

# Linux is the product of Standards – Re: Linuxes are all proprietary.

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Jeff Relf <Usenet\_2\_@JeffRelf.Cotse.NET> wrote in message news:<\_Jeff\_Relf\_2004\_Sep\_18\_VWSy@Cotse.NET>...

> *Hi Rex Ballard,*

>

> *Re: Your claim that Microsoft's products reduce productivity*

> *because they are not what you call " standards ",*

Keep in mind that throughout the rest of the computer industry, standards are established by groups representing industry vendors, corporate consumers, and others who invest in long-term management of information. Most of these decision makers and representatives are thinking in terms of standards that will help them maintain access to legally mandated archives for 7, 10, 20, 30, even 100 years. I still have to keep a copy of Windows 95 on one of my hard drives so that I can access quicken files and turbotax files from 1992–1999. I also need it to access archives stored on Colorado Memory tape drives.

The key is that all of the factions must agree on common baseline technologies, and even when optional extensions are added, the core systems function independent of the extensions. Backward compatibility is critical as well.

We had standards bodies such as the IETF, ANSII, ISO, CITT, and IEEE which publish proposed standards, collect review and feedback, make sure that the standards are complete, and make sure that they can be implemented based exclusively on the recommendation. In many cases, these standards are used as guidelines such as the Federal Information Processing Standards (FIPS) and other standards used for purchasing.

The most critical part is that an established standard cannot be altered or obsoleted by some new enhancement. Even when new revisions of established standards are proposed, the review process assures that there are negotiation procedures to make sure that an HTTP 1.0 browser can read from an HTTP 1.1 host, and vice versa.

Microsoft calls it's "brute force" technology "de facto standards", but that term is actually fraudulently misleading. There are no processes which prevent Microsoft from making revisions which are not backward compatible, or implementeting systems that break forward compatibility. In fact, breaking backward/forward compatibility is a critical element of their revenue stream. If Windows 95 users using Office-95 could read all of the documents generated by Office 2003 (saved in "office 95 format") without losing critical formatting information (the "saved" version ends up looking completely terrible when viewed by the Windows 95/Office 95 software), then it's not really a standard.

Standards also assure interoperability between vendors, without loss of core functionality. If Word 6.0 was a true standard format, then I could view it with WordPerfect, Lotus WordPro, Applix Office, OpenOffice, StarOffice, or any version of word, and it would look exactly the same regardless of which application saved it, and which application was used to view it.

Consider your Web Browser. When industry standard HTML is used, you can't tell from the display on the browser whether it was generated using Netscape Communicator, FrontPage, Word using "Save As HTML", or using vi or emacs.

You can't tell which server is serving it either. When you look at the content using a text editor, you can see differences in style, but you could even strip out things like specified fonts, and still view the content in a useful format.

> *You wrote: <<*  
>  
> *...some of the biggest productivity " losses "*  
> *were the result of the fancy proprietary technology.*

I also pointed out how these proprietary technologies, lacking the benefits of public reviews for security, interoperability, completeness, and possibilities of "harvesting" information from one format to another, have resulted in productivity hits such as:

- Viruses
- Worms
- Trojans
- Back-door breach servers.
- Manual reentry of data.
- Manual reformatting of cut/paste data.
- Manual searching of large archives.
- Manually managed revision controls.
- Loss of work previously done (loss of "Good State" products).
- Loss of new work (due to reluctance to back-up).
- Loss of all work (due to ineffective backup resources).
- Loss of all functionalities (reimage of hard drive to recover).
- Loss of key functionalities (lost or nonexistent installation

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media/IDs).

Loss of critical data (because personal files are stored intermingled with application code in the same directory trees.

Loss of critical data – due to inability to back up open files.

Loss of archives – due to incompatibility with previous versions.

Manual transformation of archives – opening word documents in one version so they can be saved in the newer version.

Loss of systems – due to Manual configuration procedures via GUI.

Loss of systems – due to lack of fully functional scripting.

Loss of systems – due to lack of automated maintenance.

Extended development time – due to GUI-only development techniques.

Extended development time – due to lack of automated testing.

Extended development time – due to focus on GUI while ignoring business rules.

Extended development time – due to frequently changing APIs without warning.

Extended procurement related costs (not including actual purchase)

due to

lack of "test drive" capabilities.

Extended procurement related costs (due to wrong choice – switching).

Extended procurement costs (due to vendor "dog and pony shows").

Extended procurement costs (due to vendor incompatibilities).

Extended procurement costs (due to Microsoft's "revolutionary" changes).

Extended integration costs (due to vendor incompatibilities).

Extended integration costs (due to OS incompatibilities).

Extended Integration costs (due to API incompatibilities).

Extended Integration costs (due to API changes by Microsoft).

Extended Integration costs (due to API incompatibility between platforms).

Extended Integration costs (due to Version synchronization problems).

Is it any surprise that many of those who have COMPLETED Linux transitions have been reporting long-term savings as high as 80% (cut costs by 1/5th) over the long term?

> *Proprietary plug-ins and applications*

> ( *MS-Office Macroviruses, OLE transformation ( lack of it )*,

> *ActiveX controls ( Virus factory and worm garden )*,

> *and time-wasters ( Video Games on corporate PCs*,

> *Flash Macromedia pop-ups, general pop-ups*,

> *spyware, and SPAM )*. >>

> *You're a smart guy Rex, but you got this one ass-backwards.*

>

> *Why is Linux continually being forked ? !*

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Actually, Linux isn't really forked. The Linux distribution is based on the Linux kernel, which has very much AVOIDED forks. This means that there is a common baseline. Furthermore, there is a great deal of effort to maintain backward compatibility. Most applications written for a Linux 2.2 kernel will run on a Linux 2.4 kernel or even a 2.6 kernel. This means that less time is spent trying to re-port – look at the way Windows NT 4 server applications were expected to be reported to take advantage of Windows 2000 features, and Windows 2000 applications were supposed to be rewritten to use Windows 2003 functionality. Those who failed to do so found that their applications ran SLOWER on the newer platforms. Even SQL Server 7 ran slower on Windows 2000 than it did on NT 4. Microsoft even went to court to try and prevent that information from being made public – claiming that the benchmark violated the EULA agreement. The judge ruled against Microsoft, noting that Microsoft was trying to use the EULA to perpetrate fraud by preventing the publication of results they didn't contest. Microsoft knew that NT4 apps were slower on Windows 2000. They just didn't want that fact made public.

Many companies did have to commit extensive – and expensive – resources to reporting the same application to the same core platform, simply because Microsoft decided to "change the rules".

Linux DISTRIBUTIONS consist of numerous components. Many of which COMPETE with each other. For example, KDE vs GNOME. But at the same time, these components are required to COOPERATE with each other as well. All applications must comply with a number of established compatibility standards including the ICCCM, IETF standards, glibc standards, ANSII C standards (with consistent extensions available on all platforms), POSIX-1, POSIX-2, and POSIX-3, X11R6, and so on.

The advantage – to the consumer is that they can use the GNOME desktop with the Kommander browser. They can use GIMP on KDE, or they can use both on FVWM. This means that there is less need to alter underlying infrastructure and more resources can be focused on creating new functionality.

Also, because these are modular components, there is less dependency on a single massive package. I can use OpenOffice for word processing, or KOffice. Both will run equally well. I can publish a document using OpenOffice which will look good on OpenOffice, StarOffice, MS-Office, Lotus WordPro, WordPerfect, or KOffice – without manual modifications. If I publish a similar document using MS-Office 2000, the columns will be screwed up on WordPerfect, the watermark will try and turn the documents into postage stamps. On Lotus WordPro the columns will be completely ragged, the tables will be the wrong column widths, and the images can even end up on the wrong pages.

> *Can you say: "Linuxes are all proprietary"*

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Actually, they are not proprietary in the sense that there are nondisclosure agreements that prevent you from looking at code, publishing comparisons between products, or identifying potential problems. In fact, those who get Linux code are encouraged to review it for security risks, patent issues, copyright issues, or any other potential legal entanglements. They are encouraged to review it early and often, so that these issues can be managed as early as possible. Debian might opt to not distribute something because there is a patent issue. Red Hat and SuSE might work out a very reasonable royalty payment for copies sold commercially. Others might even remarket these core products – paying them a royalty to cover the range of intellectual property rights.

In many cases, companies like IBM, HP, and SUN even contribute their own intellectual property, waving patent rights on the basis that others will follow suit.

> *And that's even true when no money is involved.*

Actually, it's true when money is involved too. Look at how much UNIX HASN'T forked. I can quickly move from Linux to AIX to Solaris to HPUX to UnixWare to BSD and be fully productive in a matter of minutes. Not only can I quickly adjust to the minor differences between the systems, I can even "personalize" my environment so that I get a consistent interface regardless of which platform I'm working on (And I work on all of them). When I switch to Windows, I can spend hours getting a newly reimaged system to work the way I want it to work. When my laptop Windows box get reimaged, it can take 2–3 weeks to get it back to even the BASE functionality.

> *" Proprietary " can mean simply controlling a version,  
> even if no money changes hands.*

> *See Dictionary.COM, Proprietary: <<  
>  
> 3. ( Eccl. ) A monk who had  
> reserved goods and effects to himself,  
> notwithstanding his renunciation of all  
> at the time of profession. >>*

You went directly to the biblical definition and ignored the more relevant and common meanings of the word.

1. Of, relating to, or suggestive of a proprietor or to proprietors as a group: had proprietary rights; behaved with a proprietary air in his friend's house.
2. Exclusively owned; private: a proprietary hospital.
3. Owned by a private individual or corporation under a trademark or patent: a proprietary drug.

Put simply, when you claim that you own intellectual property, and that no one but you can control it, and that you can do anything you want to it (including deface or destroy it), then it's proprietary. Microsoft has even shown their willingness to destroy their own property. Look at how they tried to destroy Windows 3.1 in order to get everyone to switch to Windows 9x and NT.

Linux standards are more like national forests. The land is available to anyone for certain types of use, but this use is restricted, to prevent destruction of the resources and make it useless to others.

- > *You say Microsoft's products are not standards...*
- > *Hundreds of billions of dollars says you're wrong.*

Actually, hundreds of billions of dollars says I am RIGHT!

Think of the hundreds of billions of dollars spent to replace perfectly functional computers with new ones simply because Microsoft didn't want to support them any more. Think of the billions of dollars invested reengineering perfectly functional products simply because Microsoft decided they wanted to change their APIs. Think of the billions of dollars spent trying to fix preventable problems simply because there were now public reviews of the "standards" Microsoft just shoveled into Windows. There were now public reviews for security, reliability, performance, maintainability, or even interoperability. In fact, Microsoft very tightly restricts all such efforts to perform even the most superficial reviews – maintaining that any comparisons between Windows and anything else must be approved – in writing – by Microsoft.

When an independent lab does attempt to publish such comparisons, Microsoft has the authority to force them to perform their own carefully rigged comparisons, to exclude any references to the absurd assumptions made, and publish the results as prominently as the original article published by the same company. Microsoft then includes these comparisons in their "Fast Facts" (Fast with the Facts) web pages. In most cases, the lab is even required to remove all references to the prior report. Occasionally you can find references to the prior benchmark. The classic example was the Mindcraft benchmarks, which, when conducted in the industry standard way, showed Linux 2.2 to be about 20–50% faster than Windows NT4. Microsoft gave them a new benchmark, using carefully doctored test conditions, atypical configurations of Windows against "default" conditions for Linux, to show that Windows was 10–20% faster than Linux.

The funny thing is that Linux 2.4 was optimized to eliminate some of the bottlenecks discovered during this peculiar benchmark. The net result was that there have been no subsequent published benchmarks – since Microsoft has been unable to cook up anything like a standard benchmark to make a comparison that was favorable to Microsoft.

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> *Windows is the de facto standard.*

Yes. In 1960, segregation was the de-facto standard. Did that make it right?

The means used to maintain this segregation was illegal, and in 1963 laws were passed to eliminate some of these legal aids to segregation.

Was the fact that realtors wouldn't show homes to middle class blacks that were located in predominantly white neighborhoods – to keep black kids out of the middle-class white schools, right? Was telling a black doctor or lawyer who had overcome extraordinary obstacles to excel in his profession – that he had to limit his housing search to slums and neighborhoods saturated with drug dealers, pimps, prostitutes, and gangs – right?

Windows is the de facto standards because of contracts that have been consistently ruled to be illegal. They are the result if anticompetitive strategies that have been ruled to be illegal.

Microsoft has been under investigation for it's business practices since 1987, and probably before that. In 1987, as part of a settlement (which turned out to be worthless) the FTC voted 4–3 against prosecuting Microsoft for fraud and illegal marketing practices. In 1990, Microsoft was again under investigation and in 1993 it's per-processor licenses and bundling practices were ruled to be illegal. In 1999, a whole series of bundling practices were ruled to be violations of the Sherman Antitrust act. During the course of the case, including the testimony of Microsoft executives, numerous counts of fraud, extortion, blackmail, obstruction of justice, and collusion were recited in the courtroom. Unfortunately the scope of the case was limited to the Sherman Act violations.

Judge Jackson's decision was remanded – because he conducted an interview with a reporter while his clerks were revising his final rulings on the remedy. During that interview, he pointed out many of these criminal activities, and admitted that he was no longer interested in giving the Microsoft Executives the opportunity to further perjure themselves and flaunt their appearant immunity from the law, as they tried to justify criminal acts they freely admitted.

> *It is the network, irregardless of the connection employed.*

Actually, no. That Web browser is 98% \*nix. The web sites you visit – are 98% \*nix. The infrastructure between them – 98% \*nix. What Microsoft "added" and the "proprietary" elements – were the very features that made it possible to spread the worms and viruses and spam.

Ironically, if there had been a public review of all of these "innovations" introduced by Microsoft, they would have been indentified as nearly identical in principle to the holes that allowed the "Morris Worm" to collapse the Internet back in 1987. They might

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have been willing to accept the concept of certificates, but they might have insisted that certificates be regulated by the regulatory agencies that regulate communications. This would have made it a federal crime to apply for a certificate under false identity, it would have made disclosing a certificate to anyone without a search warrant a crime, and it would have forced certificate authorities to submit to audits and regulation similar to those imposed on telephone carriers.

If AT&T had declared – back when they were a Monopoly, that they were going to record and monitor any telephone number and make all of those recordings available to anyone willing to pay the price of admission, nearly everyone would have been screaming for the immediate disintegration of the telephone companies.

Ironically, this is exactly what Microsoft has done.

Since the Introduction of IE4, the first really "proprietary" version of their web browser, Microsoft has functioned as an unregulated communications carrier. They have the capability to examine any file, on any machine, and any part of the memory, on any machine. They have the capability to obtain any certificate issued to any recipient of certificates from nearly all of the certificate authorities (Verisign, Thawte, Equifax...), and they can provide that information to any one they please, for any purpose. They can provide this information to law enforcement agencies without a search warrant (functioning only as an "anonymous informant"). They can even access the computers of law enforcement agents, political officials, or anyone in their staff, and make that information available to their opponents. They even participate in regulated industries, maintaining a substantial share in companies that provide everything from real estate and banking to cable and satellite carriers and services. They directly control a number of television networks, and can easily influence the coverage of several others.

Watch what happens when Microsoft gets hit with something really nasty. Watch the MSNBC and MSN sites early the following day. There will almost always be a really good "scoop" to provide diversionary coverage.

Microsoft has made \$Billions (roughly 400 billion over the last 15 years), but 3rd party vendors, customers, and competitors have wasted nearly \$1,000 for every dollar Microsoft earned.

Rex Ballard

<http://www.open4success.org>