

Bruce Perens

HP SOURCE

Bruce Perens is Hewlett-Packard's Senior Worldwide Strategist for Linux and Open Source. He is the founding father of the open source community and drafted both the Debian Social Contract and the Open Source Definition. Software includes Electric Fence and he is credited in A Bug's Life and Toy Story films



LM What current software are you working on?

BP Primarily spreading the Open Source movement. I have promised to help Debian with the bootstrap system and ensuring that HP keep ethical. I think I could do better than Python and Perl and so may write a language called 'O' but it may never be completed. I am also writing a tutorial series on Busybox.

LM What are the problems facing HP?

BP HP has a very able competitor in IBM. It is not so much challenges as opportunities such as working with the community and the IA64 processor.

LM What wins have you had at HP?

BP Adopting the Open Source policy. Enabling hardware with Open Interfaces

HP has now released the Print Server Appliance 4200. This contains Samba and is IP click and print. HP is sponsoring to the tune of \$26M the Open Source development lab along with IBM, Intel and others. This allows developers time on multiprocessor systems with load simulations that they would otherwise not be able to afford.

LM Where do you see the Open Source movement going?

BP IBM owns 10 per cent of software patents in the US. It is easy to stop an individual. Ogg Vorbis made a format to circumvent the Fraunhofer codec. The developer is now being threatened and cannot afford a day in court. Businesses that plan to make big bucks out of Open Source should help the individual developers.

LM What do you hope to achieve in the coming year?

BP More Open Source such as the Deskjet drivers. Because HP is cross patented with other people, we are trying to remove those other patents so we will be able to release as Open, and not restrict the community with others patents.

LM If I wanted to buy a HP computer today I could not buy without Windows. Do you see this as a problem for HP?

BP No Linux on HP laptops this year, but in the server market HP has standardised on the Gnome desktop, as has Sun.

LM What is there left for HP to do?

BP Lots of stuff is left to do at HP. HP-UX is our enterprise offering and will be supported as long as customers require it. Personally speaking, I think Linux will be able to handle the enterprise market within three years.

LM Will Linux make it to the desktop?

BP We are already being used on the desktop by engineers and Office workers will soon be surprised

LM What do you consider the most vital piece of software that needs developing for Linux?

BP Now we have office suites, a Quicken-like program is needed to help home finance. Greater ease of use and ease of installation. A tax calculation program, but that would depend on each country.

LM What is holding back Linux?

BP With the rate of acceptance nothing stands in the way. ■