

Re: Making Linux Easy for Newbies

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- *From:* mike <spamme9@xxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Sun, 07 Jan 2007 07:27:10 GMT
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kurt wrote:

Christopher Hunter wrote:

kurt wrote:

Regardless of what the other posters have said, software OTHER than what's included in a distribution is USUALLY more difficult to install. As a recent convert, I still have some difficulty getting programs to work. And then there's the dependencies to deal with.

Either you can't (or won't) /read/ /the/ /instructions/ for the package manager for your distro. Modern methods like /synaptic,/ /apt,/ or /rpm/ handle dependencies automatically for you. There are invariably programs packaged for /your/ distro available on the 'net – just find the right repositories. If there's some obscure program that isn't packaged suitably for your distro, email the software developer and request an appropriate .deb or a .rpm – if the original developer doesn't do it, he'll pass you along to someone who can. However, it's rare to find something /so/ obscure that it's unavailable for your distro.

C.

Not defending anything. Not even saying installing software on a Linux Distro is hard. Your reply, however, makes my point. I've never had to read installation instructions for Windows software. Never had to type a single command line command to install it. Never had to contact anyone for a package. I'm not saying it's better, worse or in between. The point is, Windows software IS easier to install. My granny can do it. Linux software is easy

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sometimes, sometimes not. Sometimes there's a package. Sometimes it installs and runs problem-free. Plenty of times not. Flash player for Firefox is a perfect example. Sure, there's a script – that must be launched from a shell. Then you have to tell it where to put the files. OK, it's not that tough (even I figured it out!). But with Windows, you click "Install" and a few seconds later the animated Flash screen is playing a movie telling you that you're all set for Flash web sites. Don't get me wrong, I'm loving my learning experience into Linux. I use it primarily for network monitoring applications (The Linux applications in this area are MUCH better than Windows stuff – and once again, the commercial Windows packages are ridiculously expensive). But you'll not convince anyone that installing software is easier than on Windows.

...kurt

Kurt,

Your input to this forum is refreshing.

You've shown admirable restraint in the areas of
name calling
windows bashing
obfuscation
misdirection.

Thanks for the refreshing and stable commentary.

My experience has been much as you describe.

I may be stupid, but I'm not dumb.

20 years ago I managed the hardware development for a UNIX workstation.

I switched to Word Perfect because it was easier to use than NROFF.

I could afford a PC. I could not afford a UNIX workstation.

In the past, the cost of M\$ software was a non-issue.

I buy used computers that come with a running OS.

If I need software, there's plenty of windows freeware out there.

If you're willing to stay

a few years behind the state of the market, even the real M\$

stuff is free. Who really needs an office suite more advanced than a 25-cent garage sale copy of Office 97. The only reason I could see to migrate from Win95 was lack of support for new hardware and software...and it crashed a lot.

My point is that there's absolutely no advantage learning

Open-Office when you can get MSOffice97 for 25-cents.

But the landscape appears to be changing rapidly.

M\$ already owns my desktop.

With Vista, it appears that M\$ has manipulated "Hollywood" into giving them dominion over my hardware.

Then they (M\$) will control the distribution channel.

By the time Hollywood figures out that M\$ is dictating the price of their content, it'll be too late.

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And if you can't circumvent the hardware encryption without violating DMCA, how will future linux distributions have any hardware to run on?

Windows is not perfect. Most of my problems and lost hours have been a direct result of M\$'s anti-piracy attempts. They make it difficult to control my own damn machine. I want out!!! I will say that I have NEVER had loss of data due to a virus. I have had loss of data due to M\$.

So, over the past few years, I've made repeated attempts to ditch M\$ for linux. I have plug-in hard drives, so I can experiment all I want. I've downloaded and installed many versions of several distributions.

NONE OF THEM WORK!!

Now that I've got your attention, I mean none of them give me the simple basic functionality I want right out of the box.

Hardware detection has been miserable. I don't give a damn if it's 95% perfect if it doesn't detect MY hardware. And I'm not trying to stress the system. I'm deliberately trying to use middle of the road hardware that some, but not all distro's support. I've even downgraded my hardware in an attempt to be linux compliant.

About half of the distributions found and enabled my sound card. Most of the distributions found my wired network card. About half would let me configure a Wavelan (orinoco) wireless card. Wireless results for other cards were near zero. Many of the distributions put my display into a readable mode. NONE of the distributions did EVERYTHING on ANY of the 5 network computers I'll be converting. Since the results were different on each of the five, I don't expect to get a single distribution to work across the bunch.

With Windows, If hardware doesn't work, I go to the vendor website, click here to download. Click here to install and I'm in business. If linux works like that, I'd like to read the tutorial.

Let's talk about the software.

All of the distributions that recognized my sound card gave me a music player. Great, let's play an mp3. One distro worked just fine. The others gave me some cryptic error message. After a few ours of googling, I discovered that the error means "codec not installed". If you're a linux guru, it's no big deal. If you're my grandma, it's GAME OVER. You can talk all day about licensing issues and why they can't install the codec. I don't care. I wanna play a mp3 and I can't. One distro

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figgered out how to do it. If you can't put it in the distro, at least automate the process to get it.

IF YOU CAN'T PLAY AN MP3 OUT OF THE BOX, YOU DON'T MAKE THE FIRST CUT.

I'll tinker with making the usb accessory work, but I wanna listen to music and have access to the web while I do it.

You have to integrate seamlessly into a windows network.

A couple of distributions came right up with my windows networked drives available right there on the screen. I could move files back and forth with no difficulty.

Most came up disconnected. My ability to configure a working network varied considerably. Linneighborhood, samba, lisa??? Ive got to get this new software somewhere. If I can't talk to my other machine, I'm stuck. At the time I was on dialup and downloading a big file was out of the question.

And what about local windows partitions? Some distributions automount them.

For those that don't, all you gotta do is drop into a shell, create a mount point, mount the drive and voila, you're in business. Remember my grandma? GAME OVER!!

Linux needs to have ONE WINDOW MANAGER. It should be installed by default.

The major differences between window managers appears to be the applications they bundle. Put up ONE window manager with ONE browser with ONE desktop manager. SURE, you let me change it later, but we ALL start out in the same place.

Linux needs one hardware manager GUI. Five different tools for each of a dozen distributions means that there's no hope of managing a network of several machines with disparate hardware.

Windows Device Manager may not be able to fix my problem, but at least I know how to access the tool across virtually all Windows platforms. modconf, modprobe, linuxconf, linuxconfig, drakeconfig, sndconfig, usr/lib/X11_R6/conf/X11config.....I can't deal with all that. Yes, virtually all the distros have a gui configuration panel. Too bad it can't install my sound card, or enable scrolling functions of my touchpad.

And fix the directory structure. The common hardware gui would go a long way.

But absent that, the existing directory is problematic.

I want to manage my display. Suppose I am smart enough to figure out what to edit in the configuration file. Now, where the heck is the file?

usr/lib/x11/x11_r3/conf/...or config or Config or X11 or X11.Conf or X11.config or ...or....

or maybe it's in /knoppix/usr/lib/X11

or maybe it's a symbolic link somewhere else. And it's likely in a different place on a different distributioin.

Put similar stuff in the same place.

By now, it's clear that I don't have a clue.

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If you want linux to flourish, you need to cater to the clueless.
I'd be glad to RTFM if I could understand the FM. NEWBIES DON'T
UNDERSTAND THE FM!!

The major problems with linux are not technical, they're political.
I'm amazed at the technical accomplishments of the linux developers.
BUT
Some SINGLE organization needs to take over management of the Linux project.
They need to set standards so that all the pieces come together seamlessly
across distributions.

But you're asking yourself, "If we did that, what would be the advantage
of having a zillion different distributions?"

And if you're asking that question, you got the point of this tirade.
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I'm educated. I've been working with computers since 1968. I have
infinite free time. I'm motivated to dump M\$. My minimum requirements
are few, play an mp3, access local windows partitions,
access windows drives on local networked machines surf the web.

Every six months or so, I download a bunch of new distributions and have
a go at it. It's getting better, but still not worth the hassle to change.
"Grub error 21???" I though I was just getting to the point
I could run lilo."

I recently purchased my first Macintosh.
While I waited for the arrival of the MacOS disks, I tried installing
several variants of linux for PPC. Problems similar to linux for PC.
Hardware detection issues, mp3 codecs, different software repositories
for different distributions. I did get it sorta running.

When the OS X disks arrived, I stuck them in the drive and pressed go.

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It came up running.

The environment was foreign, the descriptive terms different. It was a real hassle to figure out how to configure it, but at no time did my confidence level reach the point where I wanted to give up. FWIW, I found no advantages and lots of disadvantages relative to Win2K.

My problem as a linux newbie is that I often reach the point where I want to give up. I'm stubborn and I always proceed well beyond that point. But I eventually throw up my hands. With a little overall linux organization and consistency, it wouldn't have to be that way.

To be fair, I'll admit that a few years back, I did actually build a working Debian system. Had to carefully select the hardware. Took me weeks to get it running the way I wanted. And it had zero advantage and lots of disadvantages relative to windows 2000. It's interesting... or sad... that most of what I learned configuring that system doesn't help me install other distributions.

Windows is a business intent on world domination. They cater to the newbie in two ways:

- 1) They don't give him a choice and
- 2) they force developers to use features not available in older versions (they don't give developers a choice).

They have enough consistency that it is possible for a mortal to describe his problem to a helper and understand the answer. Having drivers available for every piece of hardware on the planet doesn't hurt.

It really is about choice...and choice is what's holding linux back.

Linux is more like religion. Many factions each believing in a similar diety, but convinced that their particular variant is the only road to salvation. They take pot shots at one another while the devil just keeps on truckin'.

Some fraction of you are saying, "shut up and download a live CD." The notion of a live CD is great. If it came up, accessed my network, surfed the web and played mp3, I'd be a happy camper.

If I have to configure the sound card, find a wireless driver, download an mp3 codec every time I boot, it's not gonna be much help. The Puppy multiboot variant is exciting except that most of my CD drives can't figure out how to boot a multisession bootable CD. It's always something...

And the rest of you are saying "just STF up!"

So I will,
mike

.