

# Outsider's observation upon the pros and cons of Debian

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*Source:* <http://linux.derkeiler.com/Mailing-Lists/Debian/2006-03/msg01297.html>

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  - *Date:* Sun, 12 Mar 2006 13:21:28 -0600
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I have endeavored to maintain a helpful tone in this message. Please forgive me where I may have failed. As more-or-less an outsider here, I have an observation to make concerning the Debian distribution, and considerations which might motivate people whether to chose to use Debian. I hope I am not speaking out of turn. I hope to encourage introspection. If you choose to read this message (it's rather long, I'm afraid), then I ask that you not respond until after reading all of it, and encourage you to endeavor to maintain a measured tone.

On a small number of occasions, I have proposed what appeared to me to be relatively minor modifications to the policies of this mail list. Each of these has been met by the existence of two already-formed factions each arguing either for or against my proposal.

In each case, the intensity and acrimony expressed by each faction has increased until the thread wasn't worth reading, let alone contributing to. Eventually, list administration got involved, expressing a hard-line attitude that the users don't get consideration.

Here is an actual quote[1] from a list admin...

Nothing is going to change, so if you aren't happy with the setup of debian-user then it probably isn't the list for you and you should consider unsubscribing.

It seems that there are the right way, the wrong way, and the Debian way of doing things.

Not what I consider to be the friendliest of responses, and not the first time I've seen it.

Instead of trying to see whether some compromise might be worked out, or perhaps making an alternate change which might better suit the goals of the list while giving the user the same or similar results as the proposal would, or even expressing appreciation for the contribution,

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but regretfully stating that no accomodation is possible, so one who disagrees must grin and bear it, but please to stay, people are encouraged to leave.

Usually, finding compromises is something which requires intelligence, open-mindedness, effort, and imagination. It isn't easy. Telling people that they are wrong-headed and to leave takes none of that, and I suppose that the list admins are so busy that they haven't the time necessary to exercise intelligence, open-mindedness, effort, and imagination.

I'm not going to propose a change in list policy from one

that the admins have already considered all circumstances and those who can't stand the heat in the kitchen should just get out

to one

that the admins actually listen to their users,

as that probably would start yet another acrimonious debate.

I will comment that I'm not really a Debian user, but joined because I talked my girlfriend into leaving Windows XP and trying Linux again. Several years ago, we both tried Linux and found it unsatisfactory. Somewhat over a year ago I landed a contract where I was required to use a specific Linux distribution which shall remain unnamed. I found that Linux has changed considerably, and is much nicer to use.

Upon my recommendation, she agreed to use a few LiveCD distros. I burned her several (like seven or so) and she settled upon Knoppix as being the best for her. I recommended against installing Knoppix, but using Debian, as being more stable. So she installed Debian upon my recommendation, and I subscribed here for purposes of helping her administer her machine.

I'm not all that enamored of the distribution I'm using, and have been pondering changing to another, and considering the pros and cons of various other distributions, Debian being one of those under consideration.

One of the pros of Debian is that I'd only have to become more-or-less expert in one distribution.

I'd say that one of the cons to Debian is the way this list is administered. To put it another way, the quote above translates in my mind into

"Nothing is going to change, so if you aren't happy with the

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setup of debian–user then Debian probably isn't the distro for you, and you should consider using a different one."

It certainly has encouraged me to give Scientific Linux another thought.

Since the means of support from experts is the list, the distribution and the list are inseparable in my mind. Also, people usually carry attitudes into every circumstance of life, and I suppose that this same attitude would meet proposals to changes in how the distribution itself is managed.

I hope that helps some here understand how others see the list and the Debian distribution a little more clearly, and perhaps appreciate a little more what considerations enter into what makes any given distribution the one of choice for those who are considering which, if any, version of Linux to use.

[1] I have deliberately made a point not to know who made that comment. I'm not interested in personalities, I'm interested in the list and the distribution. I hope that this message does not spawn a flame war, but rather encourages introspection. I encourage other parties not to get involved in further exchanges unless they strive to maintain an even tone. I'm also not trying to get my way on any particular proposal.

Mike

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p="p=%c%s%c;main(){printf(p,34,p,34);}";main(){printf(p,34,p,34);}
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This message made from 100% recycled bits.

You have found the bank of Larn.

I can explain it for you, but I can't understand it for you.

I speak only for myself, and I am unanimous in that!

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