

Re: [SLE] How to answer questions was Re: [SLE] Watching DVD on SuSE 10

Source: <http://linux.derkeiler.com/Mailing-Lists/SuSE/2005-10/1946.html>

From: Sid Boyce (sboyce_at_blueyonder.co.uk)

Date: 10/17/05

Date: Mon, 17 Oct 2005 14:25:41 +0100

To: suse-linux-e@suse.com

R Goodwin wrote:

> *On Sun, 2005-10-16 at 14:07 -0400, Andy Choens wrote:*

>>>

>>> *It's not only a matter of money rather than licensing and restrictions
>>> on both sides. For example, for software to be GPL compliant it may
>>> not contain proprietary closed source and vice versa. Redistribution
>>> would then be either prohibited or the closed source must be opened.
>>> You see the problem? It's some kind of deadlock and it's not going to
>>> change soon; sadly, it's getting worse.*

>>>

>>> *\Steve*

>>>

>>>

>> *Before I begin my reply I want to apologize to Steve for emailing him
>> directly. Wrong button on gmail. Sorry!*

>>

>> *This is one of the most important problems facing "Desktop Linux" today.
>> When we (the people on this list) go out and buy/download SUSE/etc. and it
>> doesn't play DVD's, we are capable of following the directions here and
>> installing what is needed. People on these lists know you are supposed to
>> read the archives, and probably have the archives on their hard drive/gmail
>> account for easy searching. But, if my Dad were to download SUSE and then
>> get told (as happened on this thread) to stop complaining, etc. about the
>> lack to DVD capability, win32 codecs, etc. he would throw SUSE out the
>> window and be back on Windows before you could blink. His feelings wouldn't
>> be hurt...since he cares less about your opinions than you suppose, but he
>> does want to be able to FULLY use his computer.*

>>

>> *I believe it is time for groups like OSDL, Novell, Red Hat, etc. to start
>> really working towards a solution for multimedia on Linux. Otherwise, yes,
>> on the modern internet you are running crippleware. It's even more
>> frustrating on 64-bit Linux, but that's another story. Everyone who has said
>> that the problem is a legal one and not a technical problem are of course
>> 100% correct. Thus, someone needs to step forward and take responsibility
>> for fixing that legal hurdle. This is not a minor hurdle. I don't know very*

>> *many non-geeks who would put up with having to jerry-rig their computers to
>> lay a DVD. True, Windows doesn't come with this capability, but when someone
>> buys a computer, the computer DOES come with this capability, which is
>> interpreted as Windows coming with the capability. Truth is often less
>> important than perception in the minds of the decision maker.*

>>

>> *I think it is VERY important that people on lists like this NOT attack
>> someone who asks this type of question. They should in fact be helped. If
>> they didn't know to read the archives or already know the answer to that
>> question, they wouldn't have asked it. If these types of questions annoy
>> you, I have a suggestion. Don't answer them, let someone else who is in a
>> better mood.*

>>

>> *Sincerely,*

>> *--andy*

>

> *You are absolutely correct.*

>

> *It would be a great help if everybody who writes an answer would read
> what they wrote from a newbie perspective before sending it. If it is
> offensive then don't send it. People who can't answer from a
> non-technical newbie perspective may not be the right people to help
> out. This says nothing about one's technical abilities. Not answering
> every question you can is not a bad thing. Sometimes others can
> articulate a solution better ... THAT is a good thing. THAT is the
> helpful thing.*

>

> *There is a famous "paper" providing guidelines as to how to ask a
> question (<http://www.catb.org/~esr/faqs/smart-questions.html>). The fact
> that it is like 40+ printed pages says to me it is no longer oriented
> towards the non-technical people we wish to have in our community.*

>

> *I am collating thoughts on a counter paper on how to ANSWER questions.
> If you have constructive inputs, please, drop me a line off the list. I
> will post what I write when it is ready.*

>

> *Rich*

>

I can only concur absolutely. At times the poster apparently doesn't know how to frame the question, at other times no thought is given to how a would-be helper would view the request and glean any useful information from it, e.g "No audio after installing SuSE, anyone knows how to fix this?" displays either a total lack of Linux knowledge or a lack of forethought in providing information that is relevant.

The helpful thing to do is to request specific information that the poster can supply, commands needed to gather that information, etc., though I've come across instances where that information isn't forthcoming in the followup, just another set of useless stuff and another question, almost as though you should understand the problem if you knew anything – as it must be a commonly experienced problem with a

known fixed solution.

On the helper's side, I've at times been lost figuring out what I've been asked to do as there was no how-to-do-it. From my many years in Tech Support on a broad range of kit and dealing with knowledgeable people who supply the maximum amount of information, I read every request for help as one that implies "What do I type in?" or with complex hardware, specific locations, test points and all that is relevant. That way everyone stays cool and a problem gets resolved to everyone's satisfaction. Very occasionally you need to shout to be heard as I now indicate.

At Amdahl, at one stage we hired guys straight out of college. The guy calls support reporting that he had a mainframe channel throwing up errors, so the support guy immediately responded by saying "I suppose for a start it could be a bent pin, a bad terminator or bad cable" only to be abruptly interrupted and accosted by "I don't care what you suppose, I want you to tell me what to change". When my colleague told me about this, I told him that my response would have been, "I'd like to change you for a start" and that if I got any further nonsense from this total wanker, I would have asked for his Duty Manager's phone number.

Regards

Sid.

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Sid Boyce ... Hamradio License G3VBV, licensed Private Pilot
Retired IBM/Amdahl Mainframes and Sun/Fujitsu Servers Tech Support
Specialist
Microsoft Windows Free Zone - Linux used for all Computing Tasks

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Please read the FAQs: suse-linux-e-faq@suse.com