

Re: Trying to install Linux on a Win XP machine

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----- Original Message -----

From: "Aragorn" <stryder@telenet.invalid>

Newsgroups: comp.os.linux.misc

Sent: Saturday, September 17, 2005 11:12 PM

Subject: Re: Trying to install Linux on a Win XP machine

>> *I have 80 GB of hard drive space, and, knowing I have a 13-CD (!) set
>> of recovery discs for Windows, have set out to try to run a dual boot
>> with Linux.*

>

> *Ehm... I'm not sure what you mean by "recovery disks", but I presume you
> mean back-ups?*

Sort of. There is a series of 13 recovery disks that will re-install windows and all the included applications if something goes wrong. I have had to use it twice.

>

>> *I first turned to Hewlett-Packard online support, where the
>> representative suggested that I remove the "recovery partition (a
>> small secondary partition that is the first option to recover from
>> lost or corrupt files for Windows or included applications)," and
>> install my secondary operating system on that.*

>

> *Okay, that makes sense.*

>

>> *That I did, up until the last part. During the Slackware install, I
>> was unable to make any changes with fdisk or cfdisk. The problems I
>> got were along these lines:*

>>

>> *- One program could not get a grip on the filesystem or partition
>> table, and simply could not recognize *any* of the partitions on the
>> hard drive, much less write new ones, and may have said something like
>> unable to find DOS or superblock or Sun or other partitions.*

>

> *Well, you have not given us any specs on your hardware, other than that
> it's an HP machine.*

HP Pavillion a1050y series. There is a new computer listed on HP's site

under that series that I do not have, but might be helpful due to its similarity with mine:

http://www.shopping.hp.com/webapp/shopping/generic_subcategory.do?storeName=computer_store&subcat1=rts&ca

>

> *What kind of hard disk are we talking about here? SCSI, PATA, SATA?*

> *Brand?*

SATA I believe, 7200 RPM, 80 gigs. Not clear on the brand.

>

>> *– The other one simply said I did not have permission to write to the*

>> *partition table, though it may have recognized some of the Windows*

>> *data on the hard drive.*

>

> *Are you sure you had root privileges?*

Yes.

> *Does the BIOS of the machine have*

> *an option to prevent write access to the master boot record?*

>

I don't know. I don't think it does, my partition magic program was able to take the boot stuff and handle it fine. I don't think this area is where the problem lies anyway.

>> *After some frustration with this, I was able to get my hands on a copy*

>> *of a Partition Magic-like program, "Partition Commander." That*

>> *program took the MBR, which was not a problem. I tried to use the*

>> *'install new operating system' option which even had a picture of Tux*

>> *the penguin for its icon, but gave me some non-descript error on that*

>> *line. However, I was able to resize the Windows partitions to have*

>> *them take up about half of the 80 gigs on the drive instead of all of*

>> *it.*

>

> *Hmm... I'm not a fan of those partitioning programs for Windows. They*

> *can leave you with badly screwed up partition tables or overlapping*

> *partition boundaries, etc.*

Well I resized my windows partitions to 35 gigs and 5 gigs respectively, leaving about half the drive free for Linux partitions, which are in fact already there, but waiting to have software and instructions written to them. So the program did work, even if it wasn't adept at letting me install a secondary OS.

>

>> *Additionally, I was able to install a number of ext3 partitions and a*

>> *Linux Swap partition through this program, seemingly so I could move*

>> *ahead with my Linux install. However, to my dismay, neither of the*

>> *installations was able to recognize the Linux partitions (if one of*

>> *the two, (c)fdisk even recognized the Windows partitions), and at
>> fdisk was still unable to recognize any partitions or even a valid
>> partitioning scheme on the drive. Therefore, I could not move forward
>> with my Linux install.*
>
> *You mentioned /fdisk/ and /cfdisk./ Have you tried /*sfdisk?*/*
>

Just tried it. No luck. Basically fdisk says there is no DOS or any other readable filesystem or partition table, and only sees the 680 or so free megs left on the drive. It also gives the warning that I will not be able to write to it.

>> *I am somewhat ignorant about the low-level mechanics of hard drives,
>> so I'd be pleased if you'd excuse me for that, but I figured having
>> partition-commander taking up the MBR, and/or whatever else is at the
>> very beginning of the drive, it might affect my chances of success w/
>> installing Linux positively. However, I had no such luck.*
>
> *Have you contacted the HP Customer Service again about this issue? This
> is certainly not acceptable behavior.*

I can't even pin down where the problem is, much less point the finger at one party or another.

>> *I have used linux for 6-7 years now, at least two years of which I was
>> running a dual boot, and this is the first time I have run into
>> something like this. It seems that Microsoft and/or HP have
>> intentionally made it difficult to install secondary Operating Systems
>> on the drive.*
>
> *Microsoft, possibly, yes. HP, I don't think so, since they support
> Gnu/Linux.*

What is the extent of their support for Linux? I do not know. I know they would give me advice to resize or remove the windows partitions, but as far as that, and the software warranty, I get the idea that after that, you're on your own.

>
>> *I can't imagine they could make a proprietary hard drive, but indeed
>> the sticker on the front of the machine (besides the Intel Inside one,
>> (but that's another story :)) says "designed for Microsoft Windows
>> XP."*
>
> *Yes, but that's not an indication that you can't use the machine with
> anything other than Windows XP. That's just a show-off sticker for
> marketing purposes.*
>
> *My second-hand Toshiba laptop also has such a sticker. I couldn't for
> the life of me get it off of the plastic - they probably use some*

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> *industrial glue for those – but at least it's so worn from the friction*
> *of my hands that you can't even tell what was on anymore.*
>
> *That laptop is running Gnu/Linux, by the way... ;–)*

Lol.

>
>> *Could it be that there is installed on the hard drive, in the first*
>> *areas, some kind of information or partitioning scheme that neither*
>> *Linux nor Partition–Commander could completely understand?*
>
> *Possible? Hmm... Probably, I guess. Likely? No, I don't think so.*

I cannot come up with any other explanation than this or that Microsoft did directly or indirectly make it very difficult for this hard drive to run anything but what it was intended for. How, I do not know.

>
> *I can't really give you any concrete diagnosis at this stage, other than*
> *that there may be a BIOS–engaged MBR protection in place. I recommend*
> *that you contact the HP Customer Service again and hear what they say.*
>
> *P.S. : You do remember to check the /md5sums/ on the distribution's*
> */.iso/ files you download against those on their mirror, don't you?*

Nope. But I installed the former version of slack on my computer numerous times with no problem. Only now have these problems come to be.

>
> *Not that I think that a corrupted set of Slack CD's is responsible for*
> *your current woes, but it's always best to be on the safe side. ;–)*
>
> --
> *With kind regards,*
>
> **Aragorn**
> *(Registered Gnu/Linux user #223157)*

Yah, thanks for your assistance Aragorn, nice to speak with you.