

# Novell approves 'Windows cheaper than Linux' statement

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- *From:* "Philip" <[home.home1@xxxxxxxxxx](mailto:home.home1@xxxxxxxxxx)>
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Novell has issued a joint press release with Microsoft, in which HSBC, a customer of joint technology from the two companies, claims that Windows has a lower total cost of ownership than Linux.

The press release, issued late on Wednesday, announced that UK-based bank HSBC has agreed to adopt technology from Novell and Microsoft's recently announced partnership.

In the release, Matthew O'Neill, group head of distributed systems for HSBC Global IT operations, states that the bank's existing Linux environment is more expensive to maintain than its Windows environment. "Some will be surprised to learn that our Windows environment has a lower total cost of ownership than our current Linux environment."

HSBC claims it will achieve cost savings by reducing the number of Linux distributions it uses and by improving the interoperability of its open-source operating system deployments with Windows. "Our decision to simplify our mixed-source environment with Microsoft and Novell will allow us to reduce the cost and complexity," said O'Neill.

Although it is unclear at this time which Linux distributions the bank is using, the fact Novell is associated with a statement that claims Linux has a higher total cost of ownership than Windows will surprise and anger many in the open-source community.

Previously, Novell has been a vociferous proponent of the cost savings offered by open-source software. Speaking at BrainShare, the company's annual user conference in Barcelona in 2004, Novell chief Jack Messman claimed that Microsoft's exhaustive licence fees for Windows have prevented end-user organisations and independent software developers from directing cash into more "innovative" software.

"I am of the opinion that innovation has been slowed because of Microsoft. It has sucked \$60bn out of our industry that could have been used for innovation," Messman said. "My vision is that companies won't have to spend so much on operating systems which have been commoditised and spend more on innovation."

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But after a long and bloody tussle with Microsoft over patents that both parties held on each other's software, Novell announced in November last year that it was laying aside its past differences with the Redmond company and launching a partnership.

The companies said that they will collaborate on development of specific technologies, for example to help Windows work with Novell's Suse Linux. The companies will create a joint research facility at which they will build and test new products, and work with customers and the open-source community.

The research will include Novell offering a version of Suse Linux Enterprise Server with optimised virtualisation features for Windows Server Longhorn, expected to launch later this year.

Novell's Microsoft-friendly makeover was marked by the dismissal of its chief executive Jack Messman, who was let go in June last year. However, his replacement, Ron Hovsepian, has not completely resisted the odd dig at Microsoft.

Speaking at a press conference in Sydney recently, Hovsepian said he was pleased by the slow uptake of Microsoft's desktop operating system Vista. "We're excited by the muted reaction to Vista," he said. "We're going to attack [Microsoft] vigorously and go after their footprint as much as we can," Hovsepian said.

Vista was five years in the making, so the code behind it is very complex according to Hovsepian, whereas open source is more nimble and flexible. "And we have got to take advantage of that."

The HSBC announcement will see the bank, which has 9,500 offices and 284,000 employees in 76 countries, sign up to a three-year support subscription to Suse Linux Enterprise Server from Novell.

Despite the marked differences in approach between open-source supporters and proprietary companies such as Microsoft, HSBC's blended approach to using the software is not uncommon. Speaking at a conference last year, Phil Dawson, Gartner research vice president, said that the analyst group was increasingly receiving feedback from its clients showing that there is a real growth in companies that want to run open-source software stacks on top of Windows, or proprietary software on top of Linux.

"The traditional approach has been an all-commercial Windows stack or a full open-source, Linux-based stack, but these are two extremes of the pendulum. The real growth is in the middle ground," Dawson said.

<http://news.zdnet.co.uk/software/0,1000000121,39286295,00.htm>

Hahaha!

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