



## **Symantec's Online Backup as a Service for SMBs**

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### **Management Summary**

How many of us know that we need to lose a few pounds to improve our health or finally set up a good retirement plan? How many of us say, "I'll deal with that later" (meaning "much later") but never get around to it? That's the situation many SMBs face when it comes to performing off-site backup of their rapidly growing collection of important files and data – not to mention other important chores.

Symantec believes it has the answer for small-to-medium size businesses (SMBs) that lack the time, money, or staff to do a decent job of backup (or of other critical functions, such as systems management, message security and archiving, and perimeter and endpoint security). All these functions will become more important for SMBs and more expensive to perform over time, although many SMBs don't yet see the need to staff up to perform them or believe that they can't afford to, even if they should.

Symantec's approach is to deliver these functions not through traditional shrink-wrapped software, but as two online services, both of which launched today and will be a good idea for many SMBs – *Symantec Online Backup* and *Online Storage for Backup for Backup Exec*.

What's different about this service, compared to similar offerings from other vendors such as Iron Mountain's *LiveVault*? First, the Symantec name and reputation, especially in backup, and especially among SMBs, carries a lot of weight. Second, the fact that the "storage" tab on the Web portal customers will use to manage their online backup soon will be joined by other security and management services that Symantec will provide on-line for SMBs. Third, Symantec already has 1.2 million users of its *Backup Exec* product, and in Version 12, Symantec will include Online Storage for Backup Exec as an option. Sending data to Symantec's SAS 70-certified redundant data centers will be a big improvement over locking those unreliable backup tapes in the boss' trunk and hoping for the best. Then there are the facts that Symantec is offering a free 30-day trial of the service, will offer it through its thousands of resellers and also likely will sign deals to sell the service through OEMs (ranging from PC vendors to telecom and Internet providers).

If you are a typical small business with 3-to-5 servers – plus laptops and desktops – with, say, 250 GBs of data or less (Symantec's target market), you know you should be doing a better job of protecting your data. An online service backed by the Symantec brand name and reputation could improve your business' long-term health by adequately protecting your data in a cost-effective and painless way. Read on to learn more.

### **IN THIS ISSUE**

➤ <b>Why Now?</b> .....	<b>2</b>
➤ <b>Why Storage As a Service?</b> .....	<b>2</b>
➤ <b>Symantec Online Backup</b> .....	<b>2</b>
➤ <b>Future Symantec On-Line Services</b> .....	<b>3</b>
➤ <b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>3</b>

## Why Now?

SMBs, like larger companies, have data that is critical for everyday business needs. A small company's financial records, legal documents, customer purchase histories, and future product designs are just as important to an SMB as they are to the largest enterprise. Many SMBs, like larger companies, also need to assure this data is secure and available for legal or compliance reasons. Think about, for example, how the patient privacy requirements of HIPAA (the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) affect a small medical practice; about the environmental impact statements a construction firm needs to keep on file or the records about toxic waste disposal a small manufacturing firm might need to produce on a moment's notice.

SMBs need some of this information (such as customer records) just to do business every day. They might also need to produce other types of information quickly, if and when regulators come calling with an audit, and still other information to defend themselves in the event of a lawsuit.<sup>1</sup> It could be argued that data protection (meaning both security and backup) is even more important for a smaller business because an SMB likely has a smaller IT staff to recover lost data, and less money to pay regulatory or legal fees if they lose data or suffer a security breach.

Most SMBs know they should be doing "something" to back up their data and to keep it secure, and that's just what many of them do – something. Many rely on "expert" users or ad-hoc methods (such as storing tapes in the trunk of the boss' car) for backup. Yet many of these experts may not be so expert, and some of the technologies and processes (such as the handling of tape) are prone to failure. **So, it is not hard to say that many SMBs have a problem with the data backup piece of data protection. Symantec has chosen to address it with a backup service delivered over the Internet, rather than with shrink-wrapped software.**

## Why Storage As a Service?

Symantec has solid reasons for believing the time is right for software as a service, especially for SMBs. First, the concept has been proven by other offerings, such as *Salesforce.com*, with its

tens of thousands of customers. Second, the growing ubiquity of broadband (both fixed and wireless) eliminates one of the biggest drawbacks to software as a service (i.e., when you lose the network connection you lose your application.) Third, SMBs (along with all users of every size) have been trained through years of automatic updates of Windows and their antivirus programs to accept infrastructure services in the background over the Web. Heavy promotion of consumer-oriented, "set it and forget" backup-over-the-Web services, such as those provided by *Carbonite*, have prepared the ground for a more full-featured, business-ready offering from an established player such as Symantec.

## Symantec Online Backup

Symantec has taken this model a giant step further with *Symantec Online Backup*. Like other online backup services, Symantec Online Backup provides an easy-to-use Web interface that allows the customer to choose which files they want to store and the length of time they want to store them. Like other services, files are automatically backed up whenever they are changed. The data is compressed and encrypted using private key (256 AES) and transmitted via SSL to one of Symantec's redundant SAS 70-certified data centers.

However, Symantec delivers higher-end capabilities that go beyond the typical consumer/SOHO online backup offerings. It offers the option, for example, of backing up servers as well as clients. Recognizing that restoring a high-end RAID array would take too long over the broadband capabilities serving most SMBs, it offers the option of restoring data the old-fashioned way – shipping a USB-connected external disk drive to the customer via overnight courier.

Recognizing that the older the data is the less likely it will be needed, Symantec stores data utilizing "fading granularity," storing the most frequent incremental updates for newer data, and combining it with the mass of unchanged data that has been retained according to the policy selected, with retention periods of up to 7 years.

The service currently supports *Windows Server 2000*, *Windows Server 2003* and *Windows XP*, *Linux*, *Unix*, *Mac*, and *NetWare*. Symantec says it intends to support other Microsoft client operating systems (*Vista*) and Microsoft servers "as our customer base requires it" and "is already working toward support for *Windows Server*

<sup>1</sup> Recent changes to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure requiring companies to preserve and produce electronic data, and not just paper, only add to the pressure.

2008, for example.” Pricing starts at \$25/month for 5 GBs of data (after the free 3 months). Extra GBs, beyond your subscription, are about \$5 per GB. Ultimately, what you pay will be based on how long you want to protect data (from 30 days to seven years) and how much data you protect (from 5 GBs and up). Included in the subscription are upgrades and 24/7 technical support.

Symantec is heavily touting its free 3-month promotion, and is still tweaking its sales model. It's easy to see possible bundling deals with major PC or server OEMs, especially those who utilize the reseller channel to reach the SMB market and who share channel partners with Symantec. Major ISPs are another possible partner to resell the service, possibly as a supplement to their existing free online storage that lacks many of the features (such as an easy-to-use interface and 24/7 tech support), which business users need.

Rolling out such a large software-as-a-service offering required Symantec to build new systems that handle everything from provisioning the service to new customers to billing them. This infrastructure can be easily extended to support other online services, the first of which is *Symantec Online Storage for Backup Exec*. This taps all the customers who have already bought Symantec Backup Exec as a standalone software product. With the release of *Symantec Backup Exec for Windows Version 12*, adding Symantec's online backup service to their existing choice of backup destinations will be as easy as clicking on an option within the familiar Backup Exec interface. Moreover, Symantec is offering a 3-month promotion, far beyond the norm of a 30-day free trial.

This provides an easy way for existing Symantec customers to “bridge” from their existing practice of buying software as a shrink-wrapped product to utilizing software as a service. Symantec will no doubt capture a lot of low-hanging fruit in the form of existing Backup Exec customers, but is still working out how best to address the changing data protection needs of small to medium businesses. Just like larger companies, SMBs must manage ever-rising amount of data and thus are buying larger and larger external drives and network-attached storage (NAS) devices for on-site backup. Some of these NAS platforms don't require a file server, but allow a “super-user” (perhaps the CEO) to manage backup to the NAS hardware over their desktop or laptop. How, and whether, to support

backup of the data on such devices is among the questions still facing the Symantec product planners.

## Future Symantec On-Line Services

On its own, Symantec Online Backup has a number of impressive features (as well as the clout of the Symantec brand) to make it attractive to SMBs. What's just as important as this first offering is Symantec's future vision for opening up the SMB market to software as a service.

Symantec sees online backup as only the first in an ambitious series of services offered under the umbrella brand of the *Symantec Protection Network*. These include perimeter and endpoint security, message archiving and security, system management and remote control. In all these areas Symantec has impressive in-house expertise, brand recognition, and market presence through its existing shrink-wrapped software offerings.

Leveraging the provisioning and billing infrastructure it has created for Symantec Online Backup, it can add these new services when they're ready as additional “tabs” on the Web portal that customers now use to access the online backup service. With proper execution (correct feature set, price points, ease of use, reliability, etc.), Symantec could carve out a leading place for itself by delivering these services to an SMB market that doesn't yet know it needs them.

## Conclusion

Many SMBs have not yet developed complete enough strategies for online backup, much less other, more advanced functions such as message security and archiving that are also critical to their business. If this is true for your SMB, receiving these services through the cloud (over the Internet) will be an increasingly viable option. Symantec's Online Backup and online storage are a good place to begin exploring this option, especially if you are already using Backup Exec and are familiar with its user interface and the Symantec brand.



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