

Current issues TICKING THE BOXES



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Technical Support

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 answered in the magazine in a future issue, however Linux
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 services either written or verbal.

In the last few weeks I have noticed a big increase in businesses offering Linux solutions – not just Linux distributions, but everything from standalone software products to consultancy. For so many businesses to put so much faith, not to mention advertising money, into Linux means either they are all jumping on a publicity bandwagon or they see some real fiscal potential.

The former would indicate that they are just ticking boxes to be able to say that they offer system solutions across the whole range. This could be a valid business strategy to ensure that they do not miss any potential market. The actual sale could, hopefully, be changed into a product that they already make; alternatively the client could be charged for the development if they insist on Linux.

However, the number of business orientated products being announced and shown indicate the latter. Many companies have already spent the development and testing money; a company is not going to spend money without realistically expecting some return. We may all be happy to write and develop software for the greater good, but a company can only survive with a return on its investment.

Am I pleased that business has decided Linux is a money-earning market? The answer is yes. I am, however, wary that a business may try to take over and dominate Linux. I am wary that a large company may come along and, by differentiating its products, try to fragment the market. But I have faith that this will not happen. Any business trying to

fragment the market would run into user criticism, and probably a boycott, so financially it wouldn't be worth the risk. Due to the GPL and other licenses, anyone could start up a Linux company to compete, but as soon as one company tries to dominate it will lose customers. Not that long ago a lot was said about RedHat dominating Linux. Yet since then the number of distributions has grown incredibly; I started out trying to keep my own list but these days there are just too many.

Business moving in, however, is a good thing. The more assistance businesses give, the more it will encourage others to support it and end the curse that is the lack of drivers for new hardware. As more companies provide back up, client companies are more likely to feel confident in Linux that support is available. We may know that fast, reliable feedback is always there via User groups and the Internet, but a company wants a solution provided, not so they can blame someone but so that they can get on with running their business and leave the rest to someone else.

The advert used to be along the lines of, "Nobody ever got fired for choosing IBM". Now that IBM is spending money to ensure Linux works on all its servers and has launched a Linux consultancy with SuSE, it would be more fitting to say, "Nobody ever got fired for choosing Linux".

John Southern
 Editor

GUARANTEE

We pride ourselves on the origins of our magazine which come from the very start of the Linux revolution. We have been involved with Linux market for six years now through our sister European-based titles Linux Magazine (aimed at professionals) and Linux User (for hobbyists), and through seminars, conferences and events.

By purchasing this magazine you are joining an information network that enjoys the benefit of all the knowledge and technical expertise of all the major Linux professionals and enthusiasts. No other UK Linux magazine can offer that pedigree or such close links with the Linux Community. We're not simply reporting on the Linux and open source movement - we're part of it.