Walking the Hall at LinuxWorld San Francisco

NEWS FROM THE BAY

Linux enthusiasts gathered in San Francisco to learn about new tools, new initiatives, and even a new license.

BY JOE CASAD

The usual crowd of vendors, programmers, reporters, and Linux enthusiasts gathered at the Moscone Center in downtown San Francisco for the US West Coast LinuxWorld Conference and Expo. Organizers expected a turnout of around 11,000 visitors with 180 exhibitors on the show floor. Most of the usual companies were in attendance – including HP, IBM, Intel, Novell, Oracle, Red Hat, and Sun, as well as many smaller vendors.

Some new names were also in evidence, including interesting tools such as Splunk, a log file management tool, and Black Dog, a tiny Linux device that piggybacks itself onto a host system by pretending to be a CD-ROM drive. Even Microsoft couldn't stay away. Although the Redmond giant kept its head low, Microsoft was around the fringes of the event, handing out invitations and squaring off with Google in a geek trivia game.

The Conference

The conference sessions fell into the usual categories, with an emphasis on enterprise issues such as data centers, virtualization, clustering, and security. A conference track that has appeared at recent shows, "The Business Case for Linux and Open Source," brought in some predictable bouts of business-speak, such as "Managing Competitive Advantage with Enterprise Open Source Software," but also included some interesting presentations on legal matters. Free Software Foundation attorney Eben Maglen gave a talk titled, "What You Need to know about GPL 3.0." Mr.

Figure 1: Business was brisk on the show floor, where mobility was a major theme.

Maglen's oratorial skills were most impressive, but he revealed few details of the next GPL. In the Q and A period at the end, he did reveal some areas of concern, including warranty disclaimers and compatibility with the Apache license. Moglen also provided some details on the elaborate global approval process planned for the proposed changes. Expect a first draft of GPL 3 around the end of this year.

OpenSuse

Novell announced the OpenSuse project, a new initiative to give outside developers more input in the Suse development process. Community developers will have access to the code in the development phase. Eventually, Novell will provide tools and technical assistance to developers who wish to contribute.

Debian Common Core Alliance

A major event of the LinuxWorld conference was the announcement of the Debian Common Core Alliance (DCCA). Several Debian-derived Linux distros formed the DCCA to produce a version of Debian that will serve as a common base for their systems. Some Debian developers are skeptical of the project, although Debian heavyweights such as founder Ian Murdock and former project leader Bruce Perens have expressed their support.

Conclusion

The West Coast LinuxWorld is always one of the more interesting shows, with vendors and community groups saving big announcements for San Francisco. I stayed quite busy learning about new products and projects, although, as a member of the press, I was at greater liberty to attend briefings and other events than the average visitor would be.

Except for a few new products and some regional companies, many of the booths were similar to ones I had seen earlier this year at LinuxWorlds in Boston and Toronto – even down to the banner graphics. This is understandable, of course, since every vendor cannot really reinvent themself for every show. But from a user's perspective, unless you're a news junkie, one LinuxWorld per year is probably sufficient. ■