Apple’s Business Essentials subscriptions support small businesses that only use Apple

This week Apple unveiled another beta program, but instead of offering early previews of software for your Mac, iPhone, or iPad, it’s a new initiative called Business Essentials. In line with Apple’s recent shift toward selling services, it’s a subscription package aimed at small businesses with three different plans and a move that has been anticipated since it acquired the device management platform Fleetsmith a little over a year ago.

Starting at $2.99 per device per month, they can cover employees across a single device, more than one device, or a more expensive plan that covers multiple devices and adds more cloud storage. An AppleCare+ package will be available when it launches full in spring 2022, adding 24/7 phone support, access to training, and on-site repairs from Apple-trained technicians.

[embedded content]

Like many other device manage platforms, it streamlines the onboarding process, preinstalled apps, as well as management of security settings like FileVault for disk encryption and Activation Lock to secure devices if they’re lost or stolen. There’s also a new Business Essentials app for iOS, iPadOS, and macOS that puts all of the various settings in one place.

I spoke to Vox Media senior VP of IT, Oumar Sall, who points

out that it could be beneficial for startups during periods of high growth. Particularly while dealing with more remote workers, it can help get new employees up and running as quickly as possible even if a business doesn’t have the other parts of its network fully formed yet. It could also be helpful for schools if Apple’s existing School Manager system isn’t a good fit.

It also has the advantage of being available from Apple itself. However, it’s unlikely to challenge mainstays in the industry since, at least so far, it is limited by the number of employees supported, and it isn’t available across different platforms. There’s also the question of how exporting data works if a company wants to leave iCloud, endpoint security management, and the other issues that can crop up later.

Jamf is one of those companies, as it provides device management to a number of organizations, including Vox Media. On an earnings call Friday after Apple’s announcement, CEO Dean Hager said that he expects the service will help improve Apple’s built-in management tools that Jamf also relies on, without competing directly with many features Jamf provides. If Business Essentials helps kickstart adoption among small businesses or startups, it gives them a basis to buy even more Apple devices and services as they grow, even if they eventually move to more on-premises support or another provider altogether.

https://www.theverge.com/2021/11/14/22781752/apple-business-enterprise-mdm-essentials-cloud-storage-security