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Bell, McAfee offer cloud-based Internet Protect to SMBs

Bell is white-labeling McAfee's security as a service product for business and selling it as Bell Internet Protect in Ontario and Quebec. For as little as \$10 a month, small shops can sign on for hosted security services that requires little maintenance. But security through the cloud has its pros and cons.

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by Brian Jackson

Bell Canada and McAfee Inc. have partnered to offer small and mid-sized businesses a cloud-based, complete PC security service, the companies announced this week.



Bell Internet Protect is a monthly subscription service available to both [Bell](#) customers and non-Bell customers alike in Ontario and Quebec. Built on McAfee's security-as-a-service Endpoint and Email Protection product, customers will download a small agent file to their computer and be able to customize the service via a management console.

Bell and [McAfee](#) are betting that small businesses with a limited to zero IT staff will get on board with the product. Internet Protect is part of Bell's strategy to "ensuring customers have access to a suite of [cloud-based applications](#) that are geared specifically to the needs of business customers," says Peter Kerr, vice-president marketing for Bell Business Markets.

"IT departments are stretched thin, with tight budgets and a shortage of staff to administer and manage software," says Marie-eve Francoeur, media relations with Bell. "Internet Protect is a cost effective solution that offers both flexibility and control to businesses that do not have the technical expertise or capital to invest in on premise security infrastructure."

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[Cloud-delivered security](#) comes with pros and cons, according to Samy Kamkar, an independent security researcher speaking at the upcoming Toronto-based [Sector conference](#).

"The biggest pro is you don't have to worry about having the latest update," he says. The Con is "what happens when the service goes down and is unavailable?"

Kamkar also has concerns with virus protection delivered through the cloud. In some cases, it can make it "more difficult to detect something through the cloud, depending on the type of connection," he says.

Pricing starts at \$10 a month for three licences, \$15 a month for five licences and \$20 a month for 10 licences. More users can be added, Francoeur says, and the cost per user goes down the more user you add.

The service offers protection for end-point computers, servers and e-mail scanning. It includes firewalls at the PC level, Web-site blocking and filtering and vulnerability analysis of Web services. The offering meets compliance with Payment Card Industry (PCI) standards.

It is designed to meet all of a business' security needs, says Ross Allen, senior vice president Canada for McAfee. "Automatic updates and an online management portal hosted by McAfee mean that Bell customers are not forced to buy additional hardware or software," he says. The product is fit for offices with three computers or even thousands of PCs.

Customers can configure the service using the McAfee SecurityCenter console. The service comes with default settings to provide a standard grade of protection, and the ability to change those policies. The console allows administrators to block Web sites, select services to deploy to workers, and delivers various reports on the local IT eco-system, Francoeur says.

After downloading the small client-side software, customers will be pushed out software updates and antivirus database definitions automatically, she adds.

McAfee's Internet Security suite recently received good marks from independent tester [NSS Labs](#). A comparative report placed McAfee at second overall in blocking malicious Web sites and malware, with a success rate of 85.2 per cent. It was beaten out only by Trend Micro's Titanium Maximum Security.

Brian Jackson is a Senior Writer at ITBusiness.ca. Follow him on [Twitter](#), read [his blog](#), and check out the [IT Business Facebook Page](#).

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