

Re: Which Distro?

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From: Moe Trin (*ibuprofin_at_painkiller.example.tld*)

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In the Usenet newsgroup comp.os.linux, in article
<kMMwe.2399\$RC6.276@newssvr33.news.prodigy.com>, DarbyCrash wrote:

> *Moe Trin wrote:*

>> *DarbyCrash wrote:*

>>> *Slack is fun and great for learning but managing software manually
>>> can be a real nuisance on servers, especially when you have to
>>> administer multiple servers.*

>> *Yes, that's why there is*

[snip list of Slack package tools]

> *I know. The problem is having to update each package individually.*

Well, that's also true of rpm in it's basic guise – and the way we got around that was wild cards. We'd download the errata to a quarantine server, and after auditing, transfer it to a local file server in an `./updates_for_tonight` directory. On all of the systems, there was a cron job that ran sometime between 7PM and 7AM the following day that used rpm in the ftp mode, (`rpm -F ftp://@hostname/path/to/updates_for_tonight/*.rpm`) and let rpm sort things out. Much less painful. It's in the man page.

For Slackware, we used a cron job to transfer the packages from the updates file server to the hosts, and a script which contained the appropriate `upgradepkg` commands. Not as pretty, but it did work.

>> *Do I detect a hint of favoritism? TASTES GREAT!!!*

>

> *There was a reason I started deploying the Debian servers. The Debian
> package system.*

No, no, no. You're supposed to reply "LESS FILLING!!!" ;-)

Actually, I'm well aware of the benefits of the Debian package system, as was Conectiva (a Brazilian clone of Red Hat) who adopted it to rpm based systems. If you are interested, have a look at Peachtree Linux

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which claims to have borrowed the best of both the Debian and RPM worlds.

*>It was a large datacenter and because of the time it took to log into
>each server individually and manually update software, updates weren't
>getting done as fast as they should have been.*

That is often a manglment decision that it's not worth the time to create automated systems such as the cron jobs mentioned above. I suppose if we were to implement it from scratch today, it would take a man-week or so, just to create the scripts, and get them installed on the various hosts – and I know whence you come – I'm living with about 1800 systems here using several breeds of Linux as well as some FreeBSD and a small number of branded Unix.

*>With Debian we could just run a cron job that checked for updates and
>installed one if it was available.*

We audit first – and may throw it onto test servers first if we have the least qualms.

*>It just freed up our time for more important things. If it was only a
>few servers it never would have been an issue, but we had about 60 *NIX
>web servers to manage, in addition to internal projects.*

Well, if you didn't waste time drinking coffee, eating, sleeping and whatnot, you would have time for these Important Tasks(tm). Just ask management.

*>There's alot of good distros out, its just a matter of personal
>preference.*

Exactly.

*>If you were running potato, I used to just run woody (this was almost 5
>years ago). Debian really does drag on getting what they consider to be
>stable releases out.*

When you consider that there were just six releases between 'Buzz' (1.1 released June 1996) and Sarge (3.0 released earlier this month), yeah you could say that. The "popular" releases like Mandrake/Mandriva, Red Hat/Fedora, Slackware and SuSE are closer to a release every six months, which is to say about 17 releases in the same time.

*>There's isnt much to knowing the others. Linux is Linux, it's just a
>package system. What is there to know?*

Well, there's a little more to it, because each distribution knows better than the others (and the original application/program author), and tweak things into incompatibility. But the basics remain.

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>*When your in a busy datacenter with people paging you, calling
>you and pulling you aside all the time, time is your enemy.*

Start wearing (and using) a broad sword. ;-)

>*I wouldnt recommend TurboLinux to anyone.*

They still exist (which surprises me), and seem to be playing Version Number Wars – they apparently went from release 8.0 straight to release 10.0, but their errata page is *_very_* sparse. Not to my liking.

Old guy