

A New Kind of Fish



Dear Linux Magazine Reader,

My friends at the Biodiversity Research Center (<http://specifysoftware.org/Informatics>) are experts in modeling the sudden changes that

occur when an ecosystem is disrupted by the arrival of a new foreign species. I'm sure they don't have a plan for modeling the Linux ecosystem, but if they did, they would also have scientific way of telling us *the times they-are-a-changin'*.

As you probably know, the foreign species that appeared recently in the Linux ecosystem is Novell. High-tech magazines are full of commentaries describing the possible impact Novell might have on the Linux industry, but it is starting to look like the area where Novell presents the greatest mismatch for the indigenous Linux companies is in the game of brand promotion.

Novell learned the PR game battling big guns like Microsoft and IBM, and they have a very extensive machine in place for projecting their presence. A company like Red Hat, on the other hand, climbed to prominence in the more lackadaisical world of volunteer-

based distros and fellow fledgling companies spread thin on resources. Red Hat used to look like a big and powerful Linux company until Novell came along. They probably still *are* as powerful as they ever were, but they don't look as powerful anymore because Novell is doing a much better job of attaching themselves to Linux in the news. And if Red Hat doesn't watch out, they may find one day that they *aren't* as powerful as they used to be, because when people think of Linux, they will think of someone else.

In the highly-charged, political atmosphere of the open source movement, the big, well-funded companies behave like big, well-funded political candidates. They use every opportunity to define their position, and they never let any attack go unanswered. Novell's rise in the Linux world started with their purchase of Suse and Ximian, but they followed up this initial investment with a careful strategy of always acting to place themselves in the center of any possible Linux discussion.

Novell has been remarkably successful at portraying themselves as the defenders of Linux. Part of this role was handed to them by the desperate SCO group, who you have probably already heard too much about. (SCO obtained their rights to the Unix operating system from Novell, and Novell has very publically used the original contracts to challenge SCO's claims on behalf of the Linux community.)

The other part of Novell's success, however, comes from just being alert and investing resources at the perfect moment. For instance, when Microsoft recently unveiled their "Get the Facts" campaign, with a series of pro-Microsoft (sometimes misleading) arguments on the benefits of Windows, Novell was quick to create a whole website called "Unbending the Truth: Things Microsoft Hopes You Won't Notice." Red Hat didn't create a website, and it is unclear from

LINUX

MAGAZINE

We pride ourselves on the origins of our publication, which come from the early days of the Linux revolution.

Our sister publication in Germany, founded in 1994, was the first Linux magazine in Europe. Since then, our network and expertise has grown and expanded with the Linux community around the world.

As a reader of Linux Magazine, you are joining an information network that is dedicated to distributing knowledge and technical expertise. We're not simply reporting on the Linux and Open Source movement, we're part of it.

their press section whether they even have an official position regarding Microsoft's assertions.

In fact, Red Hat's press section is pretty skimpy all around. As of this writing, Novell had 49 press releases and news links in their press section for the month of November, most of them dealing with Linux, and several dealing specifically with the Microsoft's controversial claims on the virtues of Windows. Headlines include eye-catching entries such as "Novell Hits Back at Ballmer's anti-Linux Memo." The Red Hat press section, on the other hand, has only one entry for the whole month of November: "Red Hat Establishes Beijing Business Practice."

Don't look now, Red Hat, but a new kind of fish just swam into your lagoon.

Joe Casad
Editor in Chief

Welcome Spain!

We are proud to announce the launch of a new sister publication, Linux Magazine Spain.

Our new Spanish-language publication opens an important chapter in our effort to reach Linux users around the world. Linux Magazine Spain will be sold in Spain and also throughout the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America.

The first Spanish-language edition will be on sale in December. We wish our colleagues in Spain great success!

For more information, visit the Linux Magazine Spain website: www.linux-magazine.com.es