

Reflections on LinuxWorld Canada 2005

TORONTO IN APRIL

LinuxWorld Canada turned up a mix of the usual suspects with some lesser known native Canadian vendors.

The conference sessions were less than inspiring, but the show had plenty of chemistry. **BY JOE CASAD**

Fine spring weather warmed the Linux faithful who gathered in Toronto for LinuxWorld Canada 2005.

The week began with the usual battery of tutorials. Topics included “All about OpenOffice.org and StarOffice,” “Getting to Know Samba 3,” and “Monitoring Linux with Native Tools.” Most of the visitors arrived Tuesday, though, for the start of the trade show and conference sessions.

Keynote festivities began Tuesday morning with a speech by David Patrick, former Ximian exec who is now VP and general manager of Novell’s Linux division. Mr. Patrick provided a snapshot of where Novell is now with Linux development. Although the speech was something of a marketing show, it was good to catch up on the latest developments in the effort to integrate Linux with the vast NetWare install base. Given the usual keynote babble, this one wasn’t bad. (Mr. Patrick did much better, for instance, than his boss, CEO Jack

Messman, did at LinuxWorld Boston in February.)

Making the Rounds

In keeping with their recent strategy, Novell continued to project a strong presence at LinuxWorld Canada. But the other big vendors were there too. IBM and HP each had large exhibits celebrating innovations. Red Hat had a space that was smaller than the big vendors but bigger than the small vendors (like Red Hat itself), and they moved traffic through their lively corner with intermittent presentations on Red Hat Enterprise Linux 4 and the upcoming Red Hat summit. But despite of the big business and big vendors, the soul of the show floor was the small to mid-sized Canadian consulting companies and service vendors for whom this show was a major networking event.

The conference sessions weren’t espe-



Figure 2: The show floor was busy but never crowded.

cially inspiring. Some were little more than vendor infomercials with misleadingly generic names, and others seemed pretty introductory for a professional conference, but I only attended a few sessions on the first day, so I can’t speak for the rest. Sessions that I didn’t see covered core technical topics such as “The Wine Project” and “Alternatives to Microsoft Exchange,” but other session titles reflected the popular appetite for bus-buzz, covering topics such as “The Linux Triple Play” or “Linux as a Viable Business for VARS.”

Parting Thoughts

This show was small compared to some, but the small scale was actually rather refreshing. I never experienced the “I am in a zoo” feeling that comes with more crowded shows, and the relatively higher density of vendors to guests meant that it was always easy to find someone to talk to.

In spite of the cozy feeling, LinuxWorld Canada 2005 was well enough attended to generate some chemistry and let the vendors feel like the trip was worth the effort. Estimates put the attendance at around 3,000, which is enough for a pretty good party. ■



Figure 1: A harmonious band rang out for better enterprise integration.