



Quick Heal stages an upset

Quick Heal upset Symantec to take the top position in the antivirus (consumer) category. At number three stood eScan followed by Kaspersky. McAfee is absent because the company did not have a consumer focus till the middle of the year, and put its consumer distribution strategy in place only in the second half of 2008.

Antivirus (consumers) includes retail packages sold to home and SOHOs in one-, three- and five-user licenses.

eScan, which did not figure in last year's top rankings, has widened its market coverage. Although Kaspersky is the most price-competitive in the market, it lacks a channel program and the right service-support policies and infrastructure.

Price-performance

While Norton is perceived to be a superior product on the performance benchmark, respondents ranked Quick Heal higher on the price-performance parameter owing to its competitive pricing.

Quick Heal's antivirus and Internet security suite are both more than 50 percent cheaper than Norton and McAfee. Norton also received complaints about its 2008 edition being heavy and slow in online updates and scanning.

Respondents believe that eScan will do better if it is more competitively-priced compared to Quick Heal.

Although Kaspersky is the lowest-priced and is considered a good technology product, respondents complained that at such a low price the product offered no real margins. (The Kaspersky Internet security suite sells at an average MOP of Rs 450 to customers.)

Product availability

Here too, Quick Heal has taken the lead from Symantec. From being strong in the west it has now strengthened its channel base in the north and east, and is available even in tier-3 and -4 cities. While Norton is readily available in tier-1 and tier-2 cities, there are availability issues in tier-3 and tier-4 cities. Tier-4 respondents said that it takes as many as 5-7 days to get a Norton product delivered after placing the order. While Kaspersky has a wider availability, its lack of proper channel structure leads to over distribution. Over the last one year eScan has improved its distribution coverage in the north and west, but it suffers from inadequate channel penetration in the east and south. Respondents said that the company needs to streamline its distribution network because the product has started picking up.

Marketing & branding

Quick Heal has been aggressive over the last one year with frequent advertisements and events. A push brand till a couple of years ago, it's becoming a pull brand in tier-2 and tier-3 cities. Norton's marketing is focused on tier-1 cities. Symantec authorized distributors, who voted in the

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| Criteria | Quick Heal | Symantec | eScan | Kaspersky |
|------------------------|------------|----------|-------|-----------|
| Price-Performance | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Product Availability | 1 | 2 | 4 | 3 |
| Marketing and Branding | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Service and Support | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Channel Relationship | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| FINAL RANK | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

survey, said that the company needs to spend more on marketing and branding. eScan and Kaspersky came at third and fourth position. eScan's visibility has increased over the last one year and so has its marketing activities. Because of its low price, Kaspersky is popular in smaller cities. But the company doesn't have a local office, and hence suffers from inadequate brand marketing.

Service & support

Quick Heal rated higher than its peers due to the quality of its post-sales support. Its USP is that it provides physical support for installation to partners in smaller cities. It has local engineers available in a number of places. The company also has good telephonic and online support.

While Norton's online support is good, its toll-free tele-support needs to improve. It has no ground support, which many respondents in tier-2 and tier-3 cities said is essential.

eScan has neither strong local support nor toll-free support, hence customers keep coming to partners for every small issue. This is a disadvantage in a market where all leading vendors have a toll-free number.

Kaspersky doesn't have local operations, and its support is managed by its distributor. Respondents said that many a time it takes months to get a response from them.

Channel relationship

Quick Heal also ranked higher than Norton on this parameter, followed by eScan and Kaspersky. It has regular interactions with partners at the local level, and is flexible in providing support to them. Quick Heal offers the best product margins and renewal commissions, which motivates partners to do more business for the vendor. According to many, Norton's channel management is focused largely on tier-1 partners. In smaller cities, resellers don't get any information about its schemes or new product launches. Survey respondents said that eScan should organize more channel events at the local level to develop channel confidence. ■