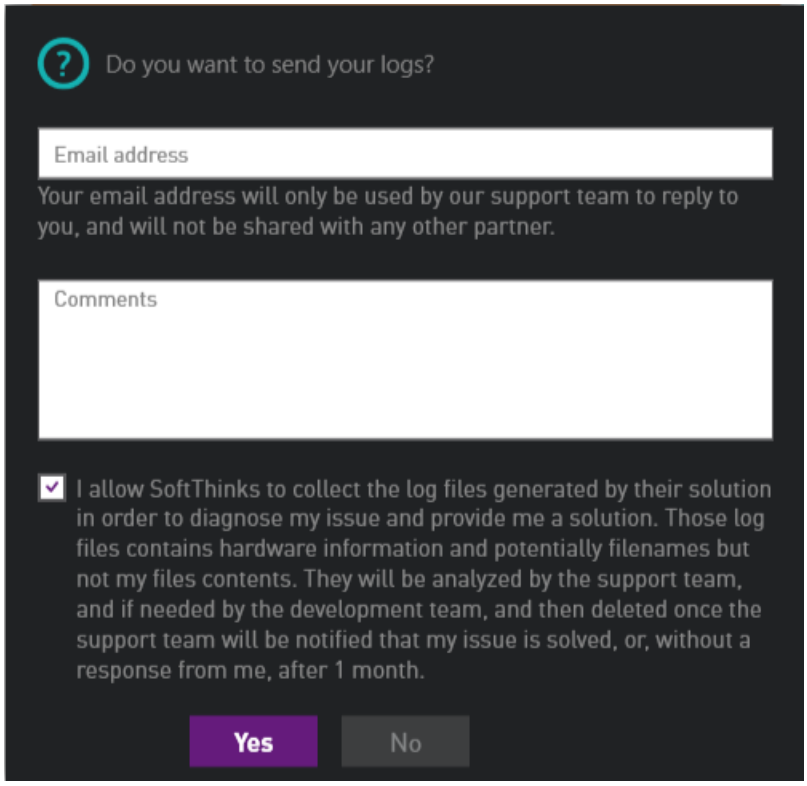
Reporting an issue

When you encounter an issue, you can send us the logs in order to allow us to analyze it and provide you a solution. Please click on the "?" icon at the top of the application to open the Help Menu, and then select "Report an issue".



As indicated, your email address will only be used by our support team to reply to you, and will not be shared with any other partner.

By agreeing to continue, you allow SoftThinks to collect certain system information so that we can provide you with faster, more accurate support.

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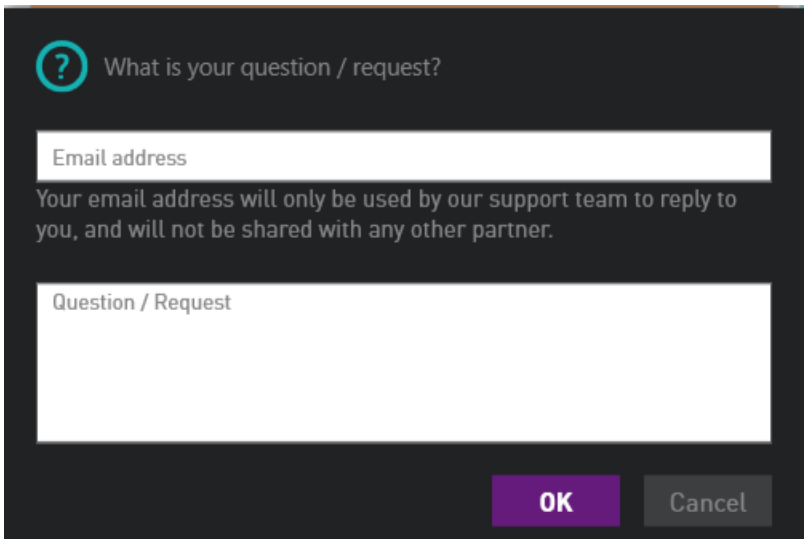
Contacting support

If you want to contact our support team for any question or request, please click on the "?" icon at the top of the application to open the Help Menu, and then select "Contact Support".

This will open the dialog box below where you will be invited to enter your email address in order to reply to you, as well as you question / request:



Click on the "OK" button will send an email containing your email address and your question / request to our support team.

As indicated, your email address will only be used by our support team to reply to you, and will not be shared with any other partner.

Our support team will send back to the email address you will have indicated a response within the next working days.

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HowTos

How to ensure that my USB Hard Drive can be used as Recovery Media

Any USB Hard Drive up to 2TB can be used directly except if:

- it is using GPT partition style (See How to know if my USB Drive is using GPT or MBR partition style)
- AND your computer is using BIOS / Legacy (See How to know if my computer is using UEFI or BIOS (legacy)).
  a. In this specific situation you will have to convert your USB Hard Drive to MBR partition style. Please follow step by step the instructions detailed in How to convert a GPT disk to MBR.

We don't recommend using 3TB and more USB Hard Drives because of technical limitations but some scenario can be managed if you make some manual operations depending if your computer is using BIOS / legacy or UEFI (See How to know if my computer is using UEFI or BIOS (legacy)):

- If your computer is using BIOS / legacy, it's it not possible to make your USB Hard Drives of 3TB or more bootable and so they cannot be used as Recovery Media.

- If your computer is using UEFI, your USB Hard Drive required to use GPT partition style in order to ensure it will be usable as Recovery Media (See How to know if my USB Drive is using GPT or MBR partition style).
  - If your drive is using MBR partition style please follow the step by step instructions detailed in How to convert a MBR disk to GPT
  - If your drive is already using GPT partition style, you have to ensure it is not formatted with exFAT file system. Please follow steps 1 to 3 from How to convert a drive from exFAT to NTFS file system. At the step 3 you will know if your drive is formatted with exFAT file system and if it's the case you can continue with the next steps.

Note: All the methods to make your drive usable as Recovery Media will erase its contents so please ensure that you have no data to keep or else please back up them before.

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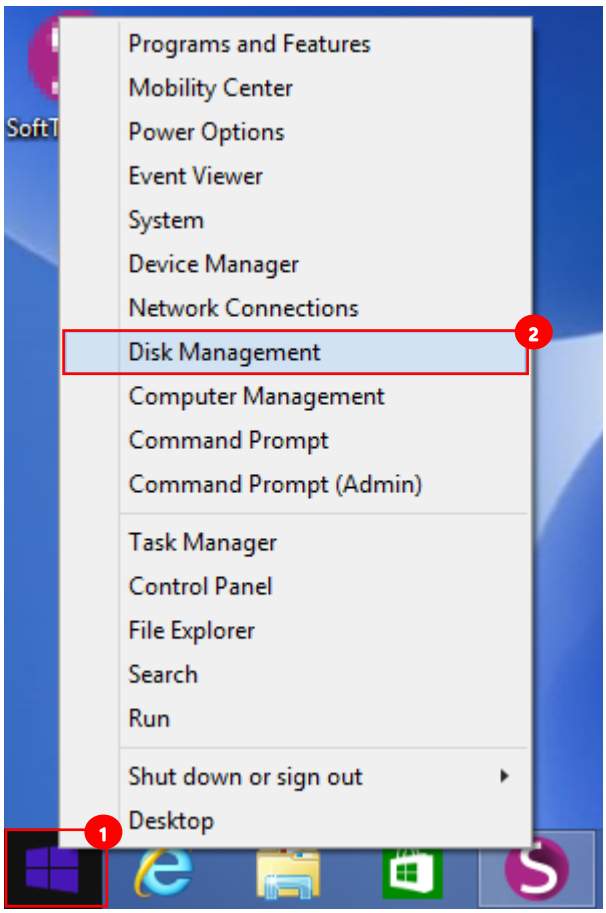
How to know if my USB Drive is using GPT or MBR partition style

1. Right-click on ***Start*** 1, the Windows logo on the bottom-left of the screen, or press the Windows key on your keyboard, to display the menu below:



2. Click on ***Disk Management*** 2

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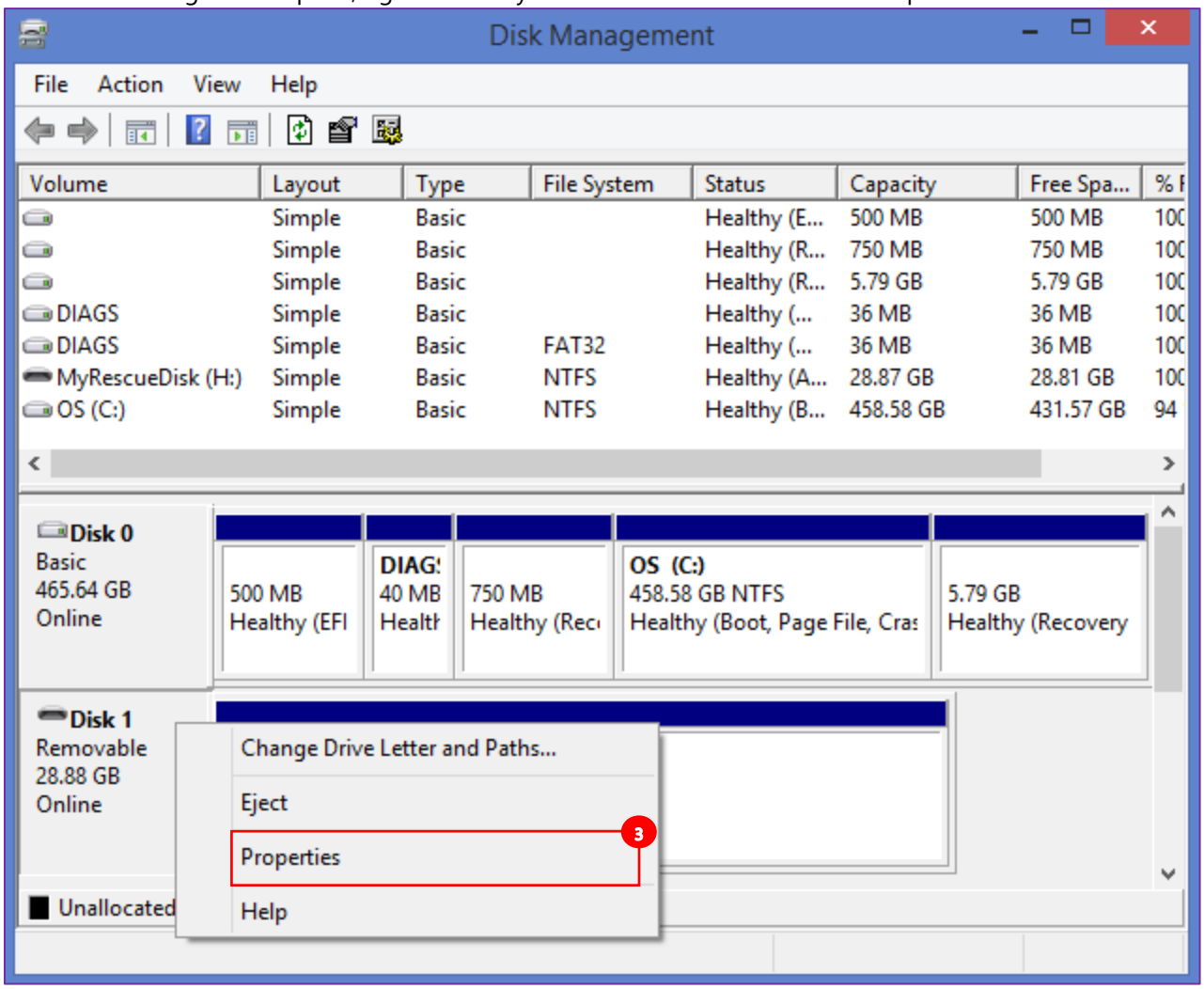
3. On the left of the right lower pane, right-click on you USB Hard Drive and select “Properties” 3:



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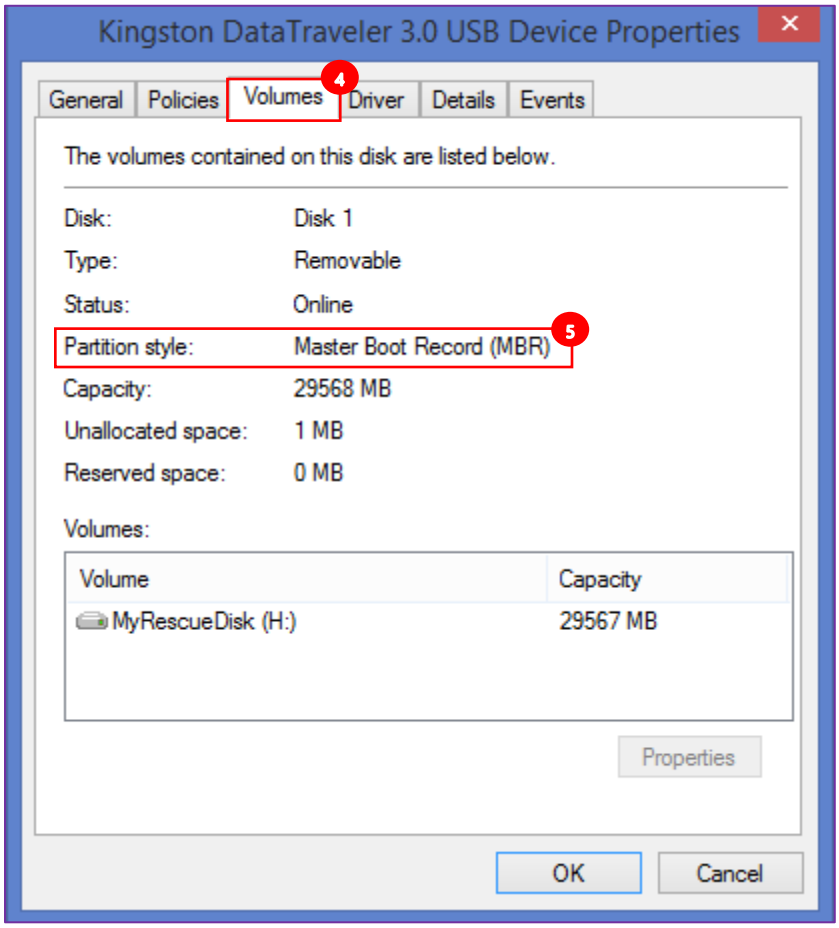
4. Select the "Volumes" tab 4:



5. Check the "Partition Style" value 5 which is either Master Boot Record (**MBR**), as in our example above, or GUID Partition Table (**GPT**).

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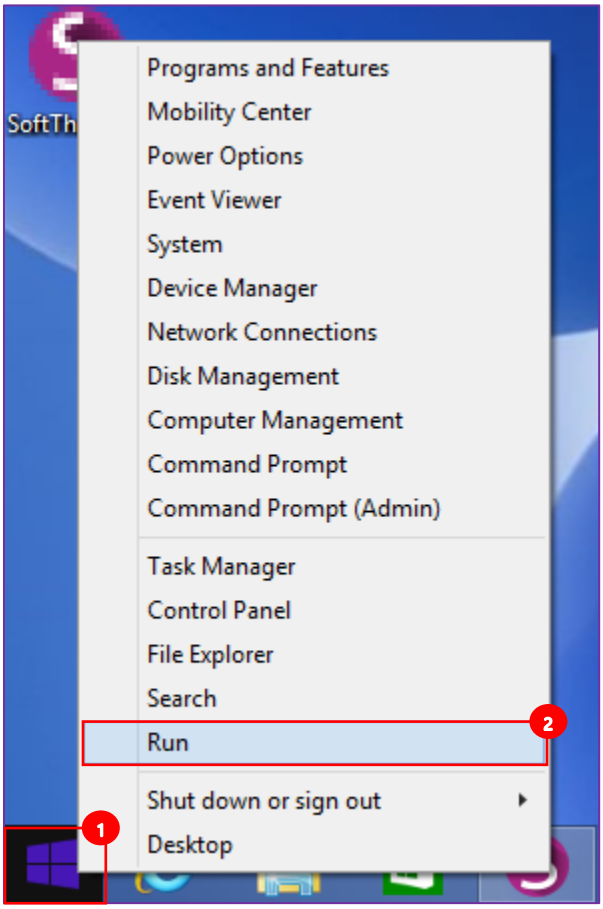
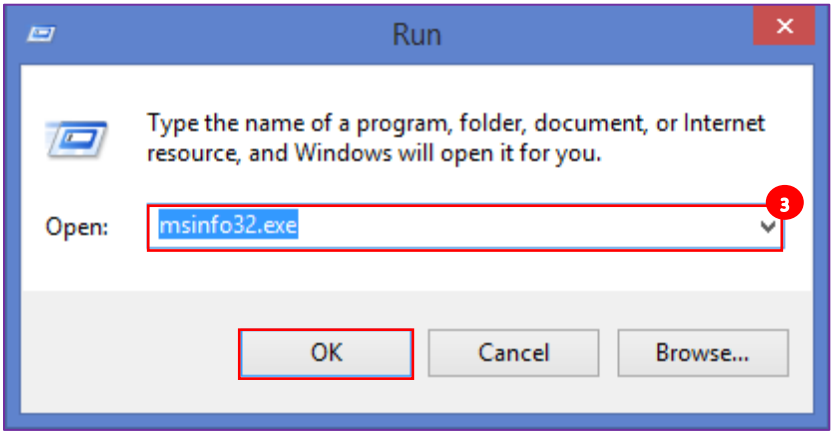
How to know if my computer is using UEFI or BIOS (legacy)

1. Right-click on ***Start*** 1, the Windows logo on the bottom-left of the screen, or press the Windows key on your keyboard, to display the menu below:



2. Click on "Run" 2

3. In the "Run" dialog box which appears, type "MSInfo32.exe" in the "Open" text field 3 and click on the "OK" button:



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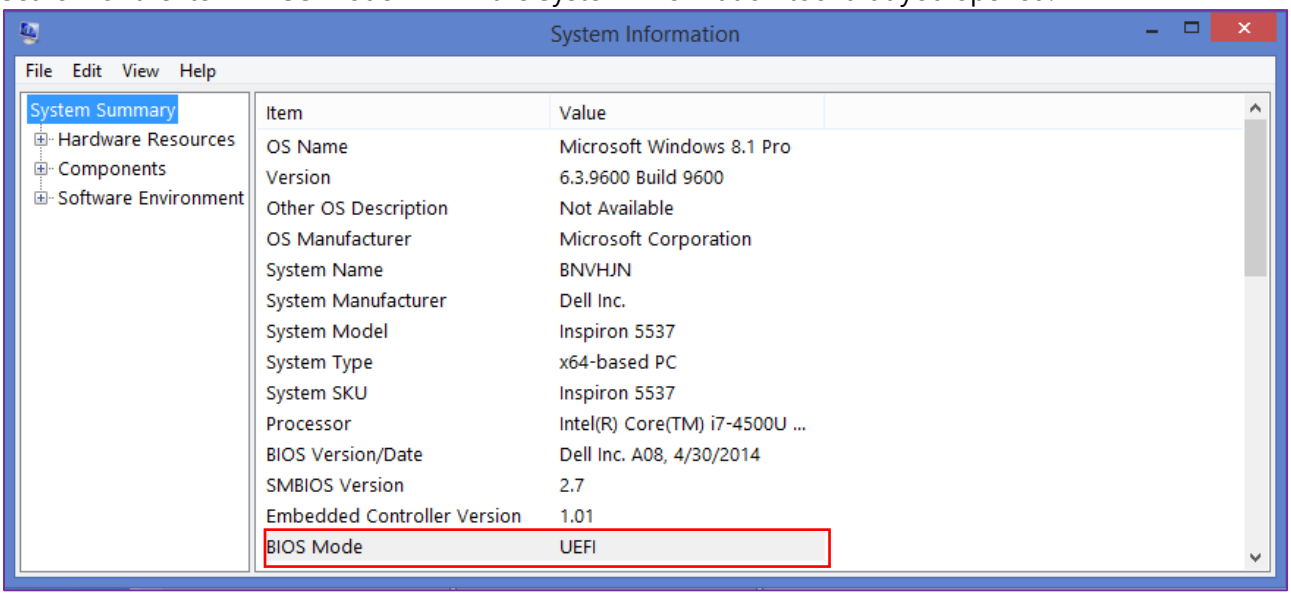
4. Search for the item “BIOS Mode” (4) in the System Information tool that you opened:



5. If your PC uses UEFI the value “BIOS Mode” is set to “UEFI”. If it is using BIOS, this sale value is set to “Legacy”.

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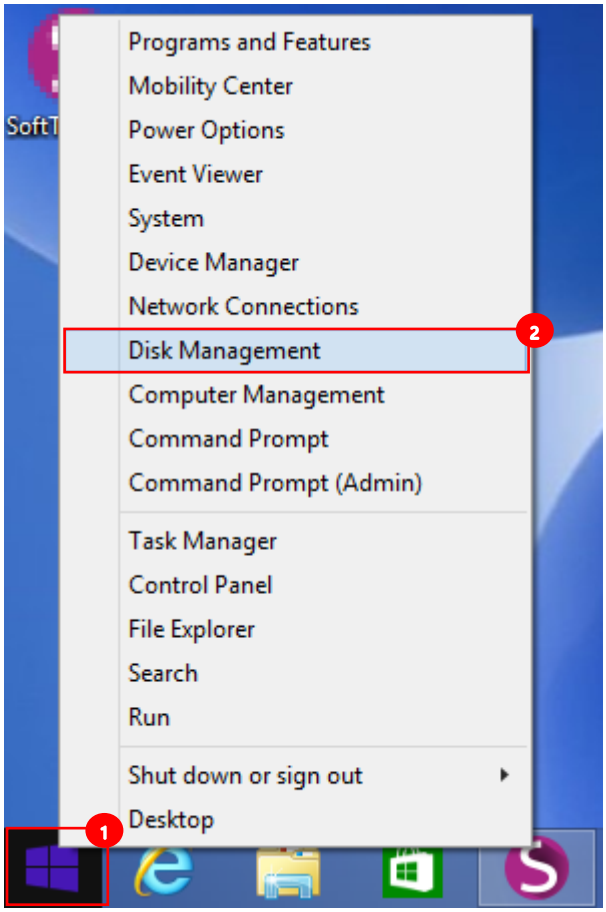
How to convert a MBR disk to GPT

Converting a MBR disk to GPT partition schema will remove all its contents. Please back up the data you would like to keep before.

Here below the steps to convert a MBR USB Hard Drive before launching the Recovery Media Creation process:

1. Right-click on ***Start*** 1, the Windows logo on the bottom-left of the screen, or press the Windows key on your keyboard, to display the menu below:



2. Click on ***Disk Management*** 2

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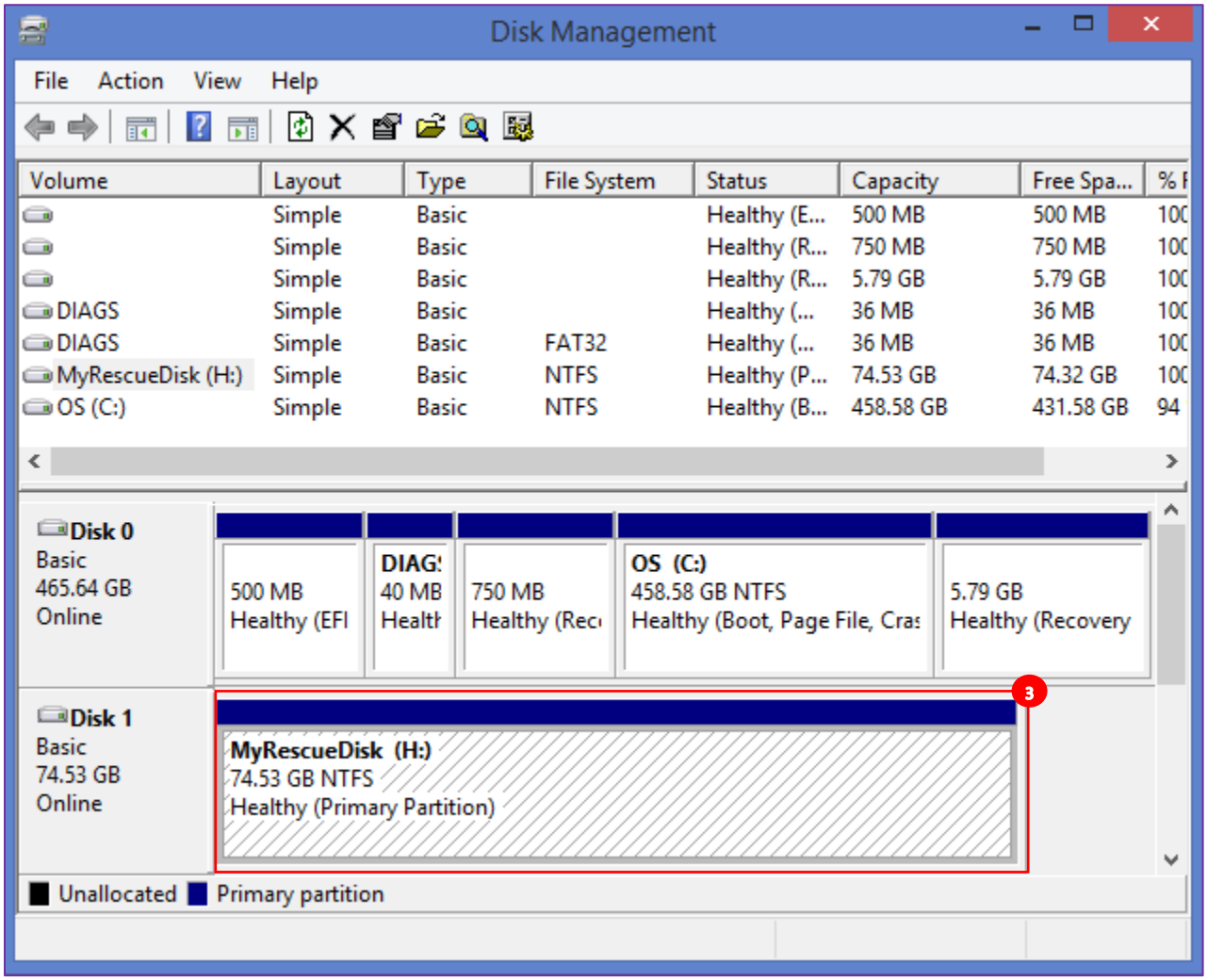
3. In the ***Disk Management*** window, the lower pane will display a list of available drives. Identify your USB Hard Drive (3):



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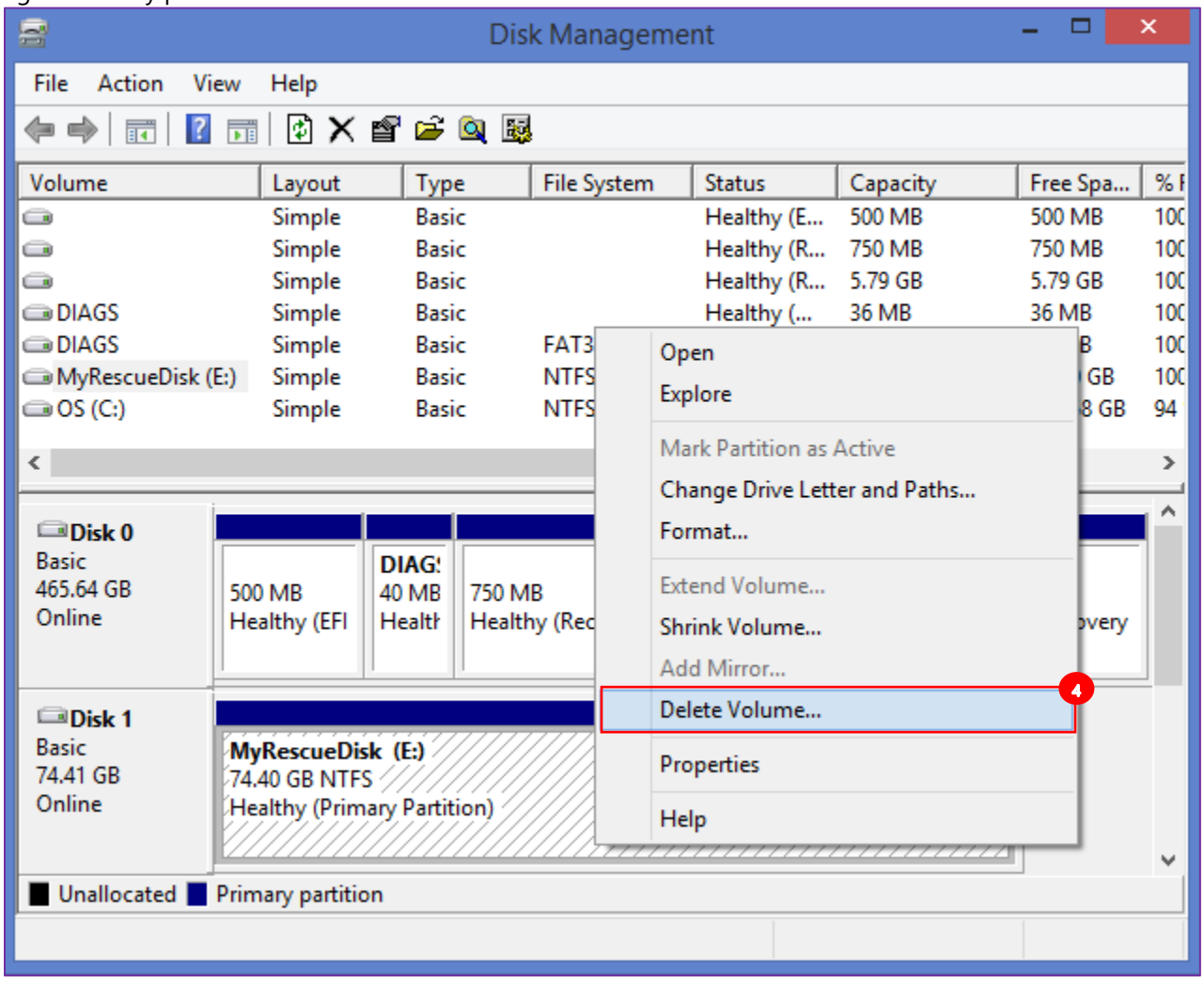
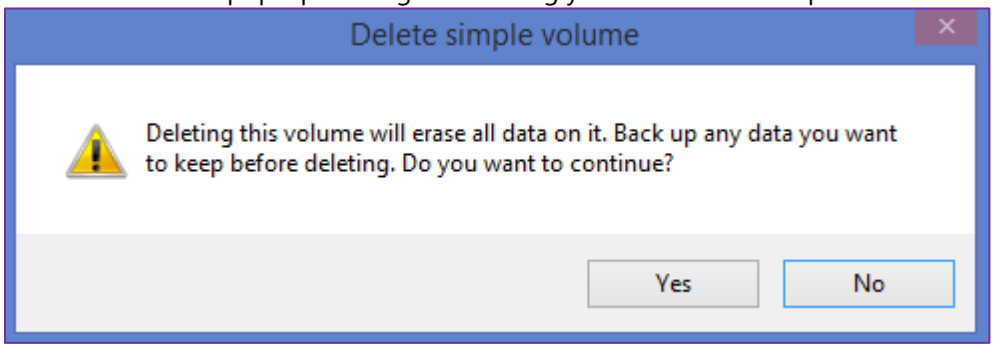
4. Right-click any partitions on the drive and select “Delete Volume” or “Delete Partition”:



5. Click on the “Yes” button in the pop-up message box asking you to confirm the operation:



6. Repeat steps 4 and 5 for each volume on that disk

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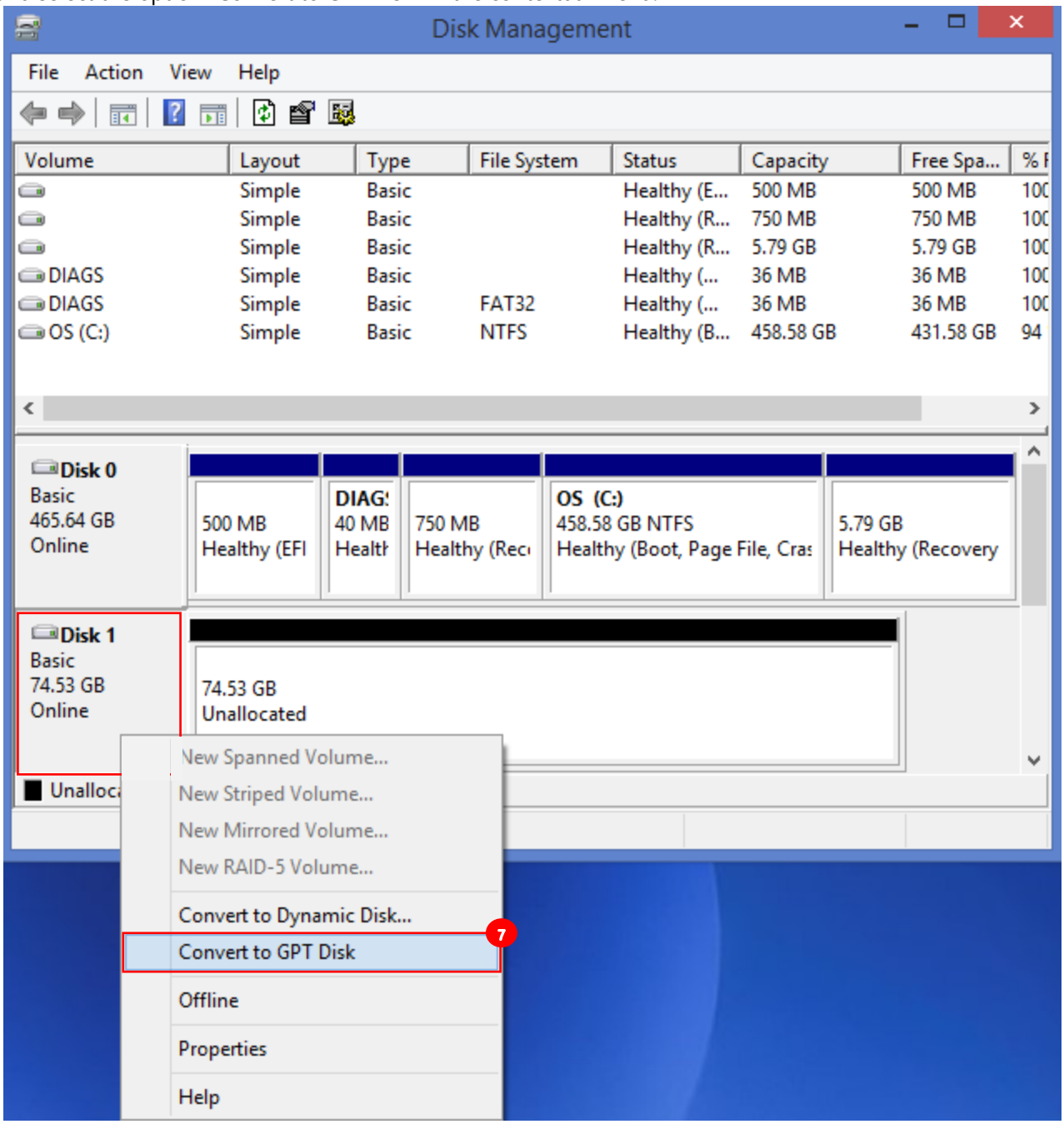
7. Once all the volumes will have been removed, the disk will appear as “Unallocated”. Right-click on the disk at the left and select the option “Convert to GPT Disk” in the contextual menu:



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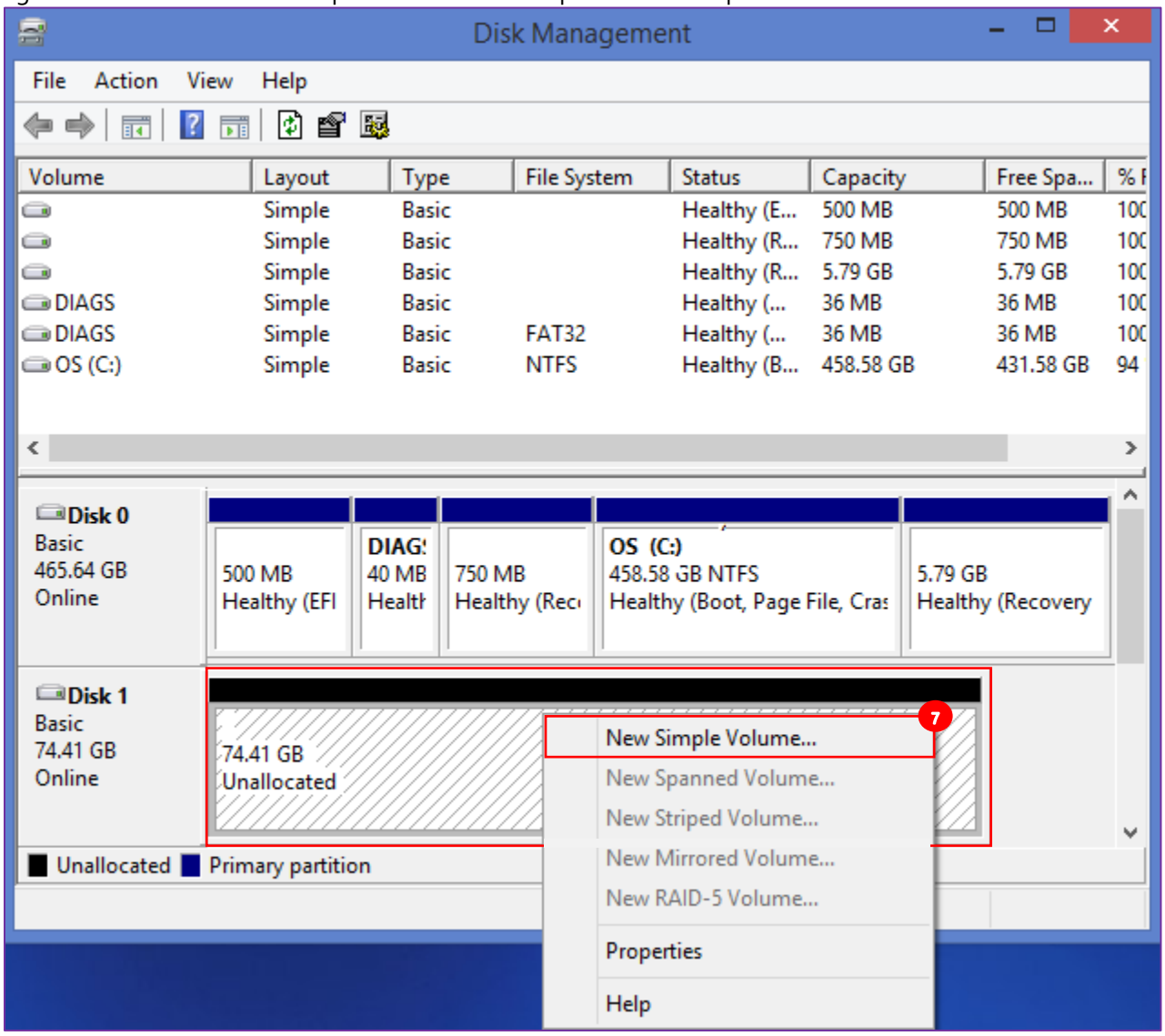
8. Right-click on the unallocated space and select the option “New Simple Volume…” in the contextual menu:



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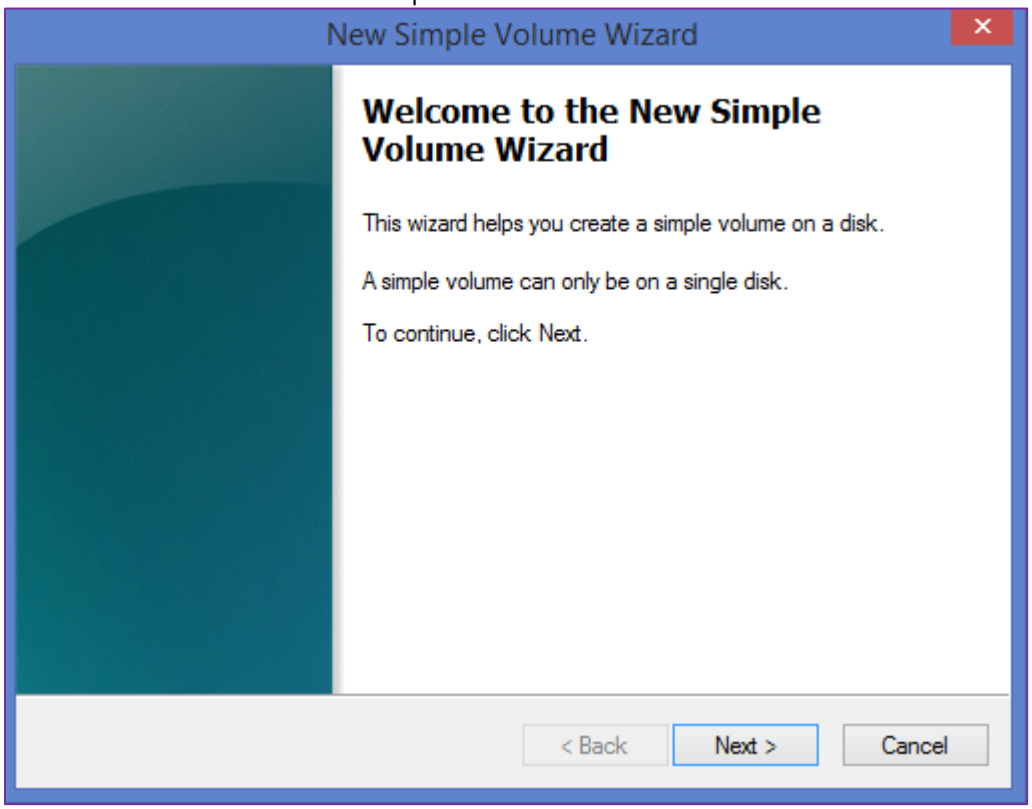
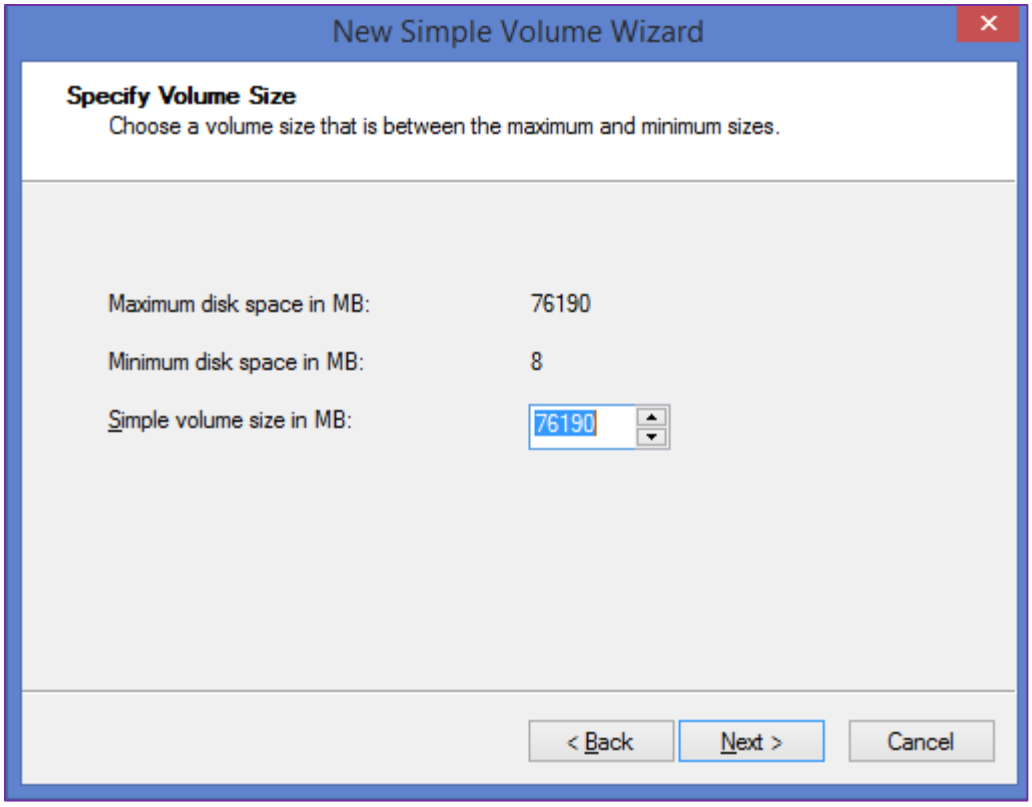
9. Click on the « Next > » button in the New Simple Volume Wizard:



10. Let the default volume size and click on the "Next >" button:



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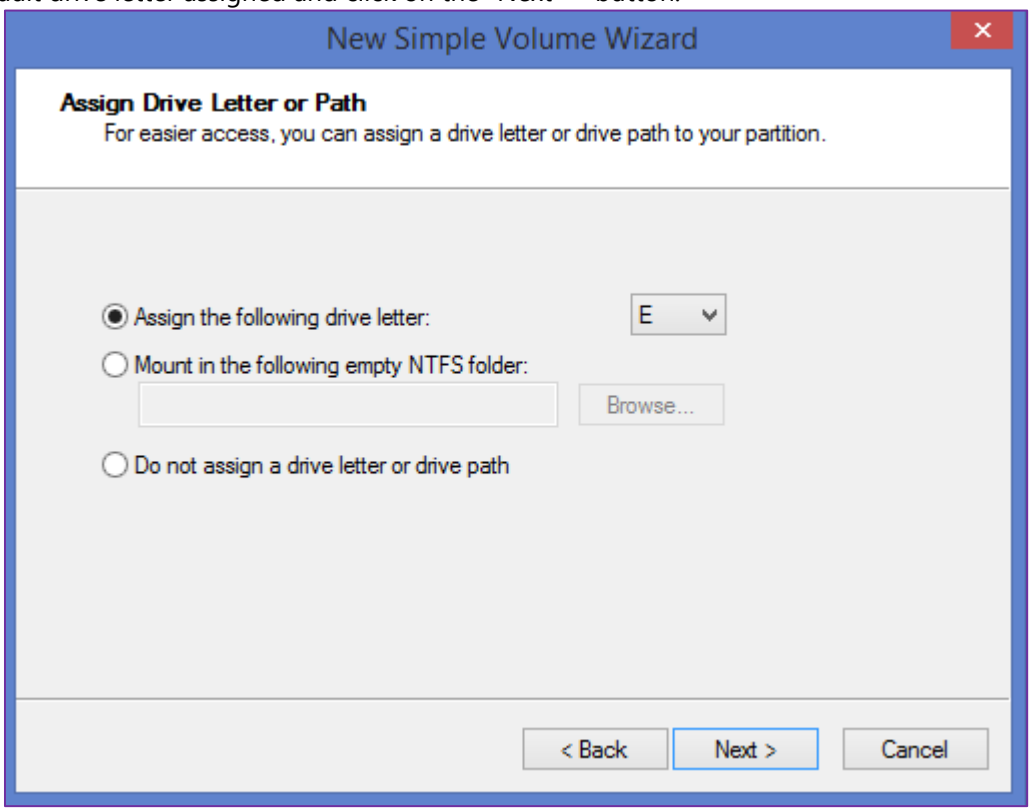
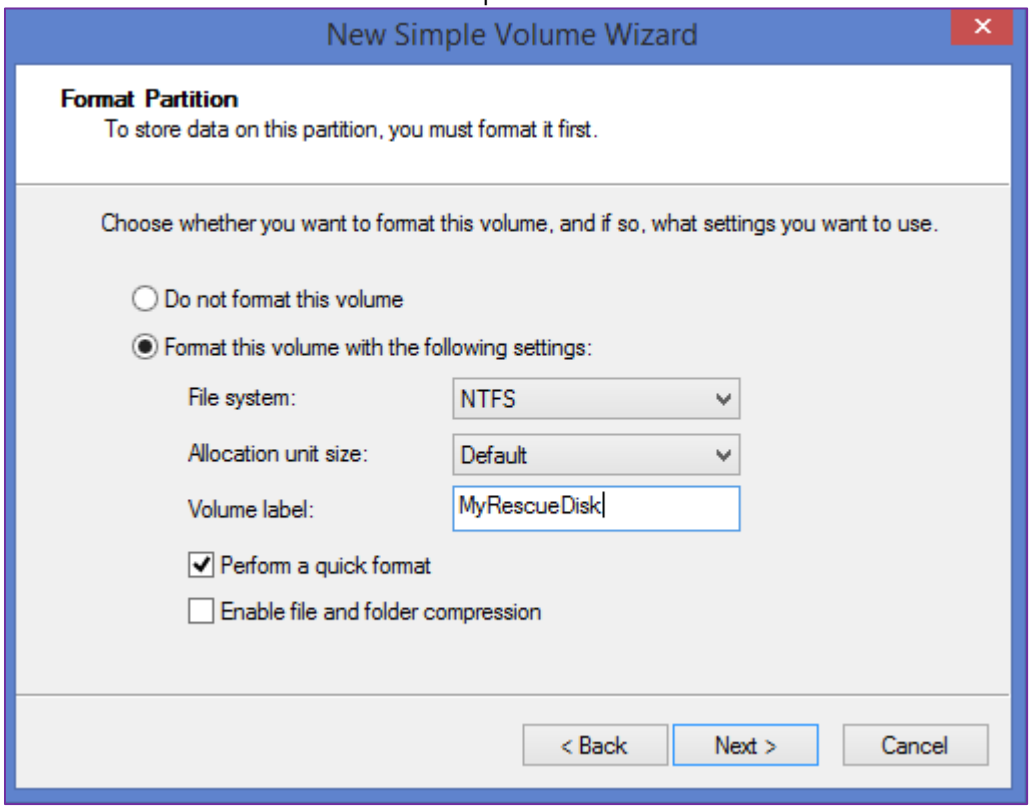
11. Let the default drive letter assigned and click on the “Next >” button:



12. Set the file system to NTFS and leave the Allocation unit size to Default. Enter a volume label, such as “MyRescueDisk”. Check the box labeled “Perform a quick format” and then click on the “Next >” button:



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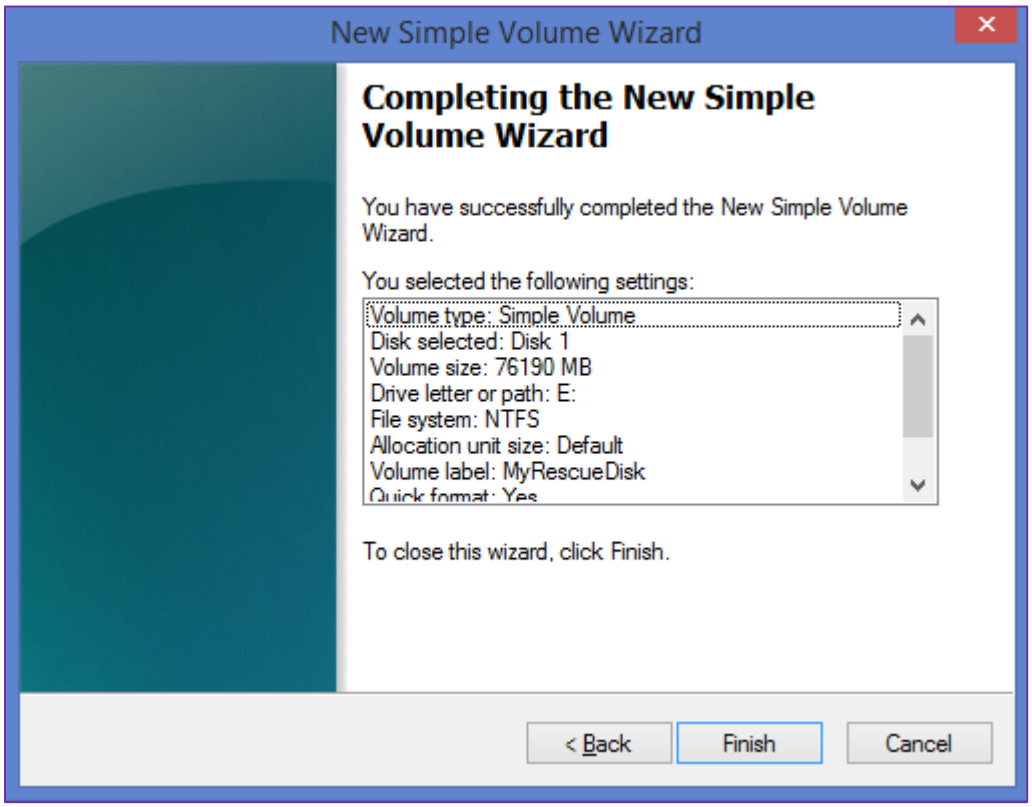
13. Click on the “Finish” button:



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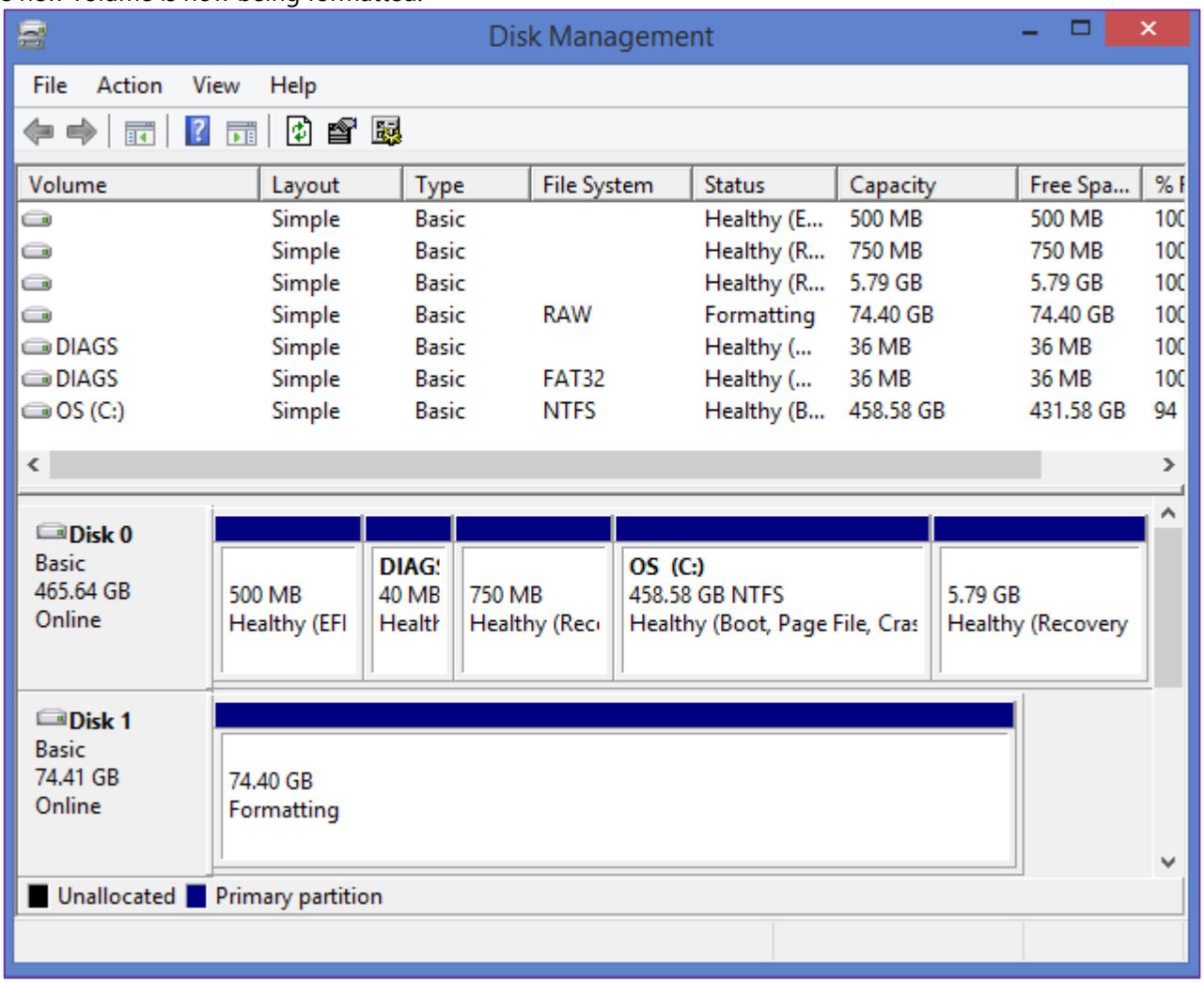
14. The new volume is now being formatted:



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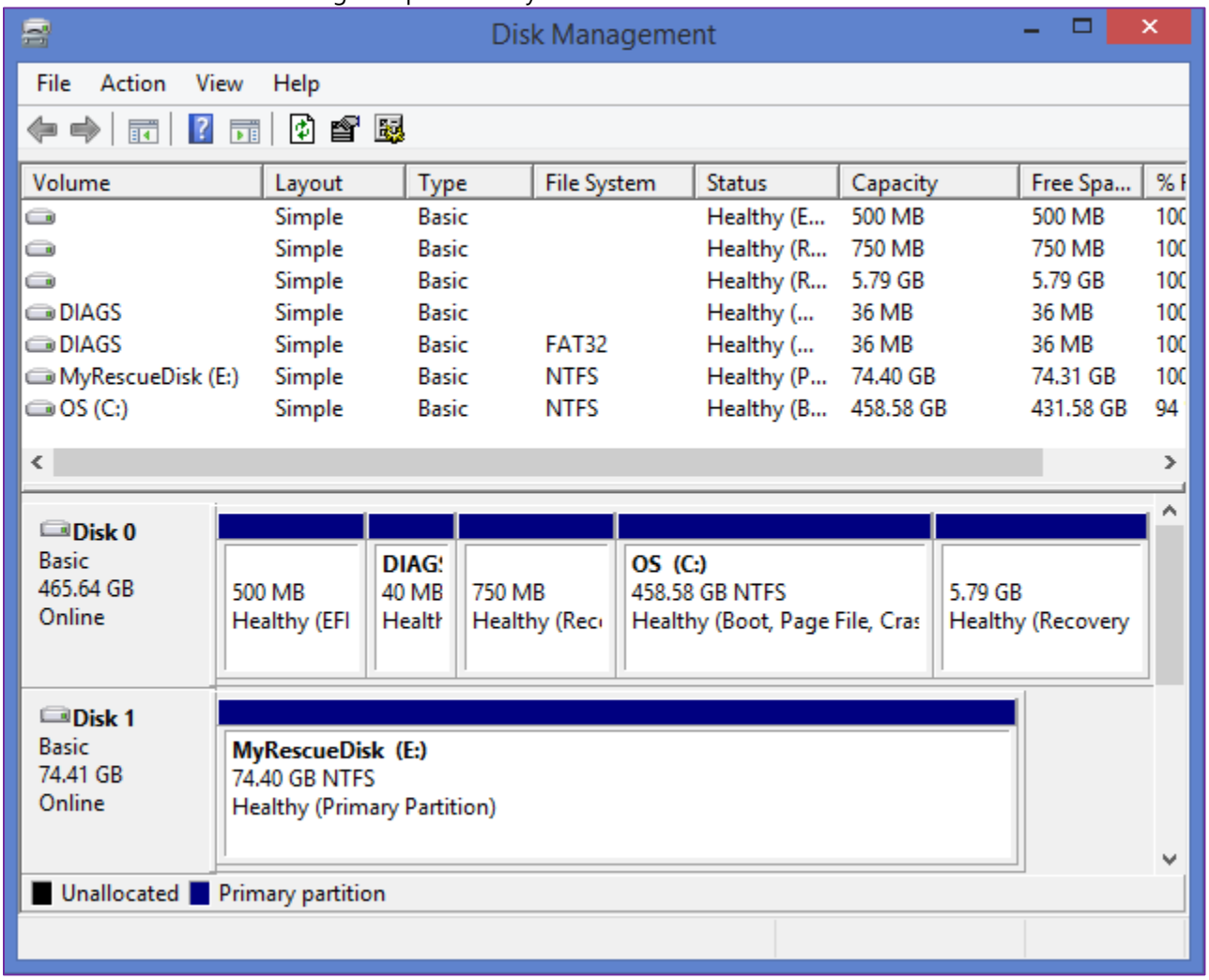
15. Your USB Hard Drive is now using GPT partition style:



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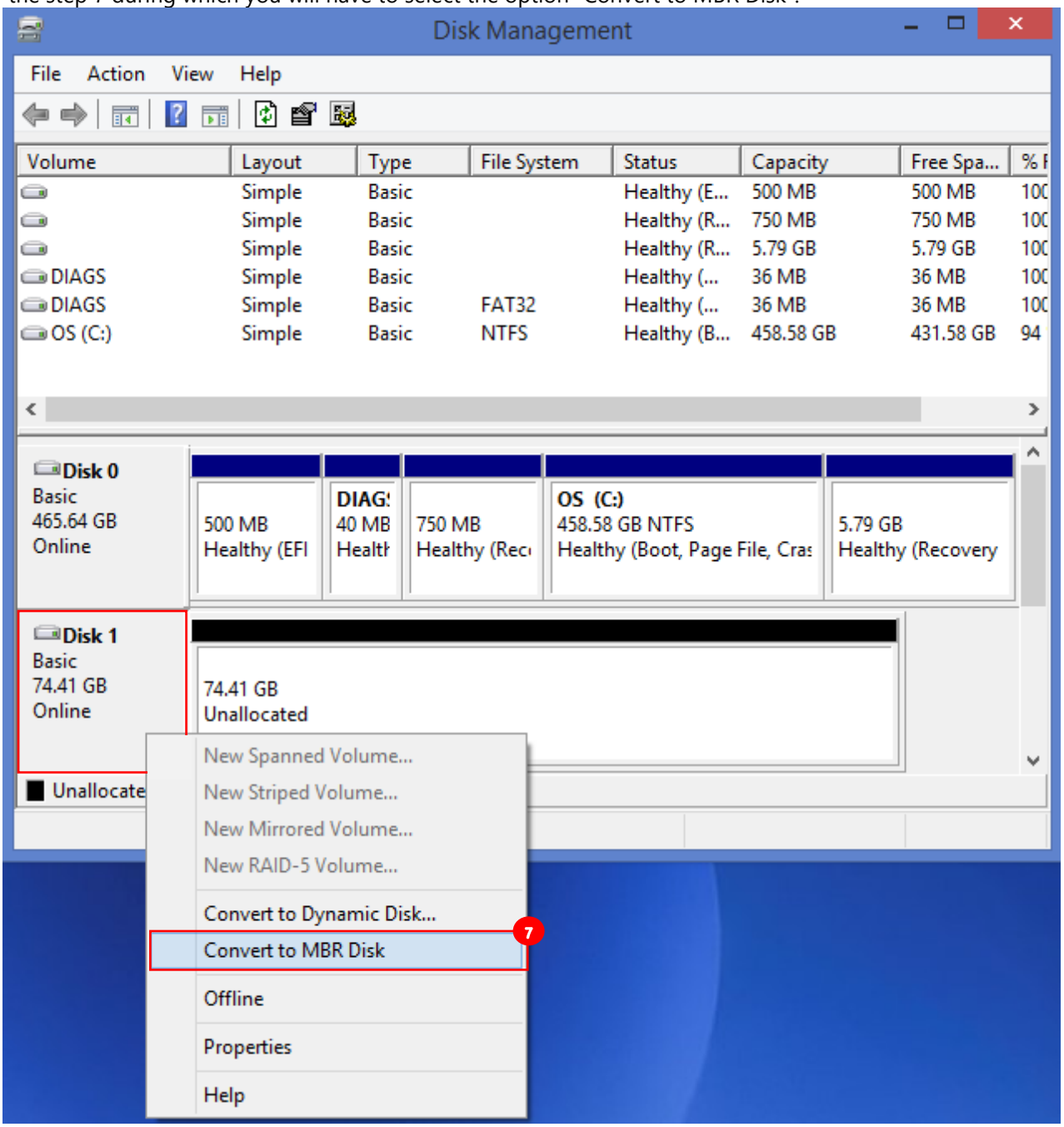
How to convert a GPT disk to MBR

Converting a GPT disk to MBR will remove all its contents. Please back up the data you would like to keep before.

7. Please follow the same steps than to convert a MBR disk to GPT disk (See How to convert a MBR disk to GPT) except for the step 7 during which you will have to select the option "Convert to MBR Disk":



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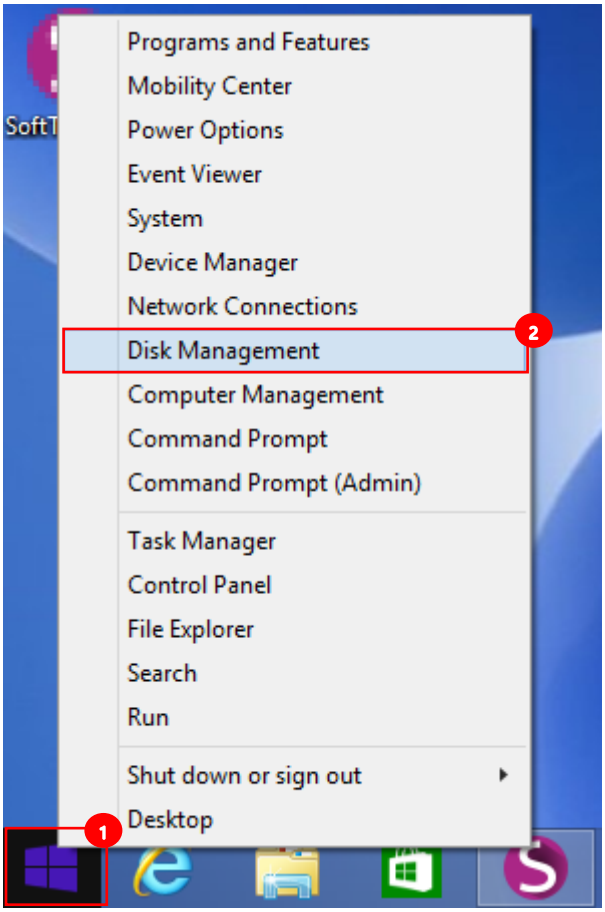
How to convert a drive from exFAT to NTFS file system

Converting a drive from exFAT to NTFS will remove all its contents. Please back up the data you would like to keep before.

16. Right-click on ***Start*** (1), the Windows logo on the bottom-left of the screen, or press the Windows key on your keyboard, to display the menu below:



17. Click on ***Disk Management*** (2)

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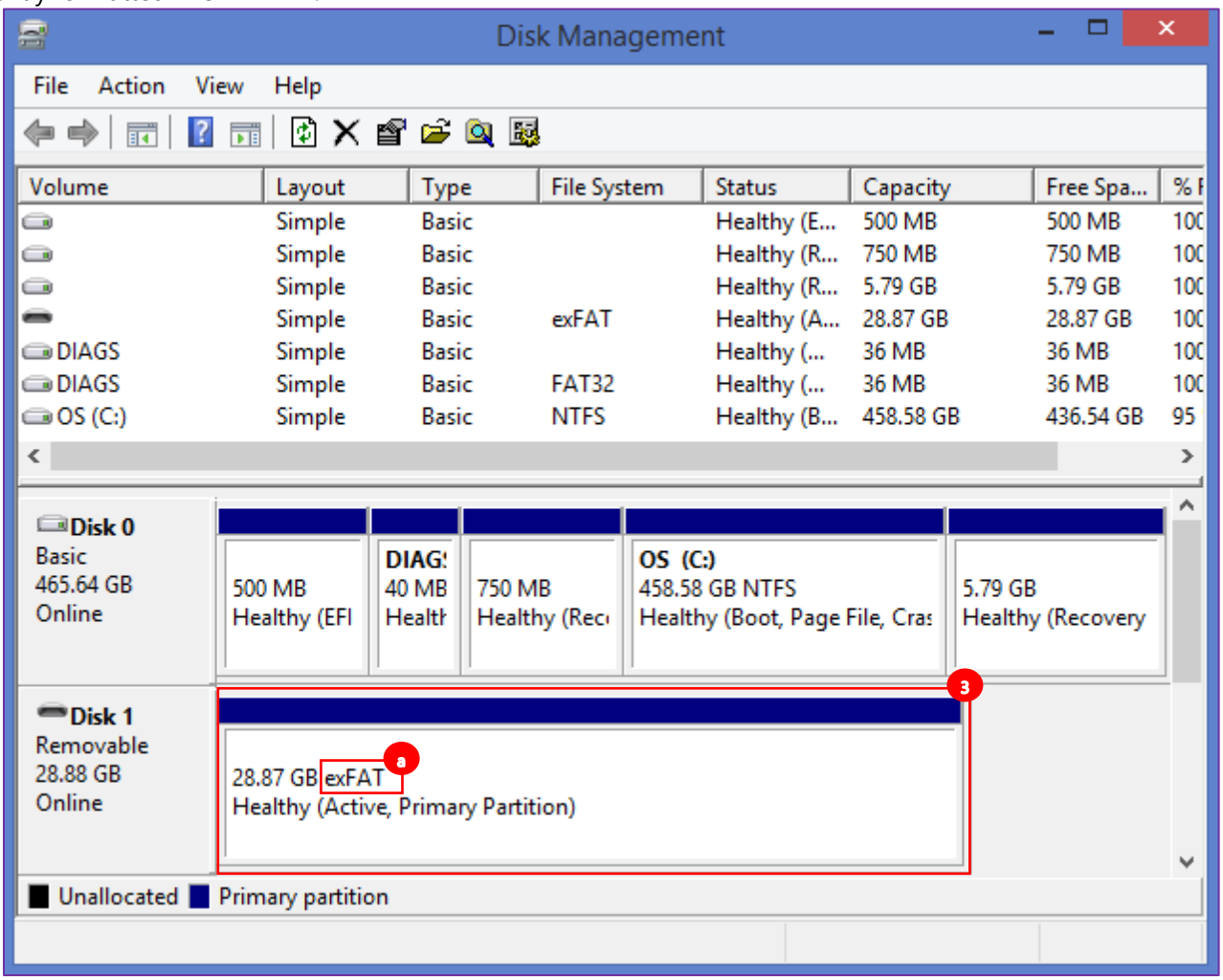
18. In the ***Disk Management*** window, the lower pane will display a list of available drives. Identify your USB drive (3) currently formatted in exFAT (a):



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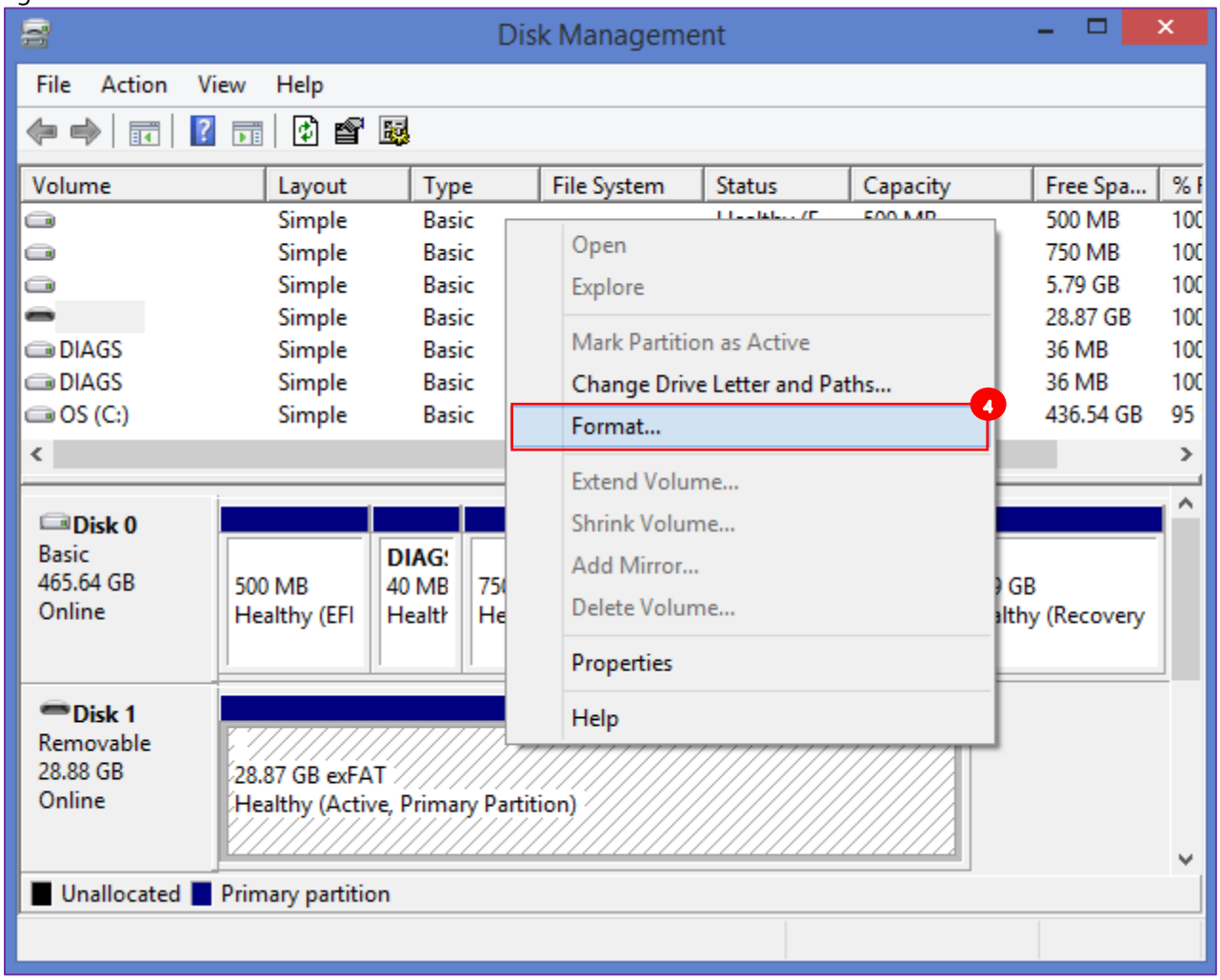
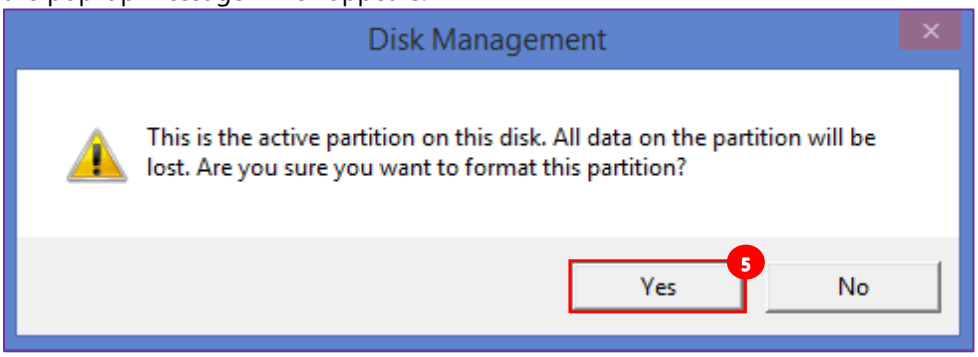
19. Right click on it and select “Format”:



20. Click on “Yes” on the pop-up message which appears:



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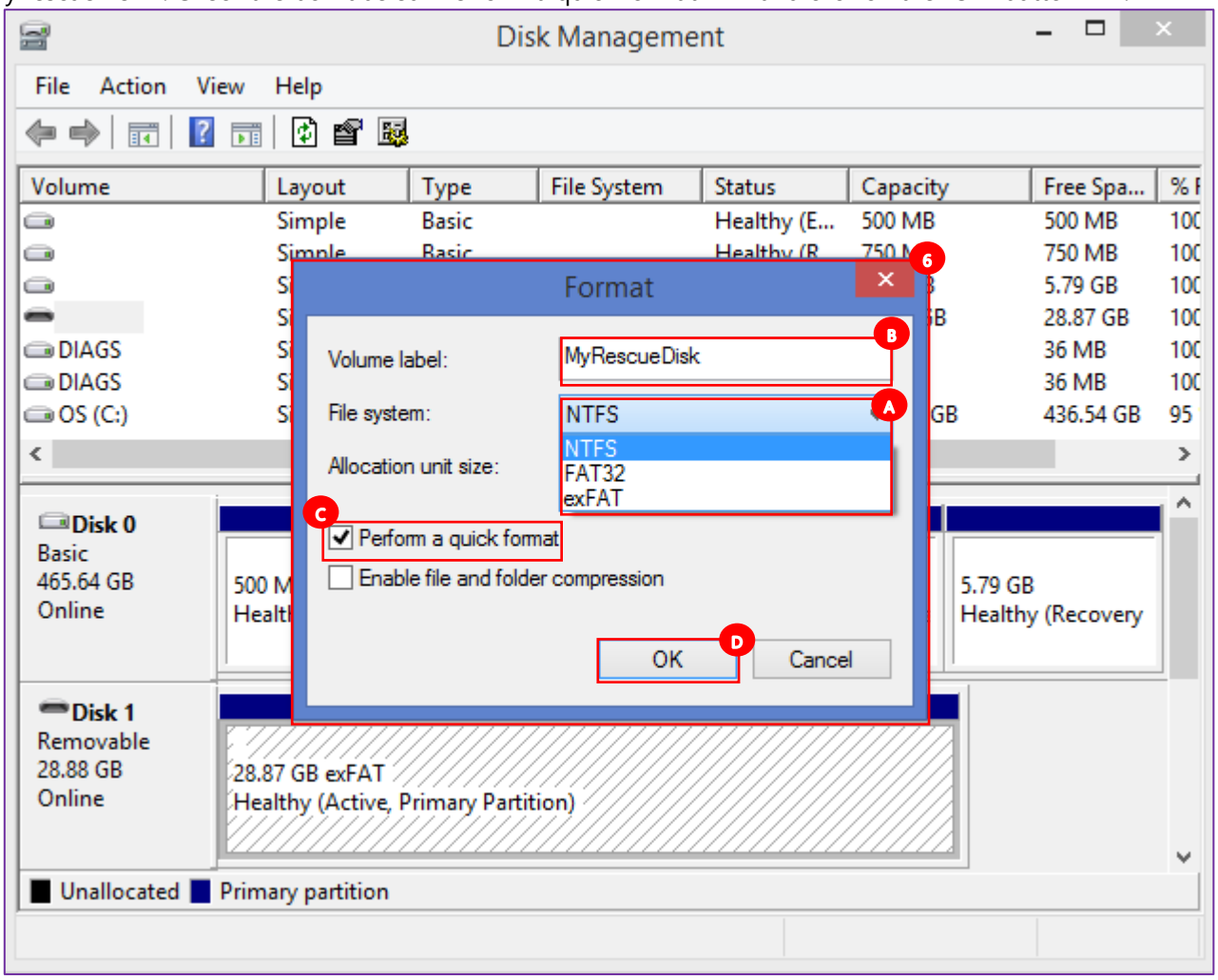
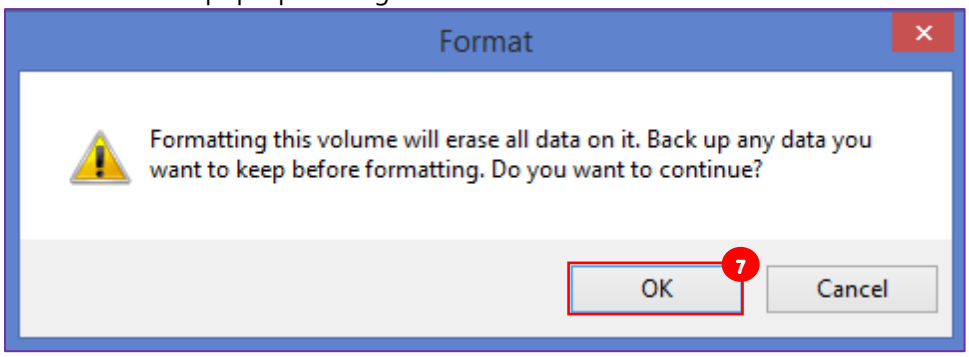
21. In the pop-up dialog box which appears 6, set the file system to NTFS A and leave the Allocation unit size to Default. The Volume Label field B can be customized in order to give the volume a desired name, such as "MyRescueDisk ». Check the box labeled "Perform a quick format" C and click on the "OK" button D:



22. Click on the "OK" button on next pop-up message box to confirm:



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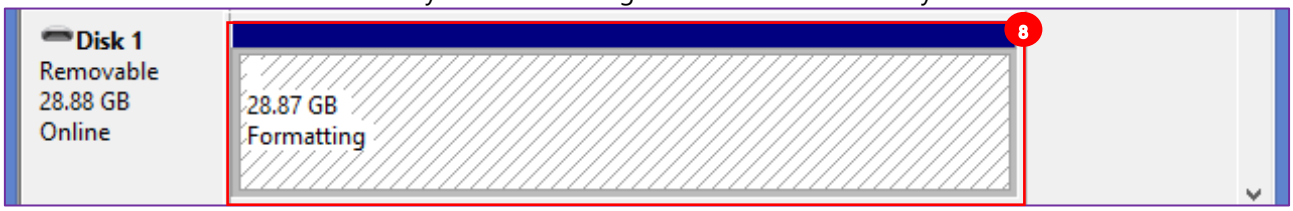
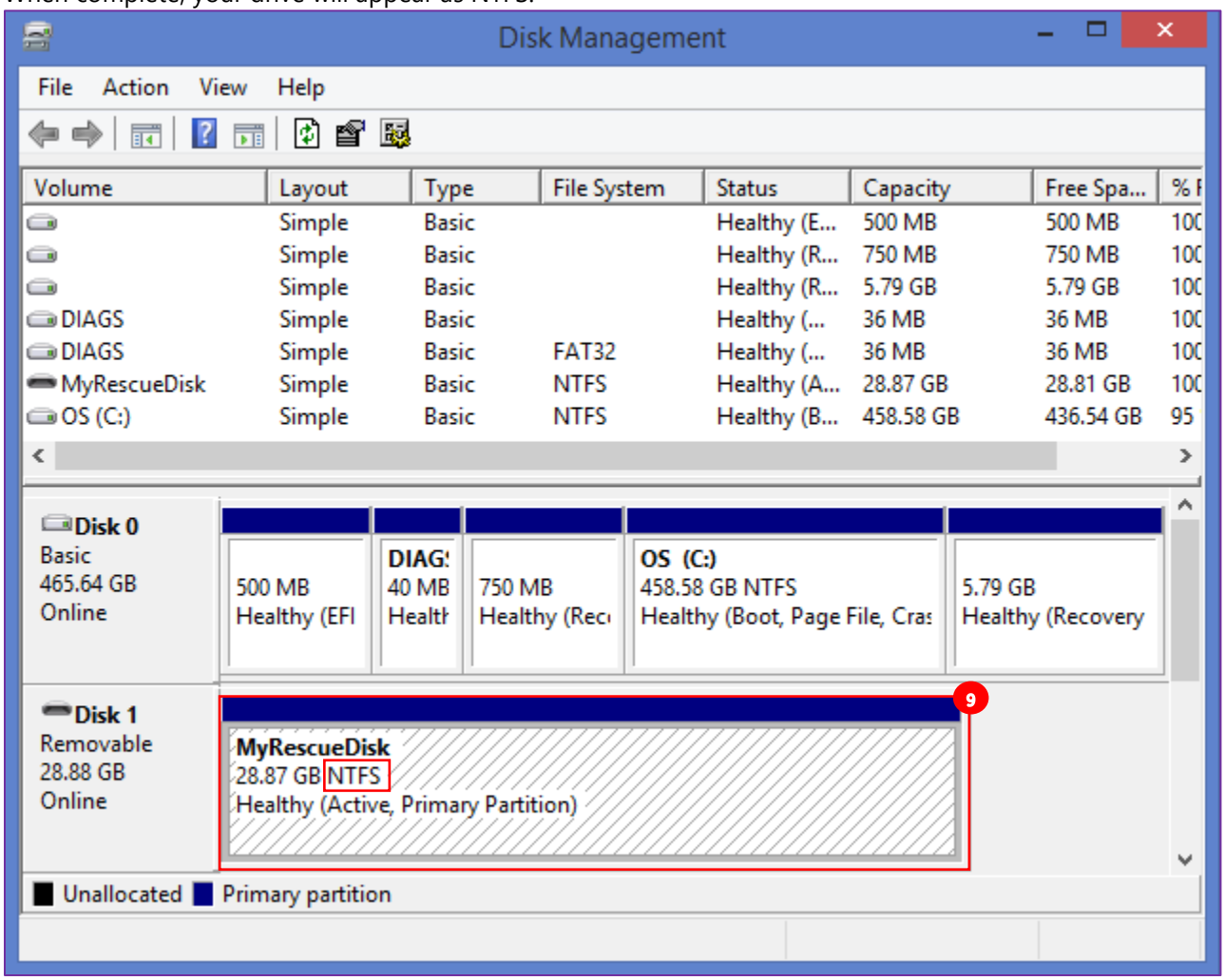
23. Please wait some few seconds while your disk in being formatted to NTFS file system:



24. When complete, your drive will appear as NTFS:



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How to revert back a USB Hard Disk partially converted to a Recovery Media

1. Delete the FAT 32 partition
2. Delete the ST_BACKUP_FOLDER folder from NTFS partition
3. Untag the NTFS partition

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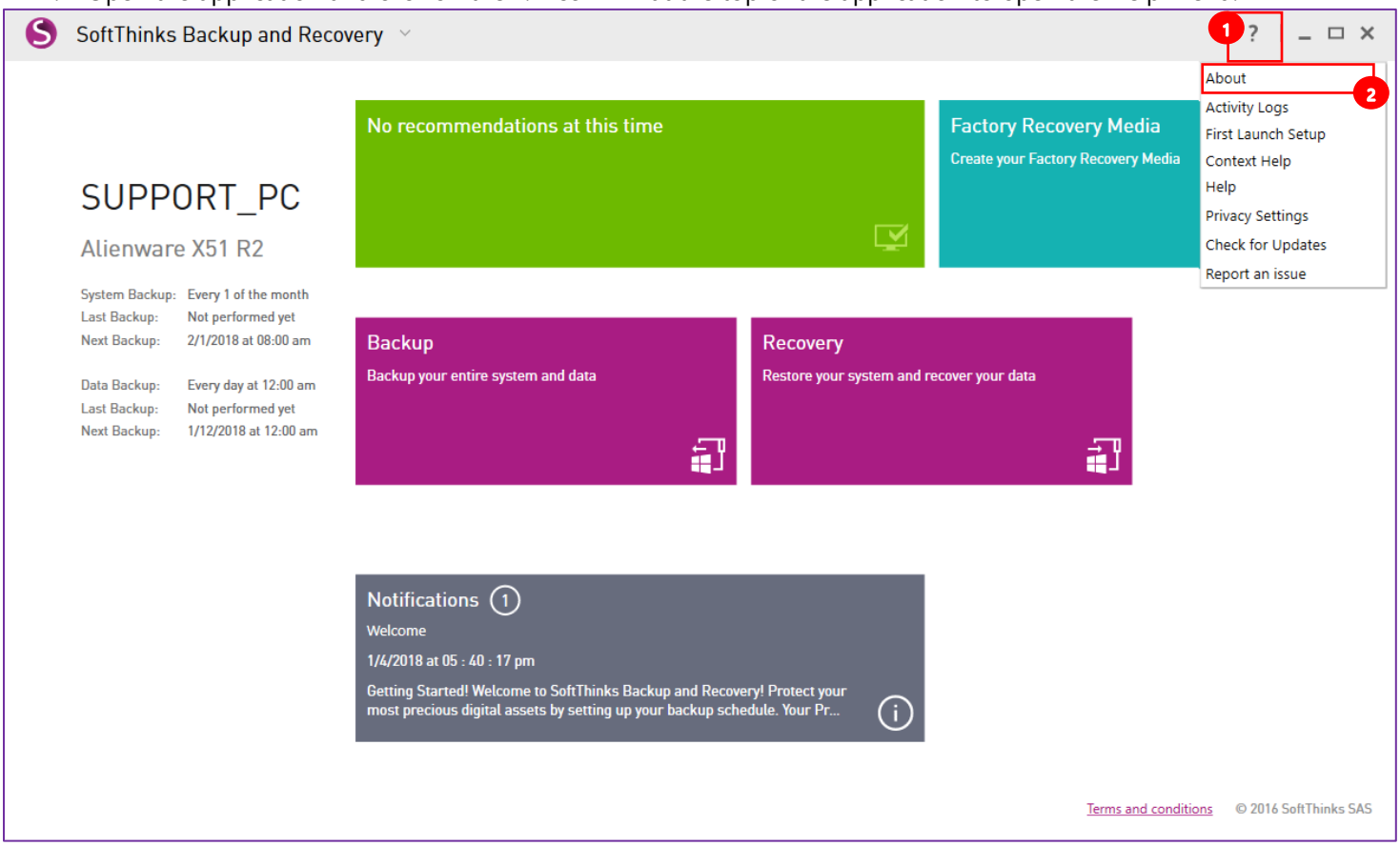
How to find the "Machine Identifier"

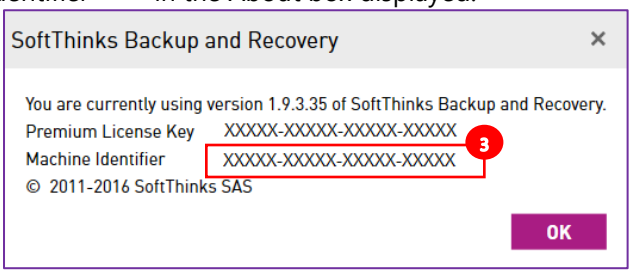
The "Machine Identifier" is a value generated by the software that the support team might ask you in order to upgrade your product to the Premium Edition (typically after a motherboard or Hard Disk replacement):

1. Open the application and click on the "?" icon (1) at the top of the application to open the Help Menu:



2. Select the option "About" (2)

3. You will find the "Machine Identifier" (3) in the About box displayed:



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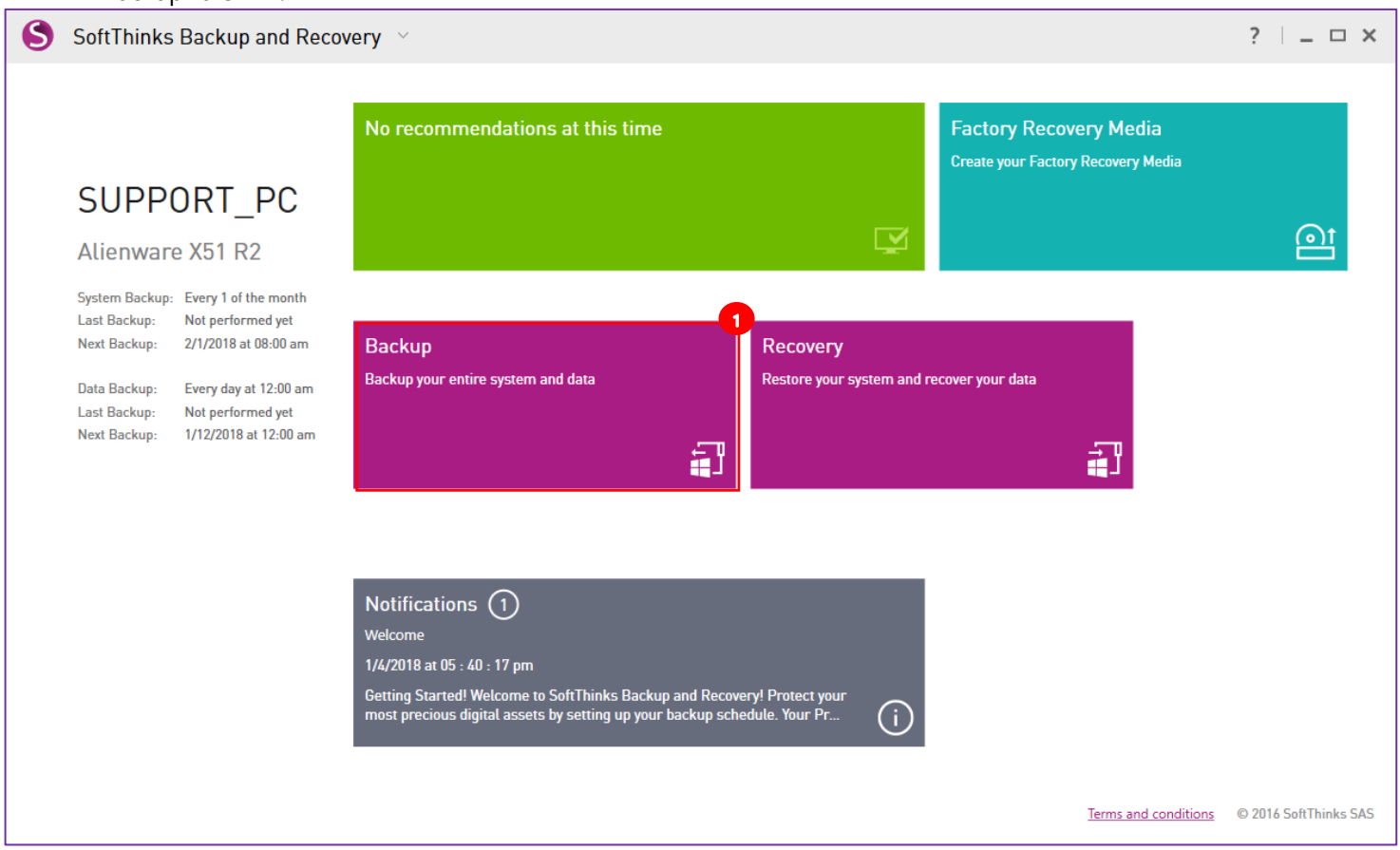
How to disable the Continuous Data Protection

Follow the steps below to disable the Continuous Data Protection (CDP):

1. Open SoftThinks Backup and Recovery User Interface (See Opening SoftThinks Backup and Recovery) and click on the "Backup" tile 1:



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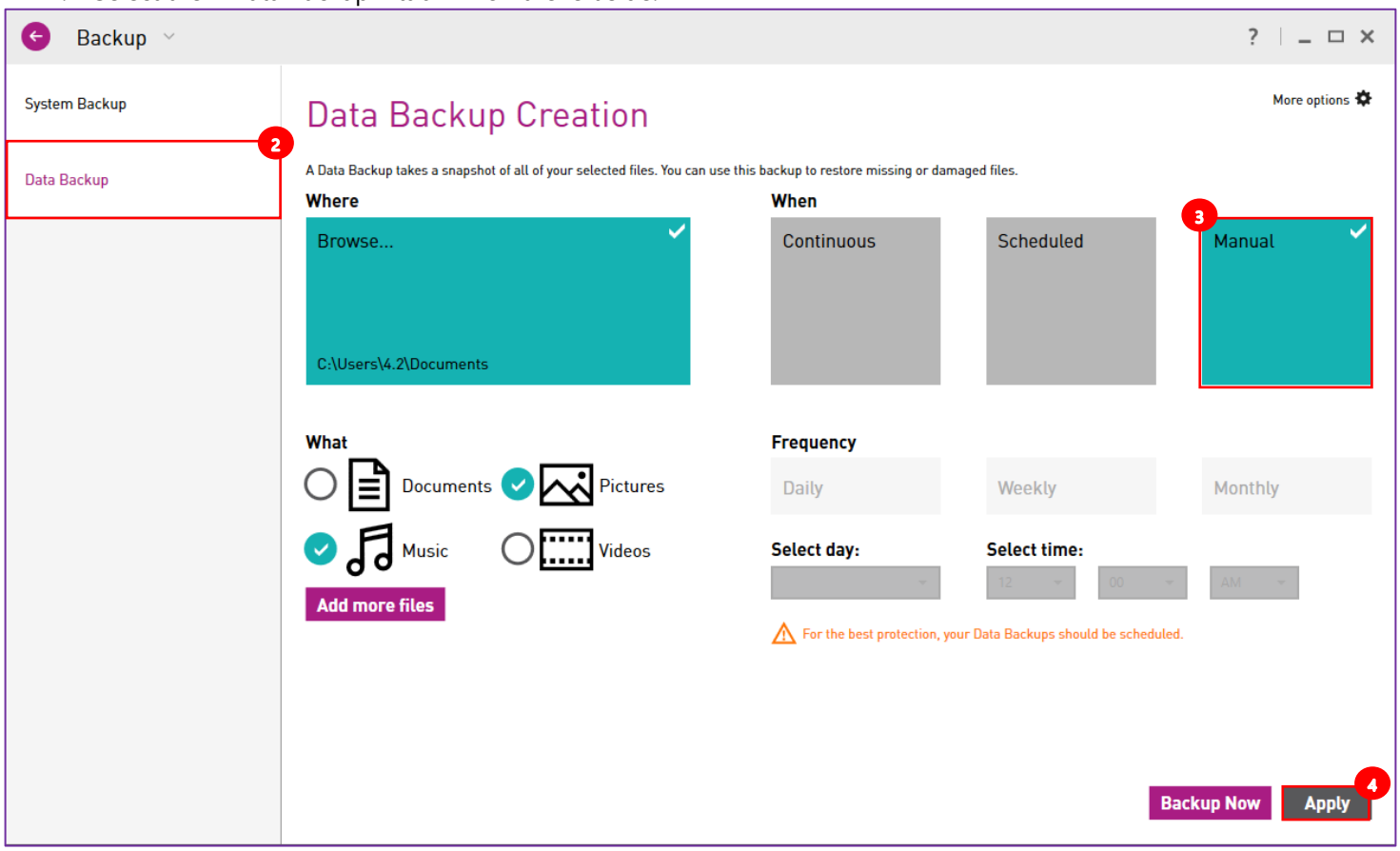
2. Select the « Data Backup » tab 2 on the left side:



3. Click on the “Manual” tile 3

4. Click on the “Apply” button 4

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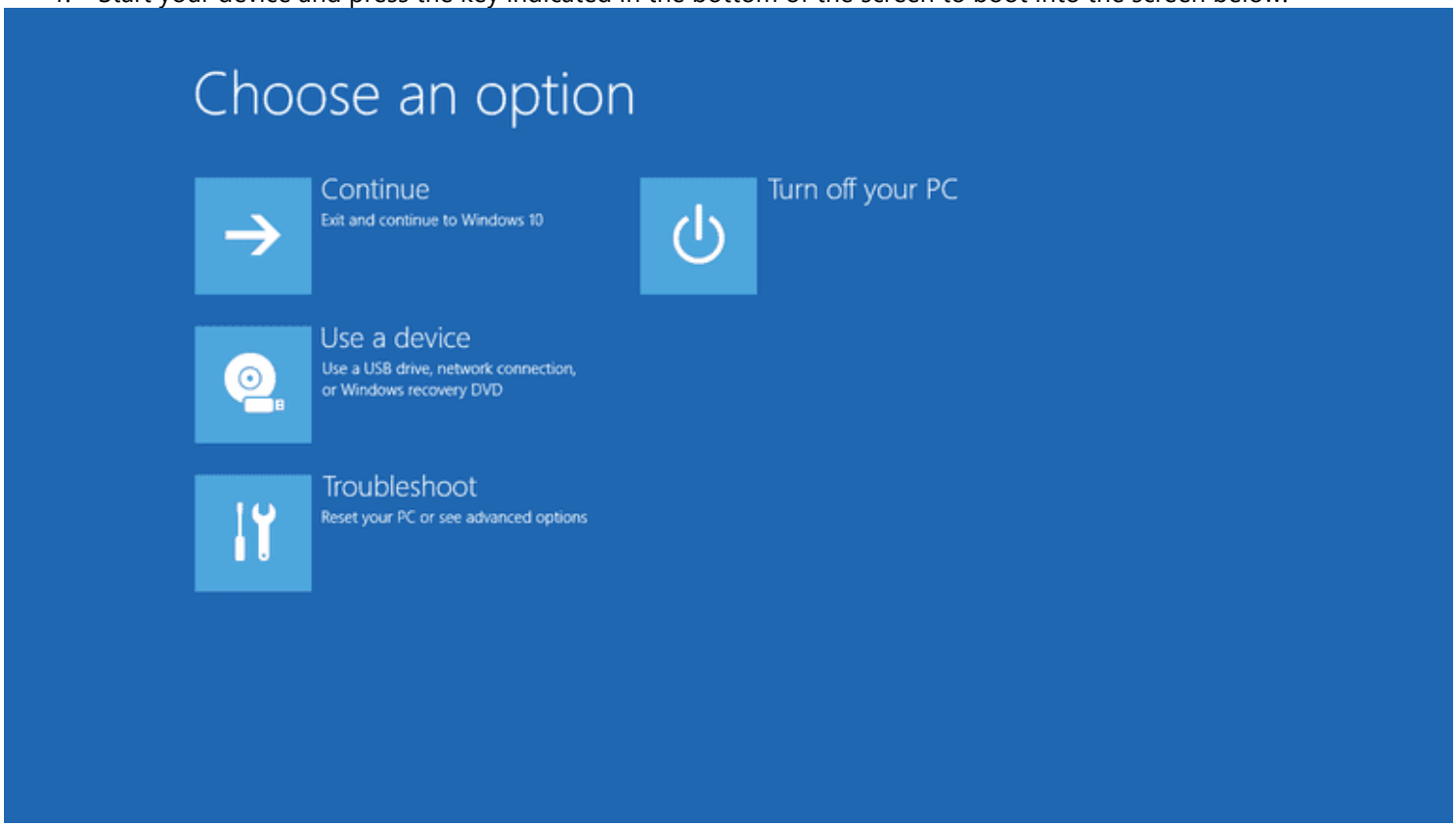
How to boot into a command prompt through the Troubleshoot menu

1. Start your device and press the key indicated in the bottom of the screen to boot into the screen below:



2. Click on the “Troubleshoot” tile:

3. In the next screen, click on the “Advanced Options” tile:

4. In the next screen, click on “Command Prompt”:

5. Select your account and enter your password if asked.

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How to manually collect recovery logs

1. Follow the "How to boot into a command prompt through the Troubleshoot menu" instructions

2. Plug a USB key or USB disk

3. Launch Microsoft Diskpart tool by typing `DISKPART.EXE`:

```
X:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM32>DISKPART.EXE

Microsoft Diskpart version x.y.zzzz

Copyright (C) 1992-2018 Microsoft Corporation
On computer: <computer name>
```

4. Display the list of the volumes through the command `LIST VOLUME` as show below:

```
DISKPART> LIST VOLUME

  Volume ### Ltr Label       Fs     Type          Size  Status   Info
  ---------- --- ----------- -----  ---------  -------  ------- --------

  Volume 3    C  OS          NTFS   Partition   442 GB  Healthy Boot
  Volume 4       PBR Image   NTFS   Partition   750 MB  Healthy Hidden
  Volume 5       WINRETOOLS  NTFS   Partition  5929 MB  Healthy Hidden
  Volume 6    F              FAT32  Removable    28 GB  Healthy
```

5. Get the letter associated with your USB device which appears as type Removable (F in our example)

6. Get the volume number associated with the label "PBR Image" (Volume 4 in our example) through the `Select volume <Volume number>` command:

```
DISKPART> SELECT VOLUME 4

Volume 4 is the selected volume.
```

7. Mount this volume as drive W: by typing ASSIGN LETTER=W:

```
DISKPART> ASSIGN LETTER=W

Diskpart successfully assigned the drive letter or mount point
```

8. Quit Microsoft Diskpart tool by typing EXIT:

```
DISKPART> EXIT

Leaving Diskpart...
```

9. Copy logs from the volume we mounted as drive W: to your USB device F:

```
X:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM32> XCOPY W:\Logs\*.* F:\
```

10. Optionally, you might be asked to provide the file SOFTWARE, if so copy it to your USB device:

```
X:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM32> XCOPY W:\PRELOAD\SOFTWARE F:\
```

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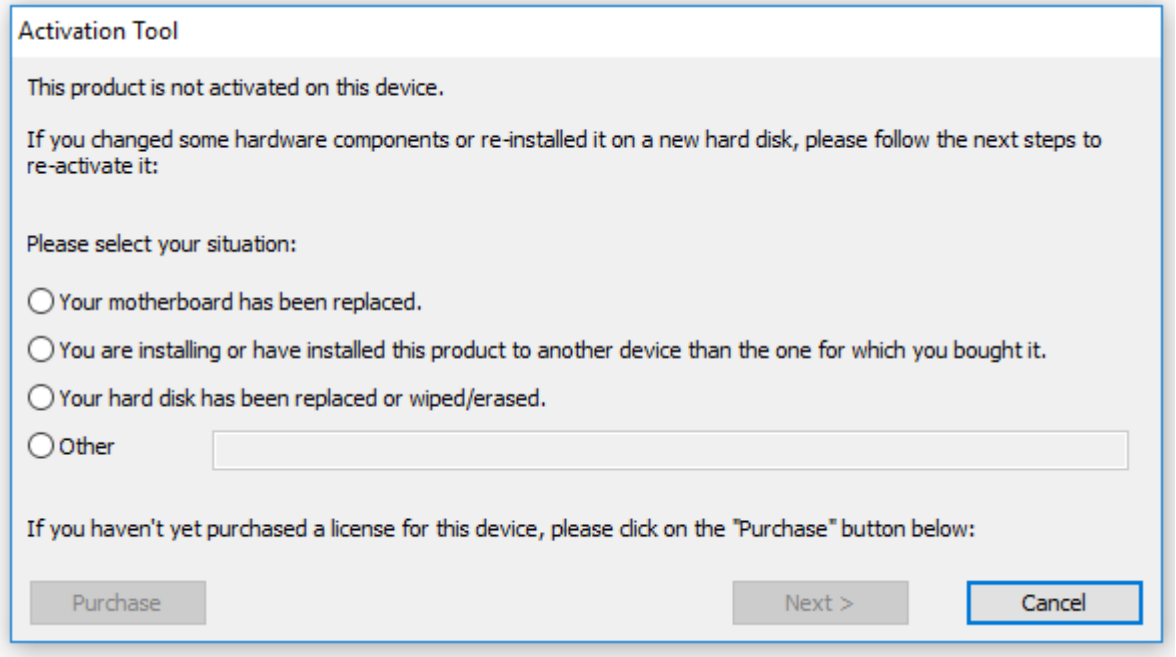
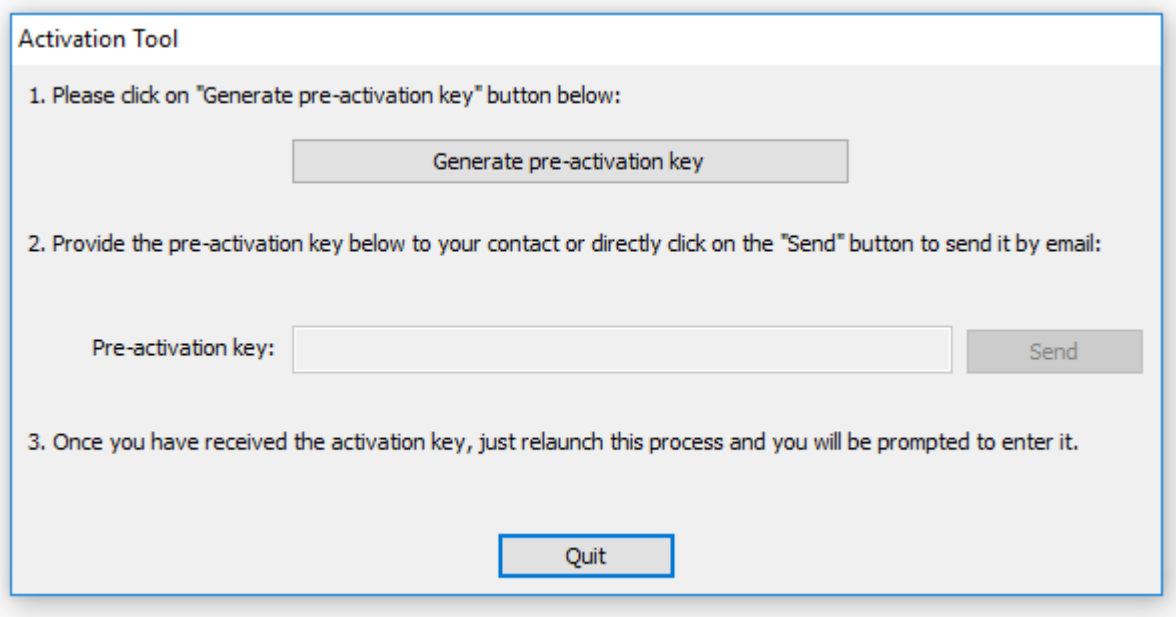
Troubleshooting guide

You encounter issues installing or activating SoftThinks Backup and Recovery

When you install or update SoftThinks Backup and Recovery, or when you launch it, you might see this screen if you try to install it on another PC that the one for which you bought it, or if your motherboard or hard disk has been replaced:



1. Select your situation
2. Click on “Next >” button to obtain the screen below:



3. Click on “Generate pre-activation key”

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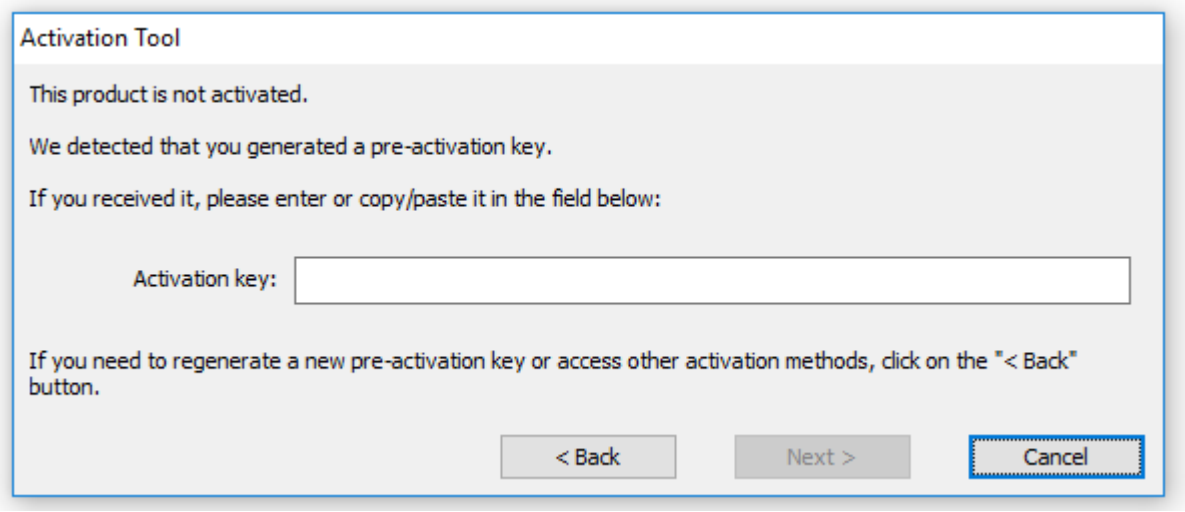
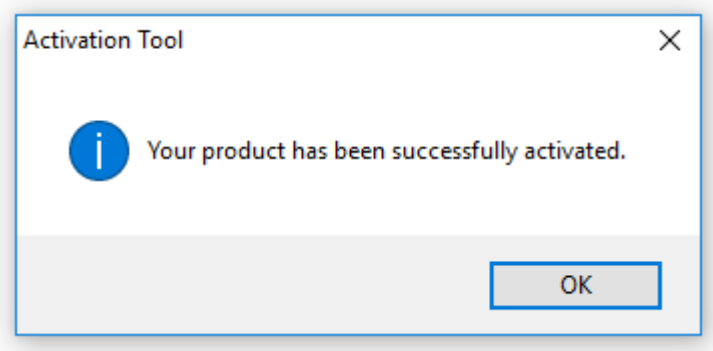
4. Send the pre-activation key to your contact
5. If your contact cannot send you back the activation key right now, click on “Quit” button
6. Once you will have received the activation key, redo the same steps you did to get the “This product is not activated on this device” and you will be asked direction to enter your activation key:



7. Enter your activation key and click on “Next >” button
8. A message will confirm you that your product is correctly activated:



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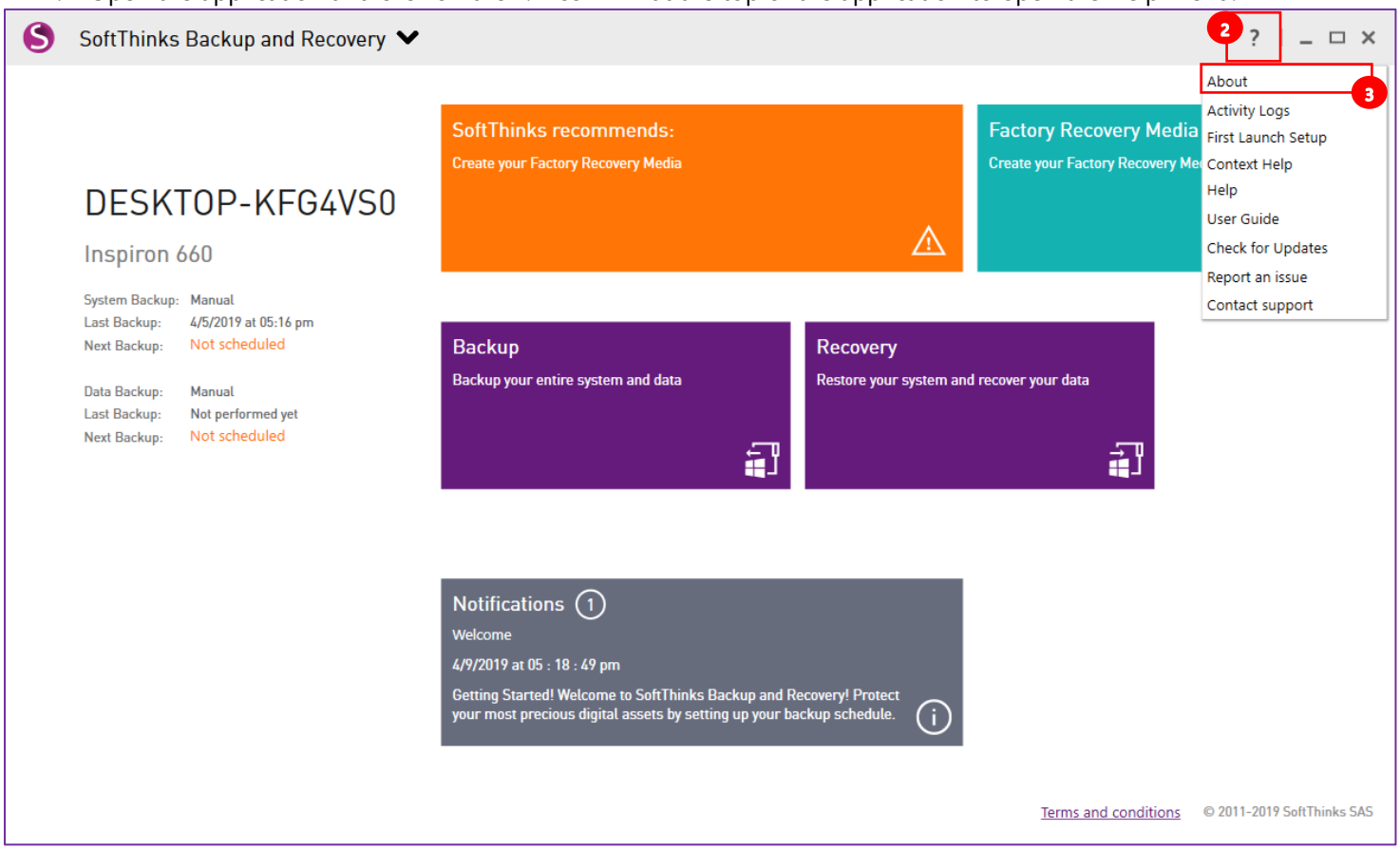
Your product is in Basic Edition instead of Premium Edition

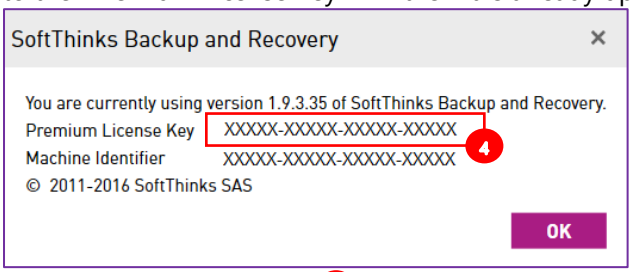
1. Please use the below link to install the latest version and the settings to check your application and upgrade it: SoftThinks_Backup_and_Recovery_3.0.1.0.exe

2. Open the application and click on the "?" icon (2) at the top of the application to open the Help Menu:



3. Select the option "About" (3)

4. In the About box displayed, look to see if there is a code next to the "Premium License Key" or does it say "Upgrade to Premium Edition"?
    1. If it has a code next to the "Premium License Key" (4) then it is already upgraded.



    2. If it has the "Upgrade to Premium Edition" link (4), then the Activation Code needs to be entered in to upgrade to premium:

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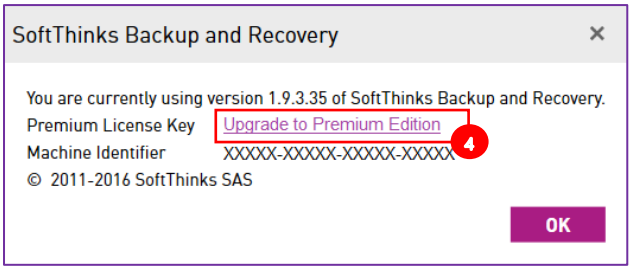
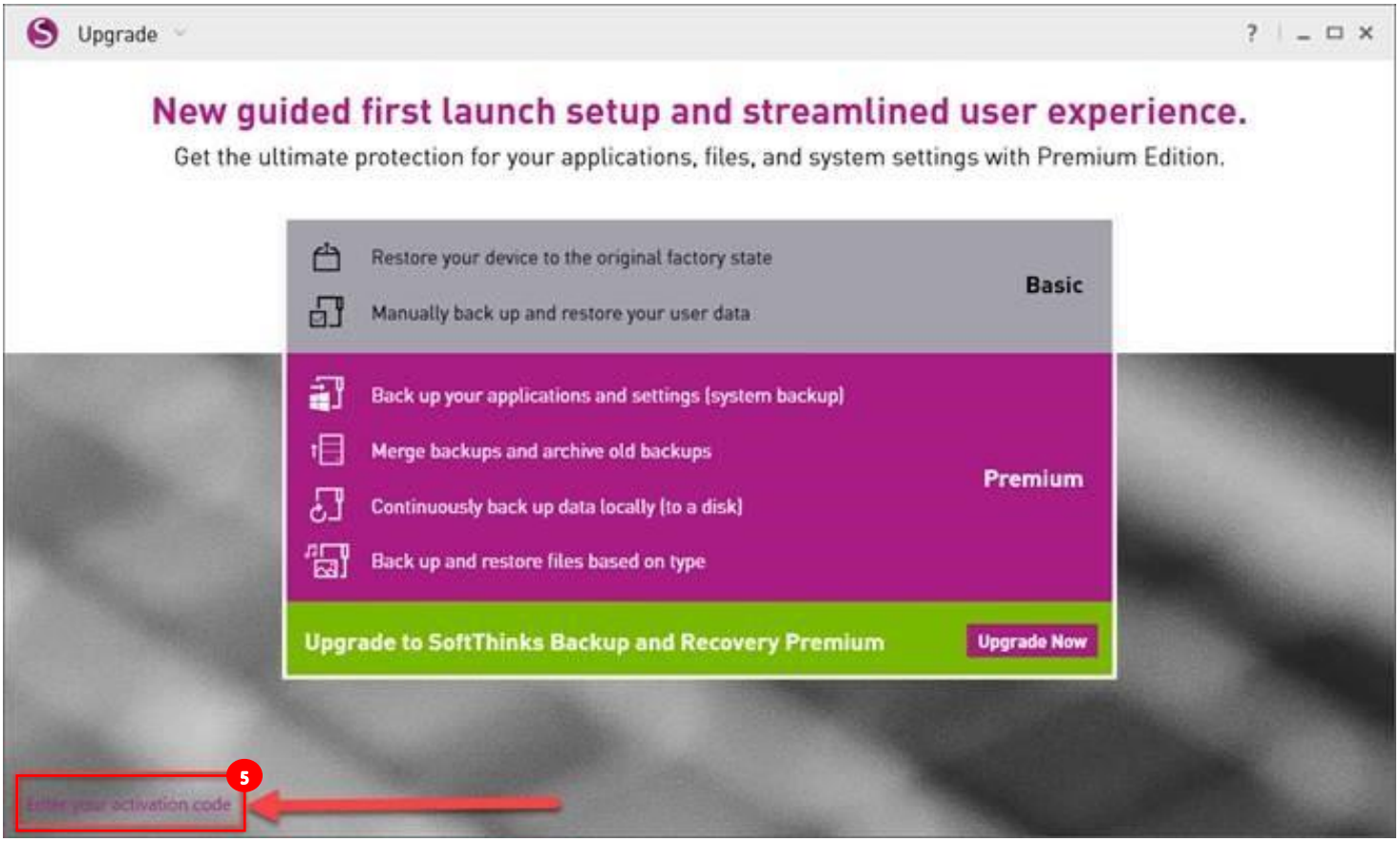


5. If you need to upgrade, click on the "Upgrade to Premium Edition" link and then on "Enter your activation code" 5 on the bottom left corner of the screen now displayed:



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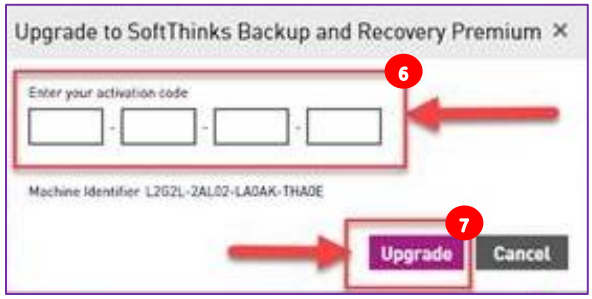
6. Type in your activation code 6:



7. Click on the “Upgrade” button 7

8. You will receive an upgrade successful message.

9. That is it, your Backup and Recovery is upgraded.

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Your system disk is running out of space

If you store your System Backups on your system disk you can:

- Move them to another location to another internal drive or, preferably, to a USB Hard Drive (see Moving your System Backups)
- Delete / Archive or merge them (see Managing your System Backups)

In the same way, if you store your Data Backups locally you can also move them to another location.

To prevent your backups to take too many space, please review your data selection for Data backups (see Protecting your Data) and exclude files from your System Backup (see Excluding files from your System Backups), and adjust the scheduled backup frequency.

Making a System Backup or a Data Backup takes several hours

In order to avoid impacting your system performances, our backup process is set to run with the lowest priority and so if you are running other applications at the same time our process is waiting that those applications no more use system resources to continue its task.

The antivirus real time analysis can considerably slow down our process since it might scan all the files we are backing up. We are working with the main antivirus providers to exclude our process from their real time scan but depending on the solution you are using and its version you might have to either exclude our processes (processes beginning with "SoftThinks Backup And Recovery") in the antivirus real time settings. Please refer to your antivirus help to know how to exclude processes from real time scan and ensure that you have the latest version.

You might also waste time backing up files that you don't need to keep. Please review your data backup selection (see Protecting your Data and click on the "Add more" button in the What section to uncheck files you don't need to keep) and exclude files you don't need to back up from your System Backup (see Excluding files from your System Backups).

You are not able to create your Factory Recovery Media

1. Unplug and re-plug the media and retry
2. Reboot the system
3. Try with other media

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Instant Restore snapshot creation fails

When checking your activity logs (See Checking the activity of your product), you might notice several “Instant Restore snapshot creation failed.” messages.

When the message is recorded in the activity log, in most cases, those are postpone events and can be ignored

When the Backup and Recovery application is preparing to create an Instant Restore snapshot, the service that creates the snapshot will check the system requirements.
There are certain items that need to be completed or not pending before a snapshot can be created.
If any of the items that are required to finish have not been completed yet, the service will postpone its creation and write the message “Instant Restore snapshot creation failed.” in the activity logs.

For example, we postpone the Instant Restore snapshot creation if there are some Windows Updates waiting to be applied, if an application or driver is being installed, or if a blue screen occurred in the last 24h to ensure that the snapshot will be usable to restore the system files to a good state.

We also postpone the Instant Restore snapshot creation when the system’s CPU usage is high in order to avoid impacting your systems performance during the snapshot creation.

In order to avoid an issue during snapshot creation, the service will not create Instant Restore snapshots when your device is running on battery.

We have found in our testing that a specific scenario does exist where the Instant Restore snapshot creation may never occur, we have made some changes to prevent this condition to be included in the next release.

END OF DOCUMENT

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