Business News

Cheaper with Linux

Set up in August 1999 to provide car owners with the quickest way to get the best car insurance quotes, *http://www.superquote.com* has implemented a number of free-software technologies to help it provide over one million people with the cheapest quotes on the market.

Using the standard free software resources, Linux (Debian), Apache, MySQL and Perl (LAMP), the site has developed a specialized 'deep conditional roboting' program to create a highly responsive tool that can quickly visit several car insurance Web sites at one time and return the most competitive quotes to the user.

The program is able to make requests to Web servers and read the file content received from the server. As the company queries multiple remote site simultaneously, the site needs a concurrent program that can do more than one thing at a time.

Superquote.com is one of the first commercial operations to adopt Perl ithreads technology, and has worked to combine Perl 5.8 ithreads concurrency with mod_perl to create a fast and highly stable environment for the Superquote

Internet quote engine. The company has fulfilled its objective to use a single technology with all server-side and back-office applications written in Perl.

The machine is a raw Web server with no mail server, batch jobs, user accounts, ping, telnet or X-server. It does the one, simple job of supplying the best car insurance quotes to users from a number of Insurance sites. ■

Linux Calling

Earlier this year, Motorola announced plans to build the world's first handset combining a Linux operating system and Java technology, with full multimedia PDA functionality. The Motorola A760, launched in August, uses Linux as its core OS, with Java running on top, to provide a multimedia application framework. The phone comes with a PDA-like personal information management (PIM) suite, a video and MP3 player, and an instant messaging tool. Bluetooth, infrared and USB interfaces make it able to talk to almost anything.

Motorola obviously thinks that Linux is the future in phone software, given that they are reported to be selling their stake in Symbian, the operating system currently used on many of their mobile

phones. As of last month, Motorola owned nearly 20 percent of Symbian stock, most of which Nokia is expected to buy, with the rest going to Psion, Symbian's parent company.

The fact that China, the world's largest mobile phone market, is also pro-Linux can only help. Motorola is able to make this move because it has already standardized on Java, which runs on all the company's existing phones and PDAs, including the Linux powered ones. And although this makes the operating system irrelevant to some extent, Motorola will certainly appreciate the saving in licence fees. ■

http://www.motorola.com/
http://www.newswireless.net

New Linux-Based Devices

Royal, part of the Olivetti group, and Trolltech have announced a partnership to bring high-quality, feature-rich and competitively priced PDAs to the consumer and enterprise markets.

The first of these products, Royal LineaLX, is scheduled to ship in the United States in the fourth quarter 2003 and retail for under $300.

The new PDA uses Qtopia as a robust application layer and gives access to over a thousand existing third-party applications. Containing an Intel 206MHz StrongArm processor, color graphics, and built in expandability, the LineaLX will benefit from having the power and customization of Linux.

http:www.royal.com
http://www.trolltech.com

On the Safe Side

IBM and SuSE announced that SuSE Linux Enterprise Server 8 running on IBM eServer xSeries has recently achieved Common Criteria Security Certification. They claim that this is the first ever security certification for Linux. The Common Criteria (CC), also known as ISO 15408, are used by some governments and organizations to assess security and integrity of technology products.

SLES 8 on IBM eServer xSeries has so far achieved an Evaluation Assurance Level 2+ certification (EAL2). IBM is aiming for a higher level of security certification, the Controlled Access Protection Profile with EAL3+, and hoping to introduce this certification to the entire IBM eServer product line. IBM also hopes to achieve the Common Operating Environment (COE) standard, which is used by the US Department of Defense (DoD) to ensure interoperability requirements for commercially acquired IT products.

While these certifications might not be directly relevant to most Linux users, it's encouraging to know that the software you're using is capable of passing such a test. The key components of the work done by IBM and SuSE are to be released back to the Linux development community and the CCeLinux Consortium and will thus contribute to improving the security of Linux. ■

■ Opera's Box

Opera recently announced a way for purchasers of set-top boxes to save 200 dollars – instead of buying an expensive license from Microsoft you'll be able to get such a box running the Opera browser on Linux. This saves you a lot of money because you do not have to pay for the operating system, although you still have to pay for the hardware and Opera, of course.

The real winners may be the iTV industry's operators, as they could save hundreds of millions of dollars if Opera's set-top box (STB) technology takes off.

Opera Software ASA, located in Norway, has successfully developed web browser technology for several years. The Opera browser runs on every popular operating system, and also on quite a few not so popular ones. It has a reputation for speed, efficiency and standards-compliance and not only runs on desktops, but also on smartphones, PDAs, and iTVs .

The obvious advantage of the Opera STB offering is that it allows you to use open standards to communicate with your servers. You don't need to buy expensive middleware or use proprietary protocols. This not only saves the operators a lot of money, they also benefit from a technically superior solution. The content offered by the iTVs can thus be produced in standard HTML, which is then rendered by the Opera engine.

Opera also provides navigational functions, instead of simply being used as a browser. The STB market seems unlikely to take off unless the price to the consumer drops well below the 300 dollars that Microsoft is currently aiming at.

So this announcement from Opera seems like good news for the industry – but, ultimately, this will be the end users' decision. ■

http://www.opera.com/ products/itv/