

Slowly moving people to Linux via OpenSource Apps

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Its the start of a new year, and there are a fair few websites, yet again, predicting this to be the Year of Desktop Linux, and others declaring last year was the year of Desktop Linux, and even more saying, it will NEVER be the year of Desktop Linux.

Personally i believe, it already is, well, it is for me, i use Linux at home, and am lucky enough to use it as part of my work. However i do understand how skeptics will want to "keep a lid" on this whole thing, because the IT Industry is full o professionals whos monthly income depends on companies using Windows Based solutions. and they don't wish to have their income disrupted by this Open Source upstart. So in board rooms across the land, there will be Technical people explaining in presentations, how Microsoft is the way to go. The main arguments for this will probably be:

- * Stick with what you know. Microsoft is a brand you can trust
- * You already have Windows everywhere,
- * Why do you need to complicate matters by adding another system.?

These are not the right reasons for installing an IT system, unless of course, you don't have any knowledge or skillset in the alternative OS market.

An operating system, a computer, a solution, is only a tool, and there are many occasons where Windows isn't the right tool for the job, however it is the right sale for the job.

This means in order to coax over that mass band of the Microsoft trained Tech market, Linux will essentially have to bend over, and take one for the lads. and become more like the Microsoft Operating system. Please at this point, do not belive i am condoning this stratagy, the point i'm aiming at, is its not Linux which is the Issue, the linu Desktop is better than Windows in some area, and worse in othere, it is making great strides, and the improvements, release, upon release are amazing, this however is not enough, when the people who are specing out the corperate systems, are effectivly scared due to a lack of knowledge and understanding.

So how does Linu over come this? It doesn't need to, as it already is, because its not Linux, which will pae the wayt o a brighter future, its the whole opensource movement. as while microsoft has been having some prett bad press over the last few years, the average joe, has been migrating slowly, bit by bit over to Open Source, of course he doesn't neccesserily know this, as far as he is concerned, he has just found a better alternative. a tool which does the job better.

This migraion usually starts with the move to Firefox, something which has become a lot easier, since the IE only webpage, has been a bad PR move in the corperate world, the last thing you need is custoer bleeting that your pretty

web interface, designed to save money on staff, doesn't work in anything other than IE6..

So once the move to Firefox is made, there is maybe a dabble with OpenOffice on the new computer, once the free 30 day Office runs out, or the user figure out MS Works isn't what they use at work...

Then its a gradual shift, usually of watercooler chat, "Have you tried Gimp to get the red eye out of those office party snaps, its free" or "I use Pidgen to speak to Marky on the 4th floor who is on Yahoo and Bill on the 2nd who is on MSN, it let me speak to both of them, my son told me about it"

So what do we end up with? a Windows Desktop, with lots of Open source apps.. familiar apps.

During the course of the year, the computer at home might be starting to run slowly, the credit crunch has hit, the choice is food, or a new computer, despite the £299, £399 deals, you can't really justify it, however a quick chat with the company IT bloke, said, give Ubuntu a try, you slap in the Live CD, the user sees what? Firefox, Open Office, Gimp, Pidgen.. all things they already know how to use. and the computer is indeed a bit quicker.. so a data backup and install later, and you have saved £300, £400 quid, the computer isn't as slow.. and you can still check your email, and surf the net..

Ah, I hear you say, what about hardware incompatibilities? Well, to be honest, these users, are going to usually have the same issues as they do on Windows, it just means for a little while, the work IT bod is going to be answering a lot of Linux questions, do you think he minds? not a bit.. because in this scenario he feels empowered, yet another convert, and, think of all that feedback on usability, you can put back to the distro provider, an invaluable resource, of actual case studies, where users are liking, or confused by the desktop interface, finally a chance to put something back into the community..

And for the first few users you convert, they now have the water cooler knowledge of how to speed up their PC, so feel like the brave new world finder, because they saved money.

The migration to Linux, is through Open Source applications, on Windows, creating a comfort zone, a feeling of familiar desktop apps, something which isn't alien, when you make the transition to the Linux Desktop.

The person who aids this movement, away from Windows, has to be patient, its a slow transition, a learning process, don't sing the praises of linux, its a voyage of discovery, and everyone finds things hard to start with.. they will not read the forums, because they won't know they are there, they will ask you.. be patient, smile, because it will pay off.. and 6 months, a year later, you'll have your own little tribe of converts, who are not complaining because linux isn't like Windows, however, are telling everyone else, about their new discovery...

So will this be the year of the Linux Desktop, for the whole planet, maybe, maybe not, but for you, it could be the year of your Linux Tribe..

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