

Drivers for Linux Adoption

There are several key drivers contributing to the adoption of Linux in the enterprise market: the search for cost savings, the pivotal role played by Intel, the need for flexibility, and improved functionality.

1. Cost Savings

The adoption of Linux has accelerated over the past five years as corporations look for flexible solutions that are both robust and cost effective. After enjoying significant cost savings using Linux for low-end applications such as file, print, Web, and mail servers - more and more enterprise administrators now have direct experience of how reliable this open source OS really is and they are keen to enjoy similar cost savings with mission-critical applications.

Linux has tended to be more stable than Windows, so there is less downtime. Additionally, the OS is less resource-intensive, leaving more computing power available for other functions. Linux is almost as reliable as UNIX, without the associated cost of the proprietary platform. This makes for a very compelling reason to evaluate Linux, even in the face of studies sponsored by Microsoft which show that its tools have a better TCO.

2. The Pivotal Role of Intel

A second key factor has helped Linux gain a foothold in the server market. Intel, historically very closely aligned with Microsoft, started optimizing for both Linux and Windows. Since Intel processors dominate the PC marketplace, this strategic shift made it possible for corporate buyers to acquire the hardware needed to run Linux at competitive prices.

Without this implicit support from Intel, it would be more complicated for server administrators to migrate from UNIX or Windows to Linux. A key barrier to change has been eliminated. Major companies now use Linux, including DaimlerChrysler, Merrill Lynch, and the E*Trade Group. As the performance of Intel chipsets continues to improve, Intel-based servers have become very competitive compared to RISC based servers. When combined with Linux, these

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new Intel servers drive down the cost of enterprise computing and offer a viable alternative to some legacy systems.

3. Need for Flexibility

A third key factor has encouraged IT managers to consider Linux as a serious alternative to Windows: Microsoft's licensing structure. In part, dissatisfaction with the cost and restrictions of Microsoft licensing have helped Linux grow at a rapid rate. Currently, a number of the brokerages on Wall Street use Linux. IT managers have become very responsive to the flexibility that Linux offers - a way to create a separation between hardware and the OS. Before enterprise administrators started to adopt Linux for non-critical server applications, legacy hardware and software typically came from a single vendor. A Hewlett-Packard, Sun, or IBM RISC-based server required customized software, and the decision to use an Intel server meant the purchase of either Windows or Unix. As an alternative, Linux can be used across all processing platforms and on the hardware offerings provided by all the major players in the server market. An enterprise administrator with Sun, HP, or IBM machines can now decide to move to Linux and then negotiate for the best price and performance package from hardware vendors.

4. Improved Functionality

A fourth factor has helped Linux to become more widely accepted in the enterprise. The open source community has shown a sustained commitment to Linux, and this dedication is yielding continuous functionality improvements. Already Linux can compete with UNIX for a number of applications and this gradual market creep is likely to continue.

Two Linux standards bodies worked hard to ensure that Linux would be a robust OS as it matures. The Free Standards Group and the Open Source Development Lab were both committed to the development of a universal basic Linux. In January of 2007, the organizations merged to create The Linux Foundation, whose goals are to protect Linux by sponsoring key developers and

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providing legal services, offering standardization services and acting as a neutral forum for collaboration and promotion of Linux.

The support of the major hardware manufacturers and software vendors has given this OS the credibility it needs to gain widespread acceptance. In the face of the SCO legal action against Linux users and vendors (which has decreased in its intensity as SCO's fortunes have faded, but threatens to be renewed), the backing of the major players in the industry has helped to ensure that the development of the Linux OS has continued at a fast pace.

Reference: *Lynn Greiner. (2009). Linux Enterprise Market Trends*

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