Symantec Survey Finds Half of SMBs Believe they are Immune to Targeted Cyber attacks and Failing to Implement Basic Internet Safeguards
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MOUNTAIN VIEW, CA, Nov. 16, 2011 /CNW/ - Symantec Corp. (Nasdaq: SYMC) today announced the findings of its 2011 SMB Threat Awareness Poll, which revealed that while awareness is high, SMBs don't consider themselves targets of cyberattacks. As a result, they are not implementing the proper safeguards to protect their information. The SMB Threat Awareness Poll examined the awareness levels of small and medium sized businesses (SMBs) regarding the dangers of security threats, and how well they are prepared to defend against them. This global survey also included 500 Canadian respondents from Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal.

"Our research shows that SMBs are quite vulnerable to cyberattacks, and it's more important than ever for them to take steps to keep their information safe," said Steve Cullen, senior vice president of Worldwide Marketing for SMB and .Cloud for Symantec Corp. "Even with tight budgets and limited resources, simple changes such as education and best practices can significantly strengthen an SMB's security approach to cyberattacks."

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Survey Highlights

- SMBs are familiar with security threats

  The survey shows that more than half of SMBs are familiar with many different security threats to the business, including targeted attacks, keystroke logging, and the risks that come with using smartphones for company business. More than half (54 percent) stated that malware would cause a loss of productivity, and 36 percent recognized that hackers could gain access to proprietary information. In addition, respondents said a targeted attack would impact the business. Forty-six percent stated that a targeted attack would cause a revenue loss and 20 percent said it would drive customers away.

- SMBs don't see themselves as targets

  Surprisingly, although SMBs know the dangers of cyberattacks, they don't feel they are at risk. In fact, half of SMBs think that because they are a small company, they aren't in danger - it's primarily large enterprises that have to worry about attacks. This is in direct contrast to the evidence. According to data from Symantec.cloud, since the beginning of 2010, 40 percent of all targeted attacks have been directed at companies with fewer than 500 employees, compared to only 28 percent directed at large enterprises.

- SMBs not taking action

  Because SMBs don't see themselves as targets, many of them are failing to take basic precautions to protect their information. While two-thirds restrict who has login information, a shocking 63 percent don't secure machines used for online banking and 9 percent don't take any additional precautions for online banking. More than half (61 percent) don't use antivirus on all desktops, and 47 percent don't use security on mail servers/services.

Canadian SMBs lacking security focus

The survey found a slight advantage for SMBs in Canada as 61 percent of respondents reported feeling

somewhat or completely protected against computer threats, compared to 58 percent of SMBs globally. Canadian SMBs polled said they are aware of the key security threats to their business including DDoS attacks (59 percent), shortened URLs (58 percent), risks from smartphone use (66 percent) and targeted attacks (65 percent).

However, almost half of Canadian SMBs (49 percent) feel they are not the targets for these types of attacks because they operate a smaller business. This apathy could leave them vulnerable as the report displays key areas of concern to business owners and security professionals. When it comes to DDoS attacks, 22 percent felt it was only a concern for large companies, while 17 percent didn't have a plan in place in case of an attack. Sixty-seven percent of businesses do not secure machines used for a company's online banking and eight percent of Canadian respondents do not have any precautions around the use of a company's online bank account.

Recommendations

In order to keep sensitive corporate information safe, there are several simple practices SMBs can follow to protect against cyberattacks.

- Educate employees: Develop Internet security guidelines and educate employees about Internet safety, security and the latest threats. Part of the training should focus on the importance of regularly changing passwords and protecting mobile devices.

- Assess your security status: SMBs are facing increased risks to their confidential information, so safeguarding data is critical. One data breach could mean financial ruin for an SMB. Know what you need to protect. It's important to understand your risks and security gaps so that you can take steps to protect your information.

- Take action: Be proactive and develop a security plan. Consider items such as password policies, endpoint protection, the security of email and Web assets, and encryption. You should also evaluate whether on-premise or a hosted service would best suit the needs of your organization.

Symantec's 2011 SMB Threat Awareness Poll

Applied Research fielded this survey by telephone in September 2011. They spoke with 1,900 organizations worldwide, including 500 Canadian respondents from Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal. Of the organizations surveyed, 25 percent came from businesses with 5 to 49 employees, 25 percent came from businesses with 50 to 99 employees, 25 percent came from businesses with 100 to 249 employees, and 25 percent came from businesses with 250 to 499 employees. In all cases they spoke to the person who managed their computing resources.

Resources

- Report: SMB Threat Awareness Poll Global Results 2011
- SlideShare: SMB Threat Awareness Poll Global Results 2011

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