CURRENT ISSUES
THE **QUIET** REVOLUTION

The world of Linux development often seems, from the outside at least, to be populated by small, committed companies, who are essentially doing their own thing. However, if you scratch beneath the surface just a little, you'll find that some major business interests are lending their support.

Hewlett-Packard is working with Linux – it's busy spending a fair amount of money on Linux development. The current project of assessing Linux on its Jornada handhelds and the release of the printer drivers demonstrates the multinational's presence.

IBM on the other hand seems to be even more proactive, but very quiet about its achievements. When earlier this year IBM announced that it would spend $1 billion on Linux, a lot of the industry said that it would not amount to much. Since then, IBM have carried on as normal for a multinational. It announced partnerships with RedHat, SuSE and TurboLinux. Then all seemed to go quiet.

Behind the scenes, IBM continues with its own path. Differing divisions from within support, or actively work on, Linux. Mandrake is supported by the Via Voice team, Caldera by the xSeries team. Even Debian is supported at various levels; slowly releasing code to the open community and providing community access to mainframes for developers.

IBM has now decided to attack the financial markets with Linux. Venezuela's Banco Mercantil with 375 branches is running SuSE on a s/390, replacing the previous 30 NT server farm. So many divisions within these multinationals and yet they do not shout about their achievements. Why don't they make their own distributions? They have the staff and resources to do so. They could easily promote it and with such power could soon be the dominant Linux distributor. Yet they don't. Maybe it is that they have don't want to risk money. More probable is that they see Linux as a community and so are willing to support and submit code while making sure they are not seen to take over. They benefit with Linux support for their ranges while we benefit form the code releases. It's a nice world.

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