WRITE ACCESS

Perl Gem

Schilli's Perl column is spectacularly good and one of the highlights that I look forward to in the magazine. I just wanted to chime-in with my opinion. Thanks!
Tor Perkins

LM Thanks for your thoughts. We agree with you 100%. Mike Schilli – our indomitable Perlmeister – is as good as it gets. The creativity and energy that Mike brings to his column each month are truly refreshing.

More How Technical

This email is concerning the letter titled "How Technical?" written by Mr. Michael L. Flynn, on page 18 of the October 2009 issue (no. 107).

I have read this article, and I have come to the conclusion the Michael is not only 100% correct but is 150% correct. I found myself identifying with his comments.

In my experience, beginner guides beat around the bush with no complete and concise explanation. Let me say that I am quite technical, and I keep using Microsoft because it is consistently all GUI and it always works.

I have been trying to set up a Linux mail server for 2 years, and even with the SLAMPP portable server DVD with Issue 107, I cannot grasp where the SMTP, POP, and GUI are to configure the server in less than 20 minutes, which is what I need using Windows Enterprise 2003 with the Kerio mail server.

Please do not try to take this letter as a defense of Microsoft, because that is not the case.

Newcomers should be treated well so they can be enlisted into the battle to stop the Microsoft monopoly, but this does not happen because there seems to be an elite with hidden knowledge of basic Linux functionality.

Over the past 8 years, there has been a great increase of Linux enterprise services charging by the hour to companies, so I assume there are people protecting the knowledge since the "raw material" (Linux) is "free" but implementations need labor.

I cannot see how Linux will ever take over home desktops this way.
Richard Benfatto

LM We agree with your point that Linux documentation could be better. From where we stand, however, it doesn't seem that Linux experts intentionally withhold basic configuration information to maintain control. On the contrary, many of our authors are experts who are excited to provide information on Linux, and they actually regard it as good business to share their solutions with the world.

As to whether Windows "always works," I can honestly say that many of our readers would disagree, and in fact, many users come to Linux *because* they can't get Windows to work.

As for the difference in the availability of introductory documentation, maybe the best place to start is to consider that software documentation is extremely expensive to generate. Microsoft makes a huge investment in Help text, online documentation, and white papers, not to mention certification and training, technical marketing, and various forms of marketing to disseminate information about their products.

This information is very useful for the beginner, but it comes with a price that is reflected in the cost of the software and the persistent inconvenience of the proprietary licensing model. This trade-off might work well for certain newcomers, but more advanced Windows users (and some beginners, for that matter) might actually prefer to keep some of that money in their pockets rather than subsidizing the education of entry-level users whenever they buy a Windows license.

Having said that, I should add that the Internet has plenty of Linux mail servers that are working very well, and in fact, the Kerio mail server you mention in your letter comes with a Linux version. Have you tried it?

Stefan Habersack, Fotolia