FILTERING VISTA

Dear Linux Magazine Reader,

Joe Casad, Editor in Chief

Many of you will probably wonder why we put Windows Vista on the cover of this month's issue. "So many other computer magazines are hyping Vista," you'll say. "Why does a Linux magazine have to do it? Aren't you supposed to be a refuge from Windows hype?" Hype, however, is the whole reason why an issue like this is necessary. The problem isn't that these other magazines mention Vista; the real problem is that, all too often, they mingle their coverage of Vista with a spoon-fed version of the Microsoft world view.

In Microsoft's view of reality, Linux hardly even exists, but the best response to this limited perspective is not to imagine a world in which Windows doesn't exist. A more productive path is to take up the challenge of providing the information our readers will need to keep Windows and Linux connected. Windows is part of the landscape, like a tree or a rock. If you happen onto it, you have to either go around it or figure out some way to deal with it. In either case, it helps to have good information. Our goal is to report on things you'll need to know to keep your Linux systems running smoothly in mixed environments.

I should add that, although I have used this space in the past to spar with Redmond over topics such as Microsoft business practices, when it comes to the nuts and bolts of good technical writing, politics just gets in the way. If Vista does something *right*, we won't be afraid to say it. On the other hand, we also want to deliver useful information to our readers, and the fact is, our readers tend to value the kinds of features that Linux provides, otherwise they wouldn't be Linux users. We're going to filter Windows with a Linux filter because our whole reason for existence is to filter things with a Linux filter. If our readers place a high value on security, interoperability, and configurability, that is the standard we'll use, regardless of where that focus falls in the spectrum of Windows demographics.

As for the politics – since this is the one place in the magazine where we mention such things – it is worth remembering that one reason why Microsoft is always in trouble with open source users is because they seem to go our of their way to alienate open source users – even for trivial things that shouldn't matter. If the moguls of Microsoft aren't inclined to change their minds on big issues like patents and monopolistic marketing, they could still help their reputation with the open source community by taking some simple steps, such as:

- Provide standard support for Linux filesystems;
- Stop charging high prices for Linux interoperability tools, such as the *Subsystem for UNIX-based Applications*, which is only available in the costly Vista Enterprise and Ultimate versions;
- Stop letting the WIndows installer overwrite the master boot record without reference to existing Linux installations, so that Linux users have to employ hacks and tricks to get their dual-boot systems back (see Page 40);
- Stop playing cat and mouse with the open source press by telling potential reviewers that a review copy of Vista is "in shipping," then explaining three weeks later that "in shipping" means "on back order";
- Stop creating websites that won't work correctly without Internet Explorer, such as the site shown in Figure 1 of Page 22. (If you are wondering why this screen was shot in Ubuntu instead of Vista, see the preceding item.)

Of course, even with these simple steps, we won't exactly be headed for a love fest, but let's start with the small stuff, and maybe someday we'll move some mountains.

Linux Magazine is proud to be part of an international group of Linux publications founded in the early days of the Open Source movement.

Our team includes authors, editors, and Linux specialists producing nine magazines in six languages. Our goal is to provide our readers with useful, hands-on information on working with Linux.

As a reader of Linux Magazine, you are joining an information network that is dedicated to distributing knowledge and technical expertise to Linux users around the world.

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