Business News

■ High Octane HP

HP, having sponsored the BMW WilliamsF1 Team for the past four years, now provide a mobile environment for the racing team – wireless technology (WLAN) links all the infrastructure at the track and the BMW WilliamsF1 and HP motorhomes. In addition to that, HP announced that the BMW WilliamsF1 Team "now runs one of the most spectacular high-resolution aerodynamic models on a cluster of Linux-based industry-standard HP ProLiant servers". All this is said to be part of a new IT strategy, which is supposed to place "the BMW WilliamsF1 Team in pole position for infrastructure power and system performance".

HP have also extended their business and technology pact with Walt Disney as part of an inherited partnership from Compaq Computer. So far HP have provided several thousand PCs, servers and printers to their partner. Disney gratefully announced that "the next 10 years will become the digital decade". HP is not only offering infrastructure to protect digital content, but also building hardware that should make it easier for Walt Disney to reach out to their customers. ■

http://www.hp.com/
http://www.disney.com/

■ Red Hat in cahoots with Fedora

Red Hat recently announced their future plans for Red Hat Linux (RHL) – it is to be merged with Fedora Linux. As a result, the Fedora Project will be formed. It is planned to coalesce the packages and integrate the infrastructure and policies during the upcoming months. Red Hat Enterprise Linux (RHEL) is not to be affected by these changes and will continue to be a commercial Red Hat product.

The reasons for this step are obvious: Red Hat is a profit-oriented company and has been making a loss on Red Hat Linux. Outsourcing the problem child could make Red Hat's future look brighter. There will be a commercial product (Red Hat Enterprise Linux) and a community based Linux distribution project (Fedora Project).

This also means that the next version of Red Hat Linux (codename 'Severn') will actually be released by the newly formed Fedora Project.

Fedora originally provided a single repository with well-tested packages for Red Hat. The idea was to build high-quality, third party packages for the Red Hat Linux distribution, using *yum* or *apt-get* to install and upgrade software. Unfortunately, some packages will no longer be available due to licensing issues, which might lead to non-US members leaving the project for new to pastures.

The relationship is expected to work in a similar way to that between StarOffice and OpenOffice.org: Contributions to Fedora Linux will find their way into Red Hat Enterprise Linux and the Fedora Project will be sponsored by Red Hat. ■

http://www.redhat.com
http://www.fedora.us/
http://fedora.redhat.com/

■ Governments dip toes in Open Source waters

The United Kingdom OGC (Office of Government Commerce) and IBM announced a program to test Open Source in nine different areas of government. The goal is to compare the utility and cost of ownership of Open Source software with proprietary systems, such as those sold by companies like Microsoft.

In a similar vein IBM has announced a partnership with the Government of Brazil to develop technology based on open standards, such as those that Linux offers. And there is also a deal with the Russian Government to establish a Linux Competence Center in Moscow. ■

http://www.ogc.gov.uk/
http://www.ibm.com/

■ BlueCat Linux in Paradise?

LynuxWorks announced that their embedded BlueCat Linux will run on Paradise Datacom's next-generation satellite data modems. Paradise Datacom

was looking for a stable, commercial-grade embedded operating system for their satellite modems. By choosing BlueCat Linux, they gain not only the flexibility that Open Source software provides, but also the ability to integrate third-party software into the design of the satellite data modems. ■

http://www.lynuxworks.com/
http://www.paradisedata.com/

■ EC EMEA choose EMC

The European agency for the Evaluation of Medical Products (EMEA) has agreed a new five year Open Framework contract with Enterprise Management Consultants.

The work which is already underway has includes a secure file transfer and messaging system for the EMEA and pharmaceutical companies. The user group has now expanded to over 1,300. ■

http://emcuk.com/

■ To Find Or Not To Find

We have clearly not yet heard the last word about VeriSign's "service" Site Finder and the redirection of mistyped and unregistered domain names. VeriSign made a unilateral decision in September to "help" the world's Internet users by no longer returning an error message indicating that a domain name did not exist. Instead, they decided that when one misspelled a domain name in the .com or .net domains, resulting in an invalid domain, they would redirect you to their Site Finder site.

VeriSign used a feature of the Domain Name System, called a wildcard record, to redirect misspelled or unassigned .com and .net. An unfortunate side effect of this change is that some applications such as spam filters and mail servers rely on getting the previous error message from attempts to look up domains when checking for valid email messages.

While some end users apparently appreciated the decision and were happy to "experience improved Web-browsing" (VeriSign), network administrators and organizations started to fight back. Their allegations: the Site Finder system breaks technical standards, is anti-competitive, violates trademark rights of domain holders and the authoritative nature of DNS. Several technical advisories on how to configure routers and servers to block access to VeriSign's site were quickly developed and published published as a result.

After the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) sent letters threatening various sanctions, VeriSign removed the offending wildcard records, but said during a press conference that "they would fight back". In further press releases, they claim that "technically, this was a legitimate use of wildcard records that did not in any way violate the DNS specifications themselves."
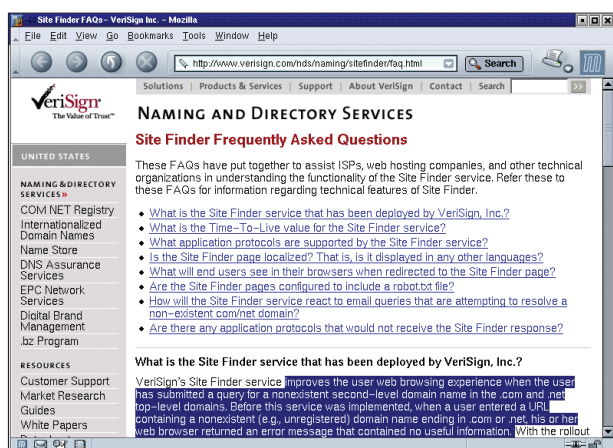
VeriSign's "consumer-friendly enhancement" might not only have purely technical implications. How would people feel if every time they dialed a wrong telephone number they got put through to someone at the phone company asking if they'd like to buy that number for their own use? ■