Projections and reflections from the San Francisco LinuxWorld

THREE DAYS ON THE BAY

Virtual visions brought vigor to the San Francisco LinuxWorld. This year's gala featured data centers, super heros, and our very own *Linux Pro Magazine* booth. **BY JOE CASAD**

Figure 1: About 10,000 visitors arrived in San Francisco for this year's West coast LinuxWorld. Linux Foundation executive director Jim Zemlin offered his views on the Linux ecosystem, and the annual Golden Penguin Bowl reminded us again what a strange, strange trips it's been.

San Francisco is always an important moment on the LinuxWorld calendar, and vendors and community groups save big announcements for the show. Although the excitement level probably peaked a few years ago, this year's LinuxWorld SF was just as interesting and probably better attended than last year's event.

LinuxWorld shared the space with IDG's Next Generation Data Center show. The data center theme used to seem dry and remote for the everyday IT crowd, but new technologies have brought the topic to the foreground, and the two conferences co-existed with surprising harmony.

The Buzz

Virtualization was the talk of the halls. The presence of a virtualization conference track was no surprise – the topic appears regularly at conference venues around the world. More striking was the very depth and vision of the theme. They're not just talking about setting up Xen anymore. Speakers such as senior VMWare scientist Mendel Rosenblum discussed the possibility of the hypervisor actually replacing what we think of now as the operating system.

The keynote presentations – which were shared with the data center conference – also echoed the virtualization theme, with speakers such as eBay research scientist Paul Strong and Amazon VP Werner Vogels describing their experiences with implementing virtualization on a massive scale. IBM's announcement of the Big Green Data Center initiative (discussed on Page 3 of last month's issue) helped to underscore the environmental benefits of virtualization.

Another important theme was pre-installed Linux. Novell and Lenovo (the company that bought IBM's PC division) announced a plan to preload SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop (SLED) on Lenovo ThinkPads. Dell, of course, beat them to market with the earlier announcement of a deal with Ubuntu, and the Dell booth offered regular workshops on Ubuntu configuration.

Other vendors who specialize in pre-installed Linux systems, such as Emperor Linux and R Cubed, displayed their own diverse product lines.

On the Floor

The aisles effervesced with the usual blend of management systems, security tools, developer aids, and rack-mounted hardware. Red Hat missed yet another LinuxWorld, no doubt preferring the sanctuary of the Red Hat Summits and other similar events.

The .org landscape seemed a bit sparser than in other years, although the vibrant Bay area LUGs added some energy to the community scene.

For me, one of the best parts of the show was rolling out our own show space. *Linux Pro Magazine* (as we are known in North America) had a booth in San Francisco for the first time. We sold some subscriptions, met lots of readers, and got some great feedback from newsstand customers.

Reflections

The chronological and geographical proximity to OSCON didn't help the attendance of this year's LinuxWorld SF. O'Reilly's Portland event was only two weeks before LinuxWorld, and many visitors simply had to choose. We heard more than one attendee mention that, as LinuxWorld has solidified its corporate image, OSCON has absorbed more of the offbeat hacker ambiance increasingly missing from the LinuxWorld series. The presence of the data-center crowd changed the mix a bit, though, and it was interesting to see how relevant the data-center topic is becoming for average admins.

On the final day, when we packed up the booth and gave our last magazines to the LUGs, I couldn't help thinking that the San Francisco LinuxWorld is still a very good place to view the evolving world of Linux. ■