

Re: Newbie wants it all and wants it now!

Source: <http://linux.derkeiler.com/Newsgroups/alt.os.linux/2004-09/1266.html>

From: Clive Dove (*chdove_at_rogers.com*)

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Q852913745 wrote:

>>You may find yourself some day with a damaged system in which the
>>basic console and the vi editor are the only tools you have available
>>to fix the system.
>
> I 'personally' have always opted for regular backups and if/when a
> problem arises I just perform a fresh re-install of windows.
> (Although, installing Mandrake did destroy ALL of my windows backups!)
>
>>Also, using the command line is actually easier and gives a better
>>command over the system once you have gotten used to using it.
>
> I have looked through a few books on using linux commands and it does
> 'seem' like a rather large subject, and surely if not used regularly
> you (I) will forget
> many of the command combinations.
>
> I will try to 'appreciate' some of the basic commands, maybe 'why' I
> need them, will become clearer as time goes on.

If you have done the default install in Mandrake and allowed Mandrake's installer to choose the partitioning scheme, the /home sub-tree will have been put into one partition and the rest of the tree (mounted as "/") will have been put into another and a small third partition formatted as "swap" and not mounted into the tree. The / partition can be totally re-formatted and re-installed without having to format the /home partition and following the install the user accounts in the /home tree will simply access the re-installed root tree (no register to complicate things).

The /home tree consists entirely of the user accounts. The Mandrake installer makes it the larger of the two because it contains all the profiles, preferences, bookmarks and workproduct of all the users and is therefor the part of the tree most likely to grow. What I do is to back up the /home tree on a regular basis to cd disks. I do the back-ups with a crom burner running as root user because each user has his own permissions for his part of the tree and only the root user can

access all of them without having the passwords for the other users.

The mandrake installer will have mounted the windows partition (C: D: etc into the tree under sub-tree /mnt. the linux system can read a ntfs partition but not write to it (yet) and can read and write a vfat (fat32) partition, so I have set up a small vfat partition to act as a file exchange between the linux partitions and the windows ntfs partitions.

Configuring a linux system is really a process of editing standard ascii files, most of whom are in the /etc sub-tree. This means learning how to use a standard ascii editor. The kwrite and kedit editors are two of a host of editors that will be familiar to people migrating from windows. The vi editor is less intuitive for a windows user but geeks still keep familiar with it as it is the only editor that is standard in all unix/linux systems including very limited systems such as those found on rescue floppy disks.

There are a lot of commands available but you don't have to learn them all at once. I certainly don't know them all. Most commands have a manual page that you can refer to by use of the "man" command. For example, to see the use of the ls command which is used in linux instead of the "dir" command that you most likely use in windows, enter this command at a root prompt:

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man ls
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Of course, the man pages are meant for people who are used to the linux conventions and so their authors do not go to the trouble of writing them for the benefit of newbies. However, you will quickly become familiar with the conventions used.

Linux users, like windows users, can stick to gui applications and never stray off the desktop and for most non-techie users that is quite adequate. Those users will get the same benefits from linux as they would from windows, but if you really want to have full use of any system you have to be able to depart from the desktop and learn how to work at lower levels. This also applies to windows.

Even in windows which I venture into rarely (usually to clean out malicious code that accumulates while my son is using the system) I have a desktop icon for a terminal window in each user account and in the "administrator" account desktop so that I can work from a command prompt.

Clive

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