

Product Brief

## Symantec Implements Holistic Changes to Backup Exec 2014

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**Abstract:** Symantec—which sells multi-decade-strong backup products as well as Enterprise Vault for archiving and a range of well-regarded security products—is now launching Backup Exec 2014 under the banner of “Powerful, Flexible, and Easy.” In consideration of the many customers who depend on Backup Exec, ESG examines the product’s feature set in the context of those “powerful/flexible/easy” claims.

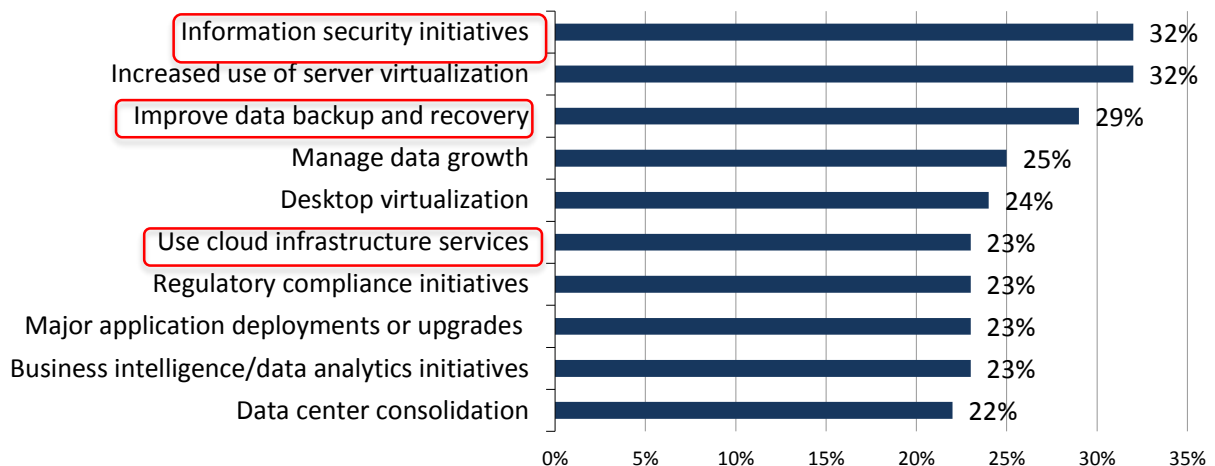
### Overview

It would be hard to name a company with a broader understanding of “protecting your data” than [Symantec](#), whose portfolio of technologies not only backs up data, but also protects against tampering and enables archival preservation. Arguably, no vendor has a larger number of lenses focused on preserving the sanctity of data than Symantec does.

That status becomes more meaningful when it is examined through a practical, real-world lens. According to ESG research into IT spending priorities for 2014, information security was tied as the most-mentioned priority by the respondents surveyed; improving backup and recovery was their third most-often cited priority, and regulatory compliance initiatives (which tie closely to archiving) appeared in the top-ten priority list as well (see Figure 1).<sup>1</sup>

Figure 1. Top Ten IT Priorities for 2014

Which of the following would you consider to be your organization’s most important IT priorities over the next 12 months? (Percent of respondents, N=562, ten responses accepted)



Source: Enterprise Strategy Group, 2014.

In other words, Symantec has decades of experience, plus a set of products that are well-received by huge numbers of customers and are aligned to market demand: The vendor is focused on three of the same priorities that IT decision makers are focusing *their* attention and budgets on this year.

Within the “backup” portion of the data protection spectrum,<sup>2</sup> one Symantec product, [Backup Exec](#), has been a perennial market share leader for more than two decades. Since the early days of Microsoft’s journey to turn its

<sup>1</sup> Source: ESG Research Report, [2014 IT Spending Intentions Survey](#), February 2014.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on this topic, read Jason Buffington’s blog, [“How to Plan Your Data Protection Spectrum,”](#) March 2014.

Windows Server into the world's dominant client-server operating system, Symantec Backup Exec has been one of a small handful of technologies trusted to protect it. As the WinSvr OS grew to become a platform of choice for application enablement and user productivity, Backup Exec's media/platform support, application support, and internal operation evolved at a similar pace.

One testament to the stability of and affinity for Backup Exec is reflected in how many organizations are running the last *several* versions of it. Unlike some startups' offerings, whose customers clamor for features or stability enhancements because not all their needs are being met by the current offering, Backup Exec's success in the market hasn't depended on the capabilities of the latest or next-to-latest version. In fact, informal polls routinely show a range of Backup Exec versions in use, likely reflecting the core platform's stability and the allegiance felt by users.

Many current Backup Exec users continue to evolve their environments in line with each new release, but it is refreshing to see the overall needs of an install base being met without a lot of continual, time- and resource-consuming upkeep. Having said that, excellent reasons exist for any current or legacy user of Backup Exec (as well as many organizations looking for a new data protection solution) to be excited about the release of Backup Exec 2014.

## Symantec Backup Exec 2014

Symantec, taking another step in reinventing itself as a company, is launching Backup Exec 2014 with a promise of "*Powerful, Flexible, and Easy.*" A lot is riding on the continued success of Symantec right now. Considering the many customers who depend on Backup Exec, ESG has analyzed the latest release in the context of the "powerful/flexible/easy" claims that serve as the launch's thematic centerpiece.

To read an ESG Lab Validation report on Backup Exec 2014, go to <http://bit.ly/esgBE2014a>.

### Is Backup Exec 2014 Powerful?

As IT organizations try to modernize and improve their data protection agility, they look for specific capabilities:

- **Virtualization-friendly backup and recovery**—Today, it's hard to imagine an infrastructure being not just partially virtualized, but moving toward "majority virtualized." Continuing to use legacy solutions that can't keep pace with virtualization innovations hinders that journey. In particular, organizations need to modernize their data protection capabilities. The 2014 release of Backup Exec continues an evolution that started in 2012, when Symantec V-Ray technology was combined with VMware VADP and Microsoft VSS APIs to protect modern hypervisors the way they are meant to be protected (i.e., host centric).

According to ESG Lab,<sup>3</sup> the newest Backup Exec administrative interface (see Figure 2) makes VM backup management more efficient, and granular restore options accelerate item-level recoveries from a backed up Exchange database. The validation also confirmed the product's ability to use VMware changed block tracking (CBT), Windows Change Journal, and its own CBT for speedy incremental/differential backups.

ESG Lab validated that Backup Exec 2014 easily managed data protection for both VMware and Hyper-V VMs from a single management screen, including providing staging screens for better workflow visualization. VMs can be discovered automatically and added to the workflow in groups for ease of management. Also, each backup job can be tailored individually as needed. The administrative interface changes simplified and accelerated VM backup task management, and Symantec made it much easier for administrators to view high-level summaries, job status details, and process flows for protected VMs without custom scripts and add-on tools.

- **Archival features**—It is notable that 83% of respondents to an ESG research survey<sup>4</sup> report that they use the archive features within their backup product as part of, if not their entire, archiving strategy. Backup Exec customers have the luxury of accessing a subset of the Symantec Enterprise Vault archival feature set, and Enterprise Vault is purportedly one of the most popular full-scale archival solutions on the market today.

<sup>3</sup> Source: ESG Lab Validation Report, [Symantec Backup Exec 2014](#), June 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Source: ESG Research Report, [Backup and Archiving Convergence Trends](#), April 2014.

- **Deduplication, anywhere and everywhere**—It’s hard for environments of any size to economically justify disk-based backup without using deduplication. Many Backup Exec customers leverage software-based deduplication (as opposed to requiring a hardware appliance). But even dedupe “in general” is not enough for many environments. Considering the common issues of VM sprawl and overall data growth, client-side dedupe is where most IT environments should head. Backup Exec 2014 offers client-side deduplication—while still offering media server- and OST-based deduplication for scenarios/environments that need it.

ESG Lab validated that the built-in deduplication in Backup Exec 2014 significantly reduced data stored, even as the amount of data being protected was increasing. As noted earlier, not only does Backup Exec 2014 leverage VMware CBT, but it also includes Symantec’s own CBT to support workloads not supported by VMware. Data is deduplicated across all protected data, not just by backup job.

- **“Radically Faster Backup”**—According to Symantec, better speed compared with the Backup Exec 2012 release is yet another area of enhancement.

## Is Backup Exec 2014 Flexible?

By combining an ability to protect/recover physical and virtual servers with technology for bare-metal/whole-server restoration, Backup Exec boasts impressively agile recovery capabilities: It can back up physical servers. It can back up virtual servers. It can back up a physical server to a VM continuously. It can back up a physical server and recover it into a VM. Altogether, those capabilities can greatly increase an organization’s protection agility.

Along with the physical and virtual protection/recovery options, users also need to ensure granular recovery of files, MS Exchange objects, and SharePoint data to an original or alternate location—capabilities evident in the Symantec feature set. Collectively, they give Symantec justification to claim that Backup Exec 2014 is the most flexible backup product it has ever delivered.

- **Platform and media flexibility**—ESG believes that every organization should at least consider a hybrid architecture featuring disk, plus tape, plus cloud. Unfortunately, not every backup software solution can work with all three media types. Backup Exec can.

Due to Backup Exec’s history of growing through generations of tape, myriad disk solutions for modern-day recovery and agility, and a burgeoning array of cloud services, Symantec is well-positioned to provide solid support for all three platforms. Yes, the product writes to tape and traditional disk, but its protocols also cover OST to advanced disk arrays; physical, virtual, and cloud-powered VTLs; and replication to other Backup Exec servers for multi-site protection.

- **Deployment flexibility**—ESG continues to see demand for preconfigured appliances in lieu of self-built backup servers based on generic operating systems that must be manually configured for storage and adjusted for performance. ESG found that 61% of the environments it surveyed are using self-built backup servers, but less than half of those doing so (24%) actually prefer that method.<sup>5</sup>

ESG Lab validated the speed and convenience of deploying the Backup Exec 3600 Appliance.<sup>6</sup> Following simple steps in the product’s Quick Start Guide, ESG Lab had the appliance ready for the first backup in 33 minutes, with storage already configured and available. The self-contained appliance approach eliminates the need for a storage expert to configure and provision production storage resources for the backup environment, ultimately saving time and money. Data centers, departments, and remote/branch offices all benefit from the packaged functionality of the Backup Exec 3600 Appliance.

ESG expects preconfigured physical and virtual appliances to continue to gain appeal as backup platforms of choice. Therefore, Symantec customers should be pleased to know that not only is Backup Exec available as software,<sup>7</sup> but that it also has been shipping inside preconfigured appliances for several years.

<sup>5</sup> Source: ESG Research Report, [Trends in Data Protection Modernization](#), August 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Source: ESG Lab Validation Report, [Symantec Backup Exec 3600 Appliance](#), April 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Source: ESG Lab Validation Report, [Symantec Backup Exec 2014](#), June 2014.

- **Restore flexibility**—ESG Lab<sup>8</sup> converted a backup of a physical server to a VM, effectively limiting downtime for a server failure to just the time it took to start up the server as virtual machine. In addition, ESG Lab used both browsing and keyword search to execute a granular recovery of individual e-mails from an Exchange database backup.

ESG Lab was impressed with Backup Exec 2014's fast, flexible restore options such as granular restore of files, folders, or application objects; restore to dissimilar hardware; and P2V, V2P, and B2V that make disaster recovery and server migration simple to implement. ESG Lab used the simple workflow to quickly and easily conduct a P2V operation.

## Is Backup Exec 2014 Easy to Use?

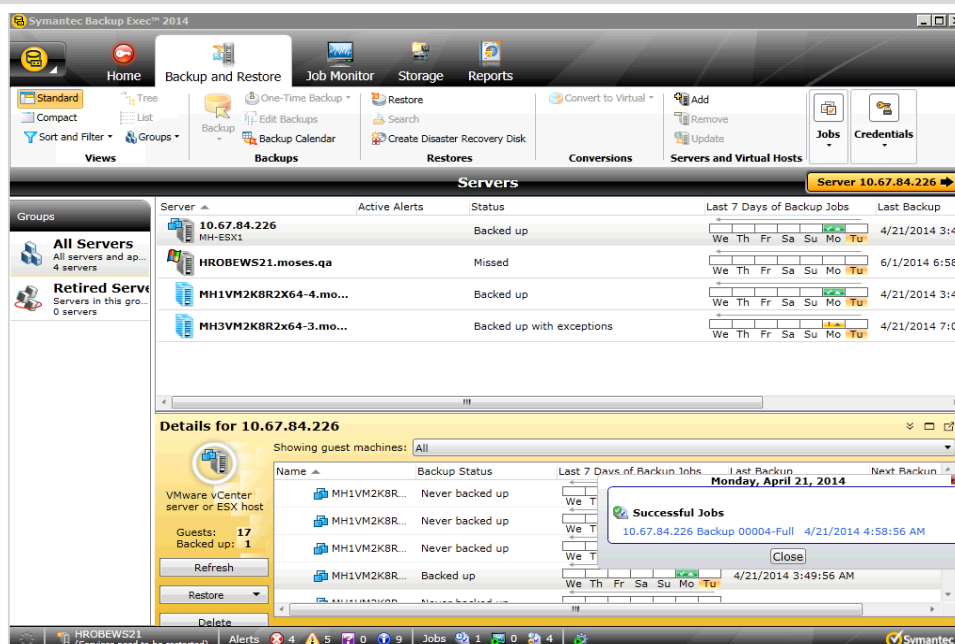
ESG commends Symantec's effort to reinvent the product with a modernized user interface—particularly considering the axiom that *"if you're not making mistakes, then you're not innovating enough."* While Backup Exec 2012 should not be termed a "mistake," its very significant re-engineering did cause a wide range of responses across the industry. To its credit, Symantec made significant, worldwide efforts to listen to feedback from customers about their perceptions of the company at large and about specific products. Customers shared what they considered great about Backup Exec's interface changes and what they believed needed reworking to satisfy the huge Backup Exec fan base.

The result is Backup Exec 2014, bringing back those elements that existing users had grown accustomed to, pairing them with modern platform support and the kind of management experience a modern IT administrator is looking for.

Backup Exec 2014 is designed to address the needs of Backup Exec faithful who are still utilizing various prior versions *and* the needs of new users searching for a modern backup product. Particularly notable are improved dashboards (see Figure 2) that are optimized for software-defined data centers and for IT organizations struggling to protect highly virtualized environments.

Other examples related to ease of use include workflows, first introduced in 2012, that continue to evolve to provide multi-stage protection, and virtualization savvy to discover new VMs requiring protection without continually provisioning them in a hypervisor UI (and then configuring protection within Backup Exec). For more on the manageability experience, [be sure to check out the ESG Lab Validation report on Backup Exec 2014](#).

Figure 2. The Backup Exec 2014 Administration Console



Source: Symantec, 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

## The Bigger Truth

The name “Symantec” is somewhat synonymous with “data protection”—not only backup, but also information security, including three venerable brands in backup and archive alone. But because so many organizations of all sizes have been using Symantec products for so long, myriad versions and implementation differences exist in the world today (far more than what any new backup vendor could even imagine). Backup Exec 2014 offers something for Backup Exec 2012 customers, for Backup Exec 2010 customers, and certainly for organizations running on even older versions.

It’s likely that when the time comes to reassess which data protection product(s) you should use, Symantec technology will be on your consideration list. With that likelihood in mind:

- Organizations that haven’t looked at Backup Exec in a while should find that Backup Exec 2014 offers the modern user interface that today’s IT managers want, and a level of versatility in media, platform, and deployment that would be hard to find in other products.
- Backup Exec 2012 customers should be pleased that the journey they began in 2012 continues with Backup Exec 2014, with Symantec making good on its “vision reinvention” and optimization as well as its promises related to reliability. When certain functional capabilities were aggregated and simplified in Backup Exec 2012, those functions became less visible, causing consternation for some longstanding customers. Symantec has made those functions highly visible once again in Backup Exec 2014. Thus, customers gain an improved GUI with dashboards and wizards, but they can still manage backups in the way they’re accustomed to. ESG applauds Symantec for listening to its customers and finding a way to respond without compromising on new features.
- Backup Exec 2010 customers should be impressed that their feedback was heard, and the wait is over regarding moving to a contemporary user interface without sacrificing the capabilities that their businesses rely on.
- A significant portion of even older Backup Exec faithful should come to the realization that *this is the Backup Exec they have been waiting for*. It offers support for the workloads of a modern data center and a management experience that may be a breath of fresh air for administrators.

Of course, the proof will come from early adopters across the world. But Symantec’s recent humility, its efforts to listen actively to feedback on how it can improve, and the spirit of reinvention apparent across the company all point to the probability that Backup Exec 2014 will be “something to watch” in the months ahead.