

Educating the masses and squabbling at the distrotech

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Once again the tide of time flowed and it's been a while since I put pen to paper or in this case, fingers to keys. It's been a rather busy and interesting time, apart from buying a house wrecking, furniture devouring, and hyperactive chewing monster in the form of West Highland Terrier that my wife named Kubuntu for unfathomable reasons. Yes, she does use it on her laptop, the distro not the mutt, but I veered away from the (how many letters in the alphabet?)ubuntu. I'm back with Fedora and how it fits my noggin quite nicely thank you very glad.

I recently replied to some comments on LinuxToday regarding PCLOS as a replacement for windows and I made a remark that's really got me thinking. The remark was regarding the impartment of knowledge to what Linux is and what applications users can run and do with it. If people, and by people I mean non-Linux users, knew what it was, could see that their word, excel, PowerPoint documents could be used, that they could have an outlook type mail program, browse t?internet and chat over their usual channels, ICQ, MSN, Yahoo. I think that Linux uptake would greatly increase, possibly exponentially. Education of potential users has to be one of the keys to get it out and used by the masses. It worked with those annoying Mac ads, and as annoying as they were, they worked. According to one of the links I read here, OSX usage is up over 2%. Granted not a lot and it should be substantially more with all the vista paraphernalia going on.

The other key is probably more difficult to implement, a seamless integration into a Windows AD infrastructure. Most people will throw OpenLDAP into the pot here but step back a minute, you run the IT Dept. for a company with 50K+ users, all with XP desktops plugged into a colossal unyielding AD beastie monster. You have AD servers replicating across domains in every region of the world. It's not going to be easy to get the resource and funding to replace and that is what you would need to do, replace the existing infrastructure. You wouldn't even get funding to implement a test or pilot beside it, not without a very good sales pitch to the techno illiterate board. Plus, it is far easier to design on a clean sheet than it is to integrate. If Linux had this area sorted then the install rate would increase, guaranteed. It would be easier to sell at board level for the reasons all of us users know and love (and Mac ads tried to pick pocket). If the non-user board members where educated and aware of Linux (Mac ad style), then the sales monkey would have an easier job in pitching the goods and still have time to eat bananas instead of going bananas because he knows that it would save a vast fortune in the long run but he may as well be talking to the gorillas at Chester zoo. Personally, I think Sisyphus would prefer pushing his rock up the hill than try and sell a Linux idea to a board committee in today's MS dominated corporate climate.

Then comes the matter of which distro will lead into it. Does it matter? I mean really, does it matter? Every day you read through the postings here or on any Linux related site and people are coming down on the poster because of the choice of distro. This is a bad one because you should use this? you shouldn't use that because the lead developer wore blue underpants on a Tuesday. Who cares, if it works for you then it works for you. Instead of flaming a review about somebody's favourite distro, accept the opinion and move on, if your choice is worth writing about, write about it, don't trample all over somebody that took the time and effort to write. The distro division is a huge, huge, huge (yes that huge), dividing factor. For a new user one review will give an opinion of the person that used it and there will be replies galore slating it. Now the user if confused, ?why are there so many different ones?? The aim is to get Linux

noticed by the masses and that isn't going to happen with people squabbling over which has the better fonts or nicer icons. I mean come on! I was called gay on a posting where I mentioned I use Ubuntu. A few things wrong with that, 3 ex wives, 1 teenage wayward daughter and a very dented bank balance would prove otherwise. Gay? If I were I would be a lot better off and probably wouldn't get as nagged for putting my feet on the coffee table whilst watching Scarface, knocking back a tinny or six with a 12" deep pan pepperoni, extra Jalapeños on order. But no, I'm afraid not. I'm too broke to be gay and my dress sense isn't all that good. How someone could just throw that in the mix as a response still bugged me (pardon the pun).

Anyway back on course, would it matter if Novell, IBM, Red Hat, Ubuntu all threw money into a hat and ran a series of ads? A generic ad? An ad that instilled the basic principles with a few quick demos? The user doesn't care what the operating system is, they are not installing it to use an operating system, they are installing it for the things they can install and run on it? can they use their word, excel, PowerPoint docs? how? Can they play their CDs? How? Can they watch a DVD from their collection? How? If all those names, IBM, Novell etc, were shown in an ad, people would have a lot more confidence to try and see. That's all Linux needs them to do, try one. Any one. They are all united under the march of the penguin.

At the end of the day, no matter how many flags are flying for each distro, it doesn't come down to the OS, it is knowing what you can with the tools that are available for it and these tools are available, more or less, across the board. Show any flashy Compiz'd desktop and the user wouldn't care, show it with a word file open, dvd playing, email from mum or a picture being edited in GIMP, the one of the dog digging up the garden (RIP chrysanthemums, they served me well, hope they find a better life in the chew monsters belly) and you'll have them on the line, reel them in and land them. A person doesn't buy XP just because it's an operating system, they buy it for the things they can install and run on it. You don't go down to Joe's sound and vision and buy a cathode ray tube (ok, I know LCDs and Plasma out-sell them now!) you go to buy an entertainment box. What use would a TV be with nothing to show on it? And how can you have any pudding if you don't eat your meat?

Now I know that maybe not all the facts are straight here, but this is a rushed lunchtime posting and if anyone can show me how to seamlessly integrate a Linux desktop into AD in 5 easy steps I am all ears and you my friend, will be showered in pints and pints of the black stuff (Guinness to the uneducated, and I do have vast Guinness experience).

Well that's my tuppence worth over with. Time to shrink back into the realm of ER diagrams and trying not to drop bits salad into my keyboard (wife's idea, the Guinness takes it toll and the mid life crisis and middle age spread isn't helping much either).

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