

BOOK REVIEWS

BY JAMES MOHR
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Linux Administrator Street Smarts

The goal of this book is to provide the reader with a hands-on introduction to basic Linux tasks – from working on the command line to configuring a network. Each task is presented as a step-by-step exercise so you understand the process and achieve the expected result.

The material is broken down into individual, bite-sized tasks. Each task starts with a “Scenario,” which briefly describes a situation in which that particular task would be useful.

This is followed by the “scope” of the task, which includes how long it should take, the setup, and special considerations and caveats.

The bulk of each task is the “Procedure,” what you need to know and do to complete the task, including useful background information, the commands you need to run, and the files you need to edit. Next is the “Criteria for Completion,” which describes what the state of

your system should be to consider the task completed.

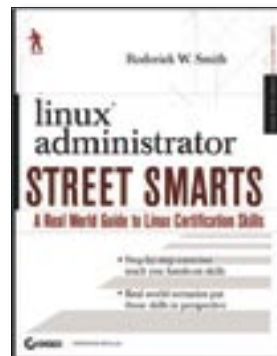
The book’s subtitle is “A Real World Guide to Linux Certification Skills,” but I found that this book is for beginners – not just beginning administrators. As a real-world Linux administrator, I found little content that really impressed me.

Furthermore, in a number of places, the level of information was not appropriate for a Linux admin. I would hope that a real-world administrator already knows how to use *ls* and *cp* and how file permissions work. Considering the incredible amount of information that a

Linux administrator needs to know, this information is simply too basic.

The beginning of the book includes a list of the material covered in both the LPI and Linux+ certifications. The book could possibly help readers prepare for either exam, but the author doesn’t explain how to apply the material to the exams.

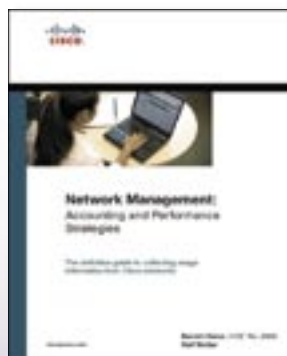
Regardless of the hype on the cover and lack of depth inside, this book might still be useful. The material is easy to follow and is presented clearly. If you have never really administered a Linux system and want a jump start, this book is a good place to start.



Roderick W. Smith
Paperback, 335 Pages
Sybex, 2006
ISBN: 978-0-470-08348-2
UK£ 19.99, US\$ 29.99, EUR 29.90

Network Management

Network Management: Accounting and Performance Strategies begins with the reasons why collecting data about your network is necessary, general aspects of collecting the data, what that data really means, and how to use it once you have collected it. *Network Management* also addresses how to measure whether you are achieving the service level you need (service-level agreements, SLA) and what the metrics really mean that determine adherence to an SLA. This first part of the book is self-contained and could



have been a book on its own or have been included with material about non-Cisco products.

In the second part of the book, the authors guide you through the Cisco-specific methodologies of how to collect the data. For example, you are shown many different commands on various Cisco products that collect the kinds of data you would need.

The book concludes with a number of scenarios and examples of how to collect and interpret the data. *Network Management* does provide

a lot of useful information, but the book also demonstrates that simply being an expert in a subject does not necessarily mean that you can present your knowledge in a way that is easy for readers to understand.

In many places, the authors focused on rather unimportant details, and I had to re-read a number of passages to figure out what they were actually trying to say. Mostly, the book could have used a bit more editing.

Benoit Claise and Ralf Wolter
Hardcover, 631 Pages
Cisco Press, 2007
ISBN: 978-1-58705-198-2
UK£ 32.41, US\$ 70.00, EUR 66.29

Managing the Test People

The target audience for this book is people who are in or will find themselves in a technical leadership position managing those responsible for testing and quality assurance. Inside the pages, you'll find topics such as:

- Making the First Impression
- Evaluating Your Staff
- Creating Procedures and Processes
- Tailoring Job Descriptions
- Interviewing and Hiring
- Layoffs and Terminations
- Mapping and Assigning People to Projects
- Selecting Your Project Leaders
- Reward Systems and Growth Plans
- Inward and Outward Communication
- Creating Synergy and Pride
- How to Be an Effective Manager
- Conducting Reviews
- Growing Your Staff

As with any book on personnel management, this book discusses forming the best possible team ("The Perfect Beast") and managing team members.

Managing the Test People looks at real-world issues and provides real-world solutions instead of giving a theoretical list of "best practices."

Although the book is intended for managers of quality assurance people, much of the content can be applied to just about any manager.

Each topic gets the point across without a lot of fluff. On the other hand, some places lacked enough depth, but anyone in management should be smart enough to extrapolate. Frankly, I am grateful for a book that jumps right to the heart of a topic and is still an enjoyable read.

Some other management books simply talk about "people management" – coordination, organization, planning, and so forth. McKay also addresses the concept of leadership, which can be more impor-



tant than organization skills, for example. I also appreciated the emphasis on the group being managed as a single entity rather than as a collection of individuals. On the other hand, the author did emphasize that each team member still needs to be treated as an individual.

The book didn't go into an in-depth discussion of organization, planning, and other traditional management topics, so it might have been more appropriate to call the book "Leading the Test People." In any case, this book is a "must read" for anyone leading (or managing) employees.

Judy McKay
Paperback, 214 Pages
Rocky Nook, Inc., 2007
ISBN: 978-1-933952-12-3
UK£ 28.50, US\$ 39.95, EUR 46.90

Professional Apache Tomcat 6

Professional Apache Tomcat 6 seems to stand on its own from the publisher's point of view because there is no "beginner" Wrox book on this topic. The Professional series is "written by working programmers to meet the real-world needs of programmers," so – despite the 600+ pages – you will need to have all of the prerequisites under your belt or acquire them from sources outside the Wrox series.

According to the Wrox website (wrox.com), *Professional Apache Tomcat 6* includes "40 percent new and updated material" and the book covers "all the major new features affecting server administration and management."

The book's web page also provides the code downloads and an Errata (so far, with no revisions).

Chapter 1 is available as a PDF on the Wrox site and provides a detailed overview of the Apache Project, the Apache Software Foundation, and Tomcat. In this beginning chapter, the authors also explain the Apache license and compare it to the GPL, LGPL, and other licenses. The chapter then offers "The Big Picture: Java EE."

Most "Professional" books provide a brief history on the topic, but because this book is written for seasoned professionals, readers are probably familiar with the history behind the Apache Project, Tomcat, and GPL or might not find it necessary to perform their jobs, so the first chapters of refresher material might be of no real interest.

Chapter 3 covers how to install Tomcat, and Chapter 4 goes into the Tomcat architecture, which anyone with a UNIX/Linux background should find easy to grasp.

The degree of difficulty advances as the book progresses. Other topics include configuration, advanced features of Tomcat, web application configuration and administration, class loaders, HTTP connectors, security, monitoring and managing Tomcat with JMX, clustering,

embedded Tomcat, logging, and performance testing and tuning.

Each chapter concludes with a useful summary.

Finally, the book concludes with two appendices. Appendix A: Tomcat and IDEs covers Eclipse and NetBeans topics, while Appendix B: Apache Ant goes into the details of Ant.

If you are already familiar with prior versions of Tomcat and want to upgrade to the latest version, *Professional Apache Tomcat 6* will bring you up to speed on all the new changes.

Professional Apache Tomcat 6 also works well if you have a sufficient programming and systems background to handle the material and you simply want to learn more about Tomcat 6 administration.

Vivek Chopra, Sing Li, Jeff Genender
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