

Newsdesk

■ Mandrake targets South America ■ Microsoft targets *Wine* ■ KDE 3.4 release ■ Germany sees biggest Linux migration ever ■ Security kudos for SUSE ■ IBM buys in ■ Theo de Raadt applauded

Mandrakesoft bids to join Linux superleague

Conectiva acquisition gives French commercial distributor road into promising Latin American market

 French Linux distributor Mandrakesoft has merged with Conectiva, the developer of South America's most popular distro, in a bid to join Red Hat, TurboLinux and Novell in the top tier of open-source software vendors.

The move will give Mandrake a foothold in the growing Latin American market, where the low costs of Linux are especially tempting to cash-strapped governments.

Though Linux market share is notoriously difficult to quantify, Mandrake is unarguably 'second tier'. Some estimates put its worldwide presence in the 1-3% range, while others suggest the company commands just over 19%. Mandrake claims to have the most popular distro in the UK, with a 46% share of the market.

Mandrakesoft co-founder Gael Duval admitted to CNET News that the merger wouldn't "elevate Mandrake to the level of Novell or RedHat yet". But he described the merger as significant growth, which the company will build on with more acquisitions in future.

Army contract

Conectiva is based in Curitiba, southern Brazil, and employs 60 people. Its off-the-shelf product is the Conectiva Linux distro and the company has also been instrumental in developing some high-profile Linux software including *apt4rpm*, which



With user numbers growing and IT budgets tight, Brazil offers Linux distributors the perfect chance to win public and private contracts.

enables RPM-based distros to use the Debian package management system, and the Crystal icons that are shipped with KDE. Conectiva has several government contracts, including with the Brazilian army and navy, as well as corporate partnerships with the likes of IBM, HSBC, HP and Siemens.

Conectiva spokeswoman Mariana Franco said reaction to the deal among users and staff has been positive. "We had the usual concerns regarding what will happen to Conectiva Linux, but as things started

to get clear with declarations from both Mandrakesoft and Conectiva managers about the integration of the two distros, the users have calmed down and supported the merger," she said. Conectiva staff on the Brazilian side of the business have been told their jobs are safe.

François Bancelhon, chief executive of Mandrakesoft, is tipped to assume the leadership of the combined company. It is expected to move forward under the Mandrake brand, but a definitive statement on the

name is not expected until April, with a unified distribution expected to be launched toward the end of 2005.

"Combining the two businesses enables us to extend the scope of our offering and address more business," Bancelhon said. He also stressed Mandrakesoft's commitment to open source and the GPL, maintaining the new company would always offer a free version of its software.

Mandrake was formed in 1998 and built on the foundations of Red Hat's distribution to become the second



SLES 9 can be used in government offices and army tanks now.

most popular Linux distribution in Europe. Revenues for 2004 topped €5 million, thanks to growing corporate sales and membership of its innovative Mandrakeclub, which offers members premium access to the latest distribution releases before the general public.

With SUSE coming under the Novell umbrella, Mandrake now stands as the continent's only major commercial Linux distributor.

Moving up?

The company went into bankruptcy protection in early 2003 but emerged newly profitable in March 2004 with ambitious acquisition plans. Since then, there has been a series of deals and partnerships including working with LaCie on a mobile hard drive and signing an agreement with the French government to supply university computing departments.

In January Mandrake announced plans of a partnership programme with American IT suppliers and support vendors to push its enterprise products to small and medium-sized business buyers in the US.

An emerging market like South America is an altogether different proposition, offering the potential to focus on Linux installation rather than migration from existing proprietary systems.

Mandrake and Conectiva are both active members of the Linux Core Consortium, which is attempting to set a standard for basic Linux systems to make it easier for hardware and software vendors to certify their products more simply.

The Conectiva acquisition has been done, Mandrake managers said, with a €1.79 million (£1.24 million) stock swap.

The combined company will have a workforce of 130 people, 70 of them dedicated software engineers.

SUSE wins level four security certification

That'll please the government

Novell's SUSE Linux Enterprise Server (SLES) has become the first distribution to be granted level four Common Criteria certification. It is now eligible to be used for command-and-control applications across US government departments.

The Common Criteria are international standards for measuring the security of software, ranging from levels one to seven. Novell chief executive Jack Messman said winning certification puts Novell at the "top of the list when it comes to projects the government wants to do".

The award applies to SLES 9 running on IBM's eServer product line and addresses functionality and interoperability issues. Red Hat recently applied for Common Criteria certification, but its software has yet to undergo the necessary testing.

Speaking at the Boston LinuxWorld Conference and Expo, Messman said that SUSE had also managed to achieve US Department of Defense Common Operating Environment compliance, a requirement for sales to US military establishments.

Novell/SUSE spokesman Mark Rex said the achievement was down to committed collaboration between Novell, IBM and the security services evaluation team. "The successful completion of this latest security evaluation ... will give our customers and partners the confidence to deploy SUSE Linux solutions."

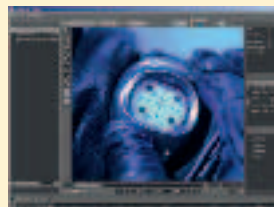


Jack Messman hopes to win US government business for his newly-certified SUSE distro.

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■ The numbers just get bigger and bigger. Since the launch of the **Firefox 1.0** web browser, the project has served up a massive 25 million copies of the software. The feat was accomplished in just 99 days.

■ Not resting on its laurels, the Mozilla project has updated **Firefox** to version 1.0.1 to fix some security issues and squash a few bugs. The most significant fix concerns a flaw in the handling of Internationalised Domain Names (IDN), which could allow an attacker to carry out a phishing expedition – that is, get access to your financial data – by creating a fraudulent website and using characters in the URL to convince a user that it's genuine.



■ **Silhouette Roto**, a high-end rotoscoping tool for film and animation, has been launched as a plug-in for *AfterEffects* on Windows and Mac and *FinalCut Pro* on Mac. The developer says a stand-alone Linux version is near completion and will be launched soon. Rotoscoping is an essential task in modern film making, and the availability of this product on Linux demonstrates the position the platform now commands in the film industry.

■ Mozilla isn't the only Linux-centric group to have posted decent figures. **The Linux Professional Institute (LPI)** says it has now examined and certified 75,000 people through its training programme. LPI provides a standardised structure for Linux training across the world, with learning materials and tests in seven different languages. Evan Leibovitch, president of LPI, said: "This is an indication that there is increasing recognition for the value of the community-driven, vendor-independent and vendor-neutral certification process offered to Linux professionals through LPI!" www.lpi.org

■ The latest version of the **QEMU** emulator has closed the gap on the commercial virtualisation applications with, the author Fabrice Bellard claims, near-native speeds when a PC is emulated on a PC. The speed boost is all thanks to the new QEMU Accelerator Module, which runs most of the guest OS's application code directly on the host processor (rather than running through an emulation routine). This makes it very effective for running an x86 guest on an x86 host, such as Windows on Linux. The accelerator runs as a module at present because it is a closed-source element of the system, though Bellard says it could be open sourced if he could get sponsorship.

Jono Bacon

The founder of UK Linux, KDE developer and all-round nice guy, Jono is also a musician whose tunes have featured on Slashdot.



COMMENT

The rise of the radio

“ The 300 or so words I scribble each month for this column have touched on a number of things that take my interest, but that I'm often not actually a part of. My subject this month is something I am heavily involved with: internet radio.

With the rampant increase in sales of the iPod/iRiver/iAudio and the constant broadening of internet access, net radio has become relevant. A handful of open-source radio shows have appeared, one of which being our very own LUGRadio (www.lugradio.org). Although LUGRadio has had surprising success (and is now planning a day-long event scheduled for 25 June in Wolverhampton), it has had its own set of challenges to overcome.

The most interesting challenge was that of tone. LUGRadio has an offbeat, humorous and irreverent take on radio, and this has involved some sharp talk, strong opinions and plenty of debate. With an approach to open source radio that's more Radio 1 than Radio 4, the effect has been more striking to many people than the written word. Although some of my writing has struck a nerve and people have mailed me their thoughts (thanks, y'all), I've had far more correspondence directed my way over things I've said on the radio. It makes me wonder if we could get more people into open source by talking about it than writing about it. If the opinion is fundamentally the same, should we be more to the point in print?

Answers on a postcard to the usual address. That is, if reading this gives you enough of a get-go.... ”

Music to your ears

Good news: *Rosegarden 1.0* includes DSSI plugin to access VST effects



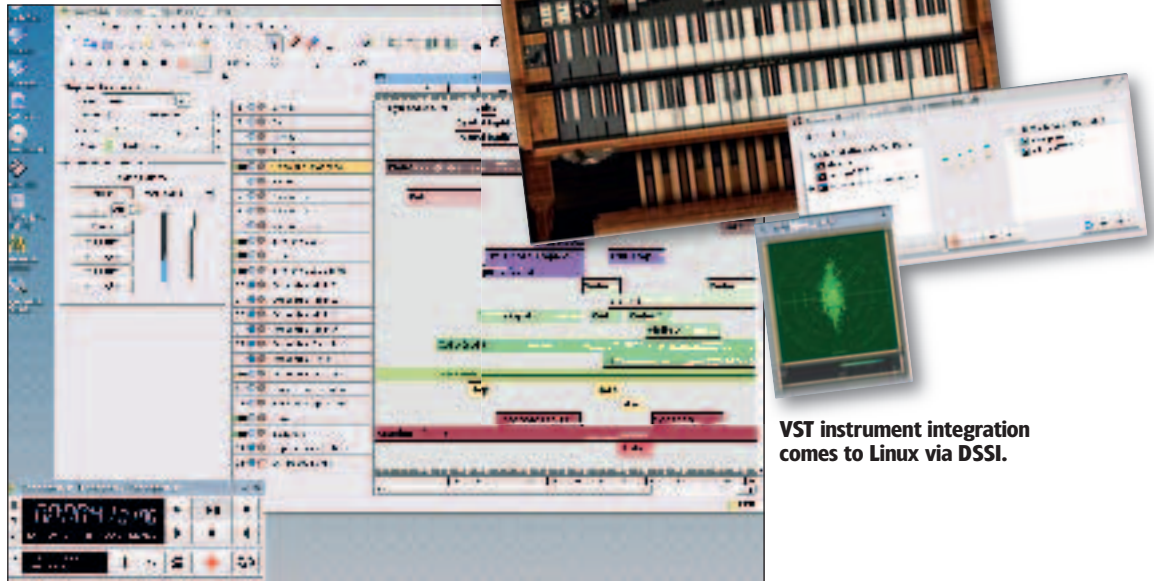
Rosegarden, the great hope for Linux music software, has a 1.0 release. The package now has the DSSI (pronounced dizzy) plugin API, which is analogous to VST in the Windows world and Audio Units for the Mac.

Most significantly, DSSI has a VST wrapper available that allows Linux users to access VST instruments and effects via *Wine*.

In an interview with O'Reilly Dev Centre, developer Chris Cannam said *Rosegarden* had grown from humble ambitions to become the biggest Linux music application available.

"*Rosegarden* is the only Linux music application designed to be an immediate alternative to the major brand-name sequencers for other platforms; designed to be a useful compositional tool for people who know classical notation; and designed with usability and learnability in mind from the outset," he said.

Rosegarden, which is the closest thing the Linux world has to *Cubase*, offers a full complement of audio,



VST instrument integration comes to Linux via DSSI.

Rosegarden is a complete open-source audio solution.

MIDI and effects tools to create a complete recording studio within the computer. The package relies heavily on ALSA and, for more complex audio sequencing, the Jack audio server. The software is also notable for its strong

capabilities in notation editing and input. Fervent Software, which recently provided support to the *Rosegarden* developers, has launched a new Live CD built on version 1.0 that offers users a complete audio and MIDI

workstation on a single CD. The cost of the package is £49.99, or £64.99 including a 128MB USB stick. *Rosegarden 1.0* is also available in source code and binary forms. www.rosegardenmusic.com

CONFERENCE NEWS

The ACCU (Association of C and C++ Users) will be hosting its annual conference from Wednesday 20 April to Saturday 23 in Oxford. Events will concentrate on Java, C++ and Python development (including a full day on Python hosted by Alex Martelli and Anna Ravenscroft) and, for the first time, there will be a whole training stream on programming for security. The daily rate for the conference is £135 for members and £160 for others while the four-day rate is £495 and £595 respectively. www.accu.org/conference/index.html.

Meanwhile, across the Severn in Wales the countdown to one of the better geek expos of the summer has begun. The annual UKUUG Linux Technical Conference will be hitting Swansea between Thursday August 4 and Sunday 7. The organisers have put out a general call for papers, with more details available on the event's website - www.ukuug.org/events/linux2005. Details of venues and speakers will be announced soon.

IBM: £52 million Linux commitment

Big Blue puts faith and investment in open-source future for world's computer users

IBM will raise its financial

commitment to Linux by \$100 million, (£52 million) over the next three years. The money will be used to fund a wide range of initiatives across technical, R&D and marketing divisions and is intended to help customers migrate to Linux on every kind of computing device - from mainframes to PDAs.

Much of the money will go on developing IBM's Workplace suite, which provides access to core business tools on any compatible device.

As well as promising a cash injection for its own in-house projects, IBM has donated more than 30 open source projects to open-source repository SourceForge (www.sourceforge.net) and launched a companion site to help developers improve their skills.

Gina Poole, IBM's vice president of developer relations, said it was critical for developers to stay abreast of the



IBM has added nuggets of code to the open-source treasure chest.

open-source sector because of its increasing adoption by governments and businesses. "Organisations looking for innovative software applications to drive their business projects are looking for developers with the tools and skills of tomorrow - based on open technologies," she said.

Projects covered by the new initiative include *Jikes*, a fast Java compiler, and the Life Science Identifier, which speeds up development of life science applications by providing tools for automatically scanning networks for biologically significant data.



Though KDE has received a slight cosmetic makeover, most of the improvements have been made under the surface.

KDE 3.4 hits the mirrors

User-friendly tweaks include text-to-speech option

The KDE project has launched the first – and possibly only – release candidate for the eagerly anticipated KDE 3.4 desktop environment.

Additions include better theme handling, a more integrated *Plastik* look and improvements to many of the individual KDE applications; not least *Kontact*, which benefits from the integration of the *AKregator* RSS application (see page 12, LXF65).

Konqueror gains RSS support, while *KPDF* has been given a search feature – finally allowing users to search for specific strings in a long document – and a new slide-show mode, which turns the application into a capable presentation tool.

Other improvements include better user switching in the *KDM* display

manager and the addition of a number of accessibility applications including a new text-to-speech option

Under the hood there is a new wireless configuration manager, which makes saving access controls for a number of networks much easier.

KDE developer Stephan Kulow ventured online to encourage testing of this first “and hopefully only” release candidate.

Users who wish to test the new desktop without running the risk of killing their lovingly-crafted setup can do so by downloading and burning the new KLAX ISO, which marries a live version of Slackware 10.1 with KDE 3.4 to great effect.

It is available via www.kde.org and the usual KDE mirrors.

OpenBSD leader honoured

Theo de Raadt chosen over Tridgell and Brod

Theo de Raadt, leading light of the OpenBSD and OpenSSH projects, has joined Guido van Rossum, Larry Wall, Lawrence Lessig and Alan Cox in being given the Free Software Award by the Free Software Foundation (FSF).

FSF president Richard Stallman presented the 2004 award at FOSDEM (Free and Open Source Developers' European Conference) in Brussels, saying that de Raadt's work had applications well outside the scope of his original intentions.

De Raadt was praised particularly for OpenSSH, which is a fundamental project for secure communication across the computer world.

Each year, members of the open source community nominate individuals who have made a significant contribution during the past 12 months.

The other nominees this year were Andrew Tridgell for his work on the *Samba* project and Cesar Brod, who was recognised for his efforts at open source advocacy in Brazil.

The award traditionally goes to someone with a more immediate connection to Linux. The fact that this year it has gone to de Raadt was seen by some as a long-overdue recognition of the role the so-called BSDs have had in the success of Linux.

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Real Software has announced the availability of *REALbasic 2005*, a complete object-oriented rapid application development (RAD) package capable of creating self-contained executables for Linux, Windows and OS X from the same source code. The company says this is the perfect cross-platform development tool – though as yet there is no native Linux version of the application. www.realsoftware.com

In a moment of candour, managers at Red Hat have admitted the company snubbed the early adopters who helped build its reputation when it went in search of more lucrative corporate buyers in 2002. The company says it will make amends with more support for the Fedora project, which acts as a test bed for the more corporate-friendly Red Hat Enterprise Linux line. Michael Tiemann, vice president of open source affairs, said it was a mistake to concentrate almost exclusively on enterprise customers. “It insulted some of our best supporters. But worse, we lost our opportunity to do customer-driven innovation,” he said.

IBM has teamed up with Mountain View, CA-based Veritas Software to develop a new hardware and software solution built on IBM's Power5 processor-based OpenPower Linux servers. The package will include Veritas' Cluster Server, Storage Foundation and Storage Foundation for Oracle RAC software.



MP3 Beamer is a new product from Linspire (above) designed to squirt MP3 files to all of your media devices, including PCs, stereo systems, PDAs and iPods. Linspire is pushing both a hardware and software solution with an MP3 Beamer PC – running Linspire, naturally – available from \$399.

PDF files of the presentations given at the recent Open Source Development Labs (OSDL) kernel conference are now available online. There are talks from the likes of Andrew Morton and Brian Behlendorf, and an exploration of the issues thrown up by the SCO litigation from Jim Harvey, of Atlanta law firm Alston and Bird. www.osdllinuxsummit.org/presentations/

GUI guru Jeff Raskin, credited by many as the creator of most modern computers' look and feel, has died of pancreatic cancer. Raskin fostered the then-revolutionary attitude that computers should make work easier for humans.

Hoyt Duff

The co-author of *Red Hat Linux 9 Unleashed* runs a fishing pier when he's not being vociferous about users' rights on mailing lists.



COMMENT

Microsoft's backslap

“Thanks, Microsoft, for all your help. Its recent action against *Wine* is a public recognition of the threat that it poses to the Windows OS, and is a wonderful compliment to the vision of the pioneers of the Linux phenomenon.

The Redmond Gang openly admits deliberately crippling its automatic update service to deny software updates when *Wine* is being used (turn the page for more). MS has an interest in locking its customers in, making them depend on its operating system and producing software that's generally incompatible with non-MS apps. If MS Office can be run on a free and open OS, the user gains flexibility and MS loses money.

That's what *Wine* threatened to do. But the Microsoft's recent action has annoyed, inconvenienced and alienated people who hold valid licences for MS software. For Linux, that's great news.

Linux is now positioned to take a large and significant place in business and personal computer use; Microsoft's validation of Linux's value comes at the best time possible. To the public, its defence of its business appears aggressive, even heavy-handed, and it gives the impression that it would rather spend its resources on lawyers' fees than improve its product and service.

While we revolutionaries can feel great for a moment, we must keep up the fight in the face of MS arrogance and bullying. Still, we don't have to defeat them: they defeat themselves every day. Thanks, Microsoft: it's where we want to go every day.

Microsoft blocks *Wine* users from Win Update

CodeWeavers stays calm as Microsoft publicly targets emulator for first time

Microsoft's latest anti-piracy measure includes what appears to be a concerted effort to block users of the Windows emulator *Wine* from installing otherwise freely-available software on their Linux machines.

The *Windows Genuine Advantage* (WGA) validation tool, which has been developed to stop pirated versions of Windows being updated via the Windows Update site, prevents *Wine* users from downloading updates or add-on tools.

A Microsoft spokesperson told the UK's [ZDNet.com](http://www.zdnet.com) that *Wine* was the first emulator to be specifically tested



Despite WGA's best efforts, you can still install Internet Explorer via Crossover Office Pro. Oh well boys, you can't have it all.

for WGA. "Microsoft does not knowingly provide copyrighted OS files to users of third-party emulators or cross-platform API translation technologies such as *Wine*," they said.

Jeremy White, chief executive of *Wine* developer CodeWeavers, said he was relaxed about the issue, as it marked the end of Microsoft's policy of never even mentioning *Wine*, but that things would be different if the company decided to restrict MS Office updates to those running Windows.

This, White said, "would expose them to legal repercussions, as they would be tying one monopoly product to another."

Win4Lin adds XP support

Virtual OS finally runs software not consigned to retirement

Win4Lin, the company formerly known as NeTraverse, has included support for Windows 2000 and limited support for Windows XP in the new edition of its flagship *Win4Lin Professional* software. Previously, the virtual OS was only capable of installing Windows 9x series products.

The company has also said it plans to integrate better WinXP compatibility into future releases.

Win4Lin chief executive Jim Curtin, said the release of Win4Lin Pro would improve the opportunities for companies to investigate Linux on the desktop without being concerned

about legacy applications. "Previously, enterprises and users needing to migrate legacy Windows applications to Linux were stuck with either an expensive porting task, or with clunky, non-integrated virtual machine solutions," he said.

Another welcome change is that the software no longer requires users to download and install a special patched kernel, making installation and use of the software potentially far easier.

SUSE Linux 9.3 released

Includes *Beagle* search tool

Novell has released **SUSE Linux Professional 9.3**, adding native support for Apple's iPod music player and the *Beagle* integrated search tool to its award-winning desktop product.

Beagle enables users to comb through locally-indexed web pages, emails, IM conversations, music files and images, as well as documents stored in a variety of formats including PDF, source code and files created in MS *Word* and OpenOffice.org.

It was created as a demonstration of the power of Mono and is a pet project of Ximian/Novell vice president Nat Friedman. If the user's system is 'notify-enabled', *Beagle*'s system works, according to developer John Trowbridge, "almost in real time". The system has some heavy dependencies, so SUSE 9.3 will probably be the first encounter most users have with the technology, which competes with Google's Desktop Search tool and the much-touted but little-seen *WinFS* from Microsoft.

Demos of */Beagle/* in action can be seen at <http://nat.org/demos>.

EMBEDDED LINUX NEWS

- **Trolltech** expects a wave of Linux smartphones to drive adoption of new telecoms technologies – including 3G, which has had a slow start in the UK and Europe. Chief executive Haavard Nord said 20 phone and mobile device manufacturers are working on *Qt*-based products for 50 hardware vendors. Motorola, Samsung and Philips will all be debuting devices in 2005, and so will Ningbo Bird, China's biggest handset builder.

- Enterprising hacker Laurent Bousis has taken a standard issue **Giga Vu Pro** (above right) from German hardware vendor Jobo and turned it into a fully-fledged 2.4 kernel series embedded Linux computer. The



device is designed to perform along the same lines as the iPod Photo, features an Xscale 400MHz processor and makes a pretty good choice for an embedded system. The first job Bousis did was to turn the whole thing into a *Doom* games console. <http://gigavupro.sourceforge.net/tutorial.html>

- Mozilla developers are working hard to knock out a production-quality Windows CE/Pocket PC build of their **Minimo** web browser. Project leader Doug Turner has posted a workable version on his website. Until now the application has been available exclusively for Linux PDAs, but a Pocket PC version is seen as a vital ingredient in emulating the success of the mainstream *Firefox* browser. Turner aims for a public release in about four months.

- **Motorola** has joined forces with Voice over IP company **Skype** to create a new range of 'Skype-ready' mobile and fixed-line phones. Speculation is rife that mobiles may be able to make */Skype/* calls when in range of a wireless LAN or hot-spot.



Deutsche Bahn may soon be the biggest Linux user in the world.

German trains to run on Linux

IBM oversees transition in biggest project of its kind yet seen

Deutsche Bahn, Germany's national rail operator, has moved its entire 55,000 workforce from using Lotus Notes to Linux. While all eyes were on plans of a massive migration of desktops to Linux in the city of Munich, Deutsche Bahn had been quietly preparing what is probably the biggest move to open-source software in history.

The company says it won't fully benefit from Linux until the entire computing infrastructure has been migrated, at some point next year.

The first step was to move its timetable systems from HP to Linux, but a spokesperson said the subsequent desktop migration is the most important milestone in the process. Once complete, the company will be running everything on Linux,

from SAP systems and sales support to web and mail servers.

The project, which is being overseen by IBM – also a major hardware vendor for the move – is being keenly watched by Munich city council. Unable to resolve potential problems with patents, Munich has decided not to go ahead with migration.

IBM spokesman Steve Menadue congratulated Deutsche Bahn on its visionary approach to adopting open source. "The strategic choice is further proof that Linux has matured as an enterprise platform, offering a variety of advantages including cost savings, shorter development time and a high level of security," he said.

NZ HEALTH CHIEFS MIGRATE TO LINUX

New Zealand's Ministry of Health is migrating its data centre operations from Windows to Linux. The ministry has cited the current system's inflexibility as the reason for the move.

Chief information officer Warwick Sullivan said the organisation was constantly hitting a resource bottleneck due to a peaky processing cycle and had

found that the installed system was not capable of holding up under this pressure. "Windows can't support what we do, and its management controls aren't consistent with a data centre operation," he said.

IBM has won the competitive tender to provide the NZ\$3 million (£1.1 million) installation.

AFFS grants for open source developers

Three-figure sums available to projects with community appeal

The Association for Free Software (AFFS) has launched a new programme to reward and support open-source developers.

The group is calling for applications from developers and says the grants are likely to be three-figure sums. Projects will stand a better chance of

winning a grant if they are judged to have the capacity to attract further funding in the future, or matched funding immediately.

Interested developers should write a short précis of their project, stating who is involved and why funding is required – this could be anything, as

long as you can show that it will benefit the free software world.

Applicants are asked to send proposals to the AFFS in an open source-friendly format (send a DOC file at your peril).

More details are available at www.affs.org.uk/grants.

David Cartwright

David Cartwright is an IT consultant who specialises in providing Linux Systems and solutions.



COMMENT

An OS is an OS is an OS

“It wasn't long after the release of Red Hat Enterprise Linux 4 that someone asked me: “Do I stick with RHEL 3 or move now?” His historical expertise was with non-Linux operating systems, and he didn't know how stable the new release would be.

The answer to this question is, of course: “Forget that it's Linux – what would you do with any operating system?” It's obvious when you think about it.

First, some of the applications he's running state the kernel version as their only compatibility issue, whereas a couple specifically mention RHEL 3.0. So until the application vendors state compatibility with 4.0, he shouldn't be overly quick to move across.

But this doesn't mean he shouldn't be moving to the new version to some extent. A 'big bang' migration on the day that his applications become officially RHEL 4.0-compatible is a very bad idea – a more controlled, methodical approach will not only help him become familiar with the new version, but also shake out the little foibles that the new version is bound to have.

I think he should get 4.0 now, try it out in a lab environment, test it to death, then perhaps roll it out to a few real, but non-critical systems and test it to death again. By the time 4.0 is supported by his 'big' applications, he'll have the confidence (and the rollback plan!) to upgrade the critical systems.

So remember boys, girls and system administrators: RHEL is just an operating system – migrate it like any other. ”