

## [SLE] Re: A better SuSE Support DB?

**Source:** <http://linux.derkeiler.com/Mailing-Lists/SuSE/2004-04/1083.html>

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**From:** Phil Mocek ([pmocek-list-suse\\_at\\_mocek.org](mailto:pmocek-list-suse_at_mocek.org))

**Date:** 04/15/04

Date: Wed, 14 Apr 2004 15:34:34 -0700

To: [suse-linux-e@suse.com](mailto:suse-linux-e@suse.com)

On Wed, Apr 14, 2004 at 09:53:06PM +0100, Mark wrote:

- > *In the longer term a company may also have to account for the*
- > *loss of revenue from those who bought another distribution*
- > *instead because the competitor's support seemed more attractive,*
- > *for whatever reason.*

Or, leaving support out of it, they need to consider loss of revenue from those who decided to use a different distribution because a competitor's documentation or simply the quality of their packaging, seemed more attractive.

Discussion on this thread seems to repeatedly confuse support with the publication of documentation. With thorough, quality, documentation, you don't need support unless you haven't the time to read documentation or are lacking the skills to understand it.

- > *That loss could end up severe even if it can never be fully*
- > *quantified.*

Definitely. In my case, I recommended SuSE for use by a client who was rebuilding a previously-Windows-NT box and purchasing a new one, mainly because of the fact that on their short list of Linux distributions (Debian, Mandrake, and SuSE) only SuSE is officially supported by the bulk of third-party software publishers. This client only has a couple of machines now, but that number is likely to grow. The closest they come to the need for support right now is when they have questions about broken software that is not documented, or questions about "the SuSE way" of doing something that is not documented. They were happy to buy the SuSE Professional 9.0 retail box, rather than just installing from the 'net, to throw some cash at the people behind the product.

This list, though, has made it pretty clear that SuSE Linux Professional, unfortunately, is really not intended for professional use. This is not to say it isn't a great distribution for some purposes, but even the simple fact that

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there is no changelog for SuSE packages makes it unsuitable for many business purposes. It would be irresponsible for me to go installing an upgraded package without knowing what has changed, since the last release, or install a package knowing that the author may be aware of problems but is unwilling to share that knowledge.

Given the fact that the closest SuSE comes to publishing known issues for their software (and ``their software" consists primarily of their installer, a custom-compiled Linux kernel, YaST/SuSEconfig, and their SuSE-fied repackaging of software written/maintained by GNU and others) is the SDB, a big list of symptoms and suggested remedies without any direct link to the individual packages that comprise SuSE Linux, I just can't imagine using SuSE for anything besides, say, a home machine on which I want to just install the whole ball o' wax and leave it alone until the next major distro version is released.

That policy doesn't work well when you want to tighten security by installing the minimum set of software that meets your needs, and then install additional packages as needed in the future.

Remember, a Linux distribution like SuSE, Mandrake, Red Hat, or Debian, is a bunch of individual packages that are individually maintained and can be individually installed or removed. This idea is foreign to many people because Windows isn't done that way. It's good, though, because it allows you a great deal of freedom in just how lean or full-featured your installation will be. With a good package management system, package installation, upgrade, and removal are no-brainers.

Since all these pieces are individually maintained, it makes sense that you'd track information for each of them individually. All the Free Software you could possibly need in order to do so efficiently is out there for the taking. I don't know how Red Hat or Mandrake or others do so, but for Debian, you can go see an example of it at:

<http://packages.debian.org/stable/net/ntp>

<http://bugs.debian.org/cgi-bin/pkgreport.cgi?pkg=ntp>

I'm not trying to start a holy war, here, but that's just a really good example of someone else is doing, and what SuSE might do someday.

I might still recommend SuSE to home users moving to Linux from Windows, but the culture surrounding it is just not right for serious business use. Instead of actively seeking descriptions of problems so that improvements can be made, everybody takes it personally and gets defensive or points to a short-sighted workaround as if it were an adequate solution.

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Maybe SLES is better suited for business use, but it's not likely that my client and I are never going to find out, since SuSE is all but chasing us away. (This is where that loss of potential revenue comes into play.)

> *Just my 2 cents but I wish SuSE had a web bbs forum instead of  
> or in addition to a mailing list.*

First: go see if Gmane comes close to meeting your needs. It's a mailing-list-to-newsgroup bridge with a good Web interface. The SuSE lists are archived there. <<http://news.gmane.org/>>

And now my 20 cents: anything that goes in a Web-based forum would usually be better off in a newsgroup. I am absolutely positive that if more people were comfortable with NNTP software (news readers like Agent, Pan, etc.) and used serious MUAs (mail user agents; e-mail client software) that showed message threads properly (or at all), we wouldn't have to go dig through a gazillion different BBSs/forums on a gazillion different Web sites, with at least five or ten different interfaces, to find the information we need these days.

When you start dealing with lots of volume, it's just not practical to go browse a bunch of Web sites if your alternative is one standard interface to information/discussions/groups/whatever that is pushed to you or to which you have subscribed.

My standard grumble about Web forums is that for C or C++ or Perl, nearly anything I could want to know has been discussed on Usenet, and I can search or browse all of it from one place. When it comes to Java, I have to start digging through forums. Sun's forums. JGuru's forums. And on and on and on and on. Worse, if one of the hosts of these forums ever decides to withdraw it, it's gone. Usenet archives will never disappear because they are mirrored everywhere. Smiley face icons and nonstop ``bump" or ``k+ to ya" messages just clutter things. </rant>

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Phil Mocek

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Also check the archives at <http://lists.suse.com>  
Please read the FAQs: [suse-linux-e-faq@suse.com](mailto:suse-linux-e-faq@suse.com)