

systems and has made it open to the OSS community to use it for development of code and to scale up OSS.

Businesses learning from the open source community

Brian Behlendorf, Apache guru and co-founder of Collabnet, presented how a proprietary company can learn from the open source community on the way they build up a particular project. He noted that there are an increasing number of failures among software development projects in proprietary companies—45 per cent of software development projects in 2003 were cancelled, and another 30 per cent were completed late. The US Government has a lot of problems trying to write software and they have a plethora of instances when software development projects have fallen apart. In 2004, AT&T Wireless had a major



BRIAN BEHLENDORF,
Apache Guru and
Co-founder Collabnet

problem when they were upgrading their CRM systems. Behlendorf cited some of the reasons behind such failures that could be attributed to the typical features of a proprietary company—very poor feedback loops between what people originally wanted and what actually gets deployed; poor documentation; low productivity due to demotivated developers and a limited, project-oriented mindset.

Behlendorf noted that though, “In the open source world, you continually have this open conversation going on between the developers and the users who are always trying to place their feedback on the efficiency of a particular solution. Open source projects do not witness those private, closed-door kind of conversations. Most of the time, the work that is done or that is planned, happens in the public sphere.” In the

open source world one is allowed to make any kind of improvement upon a particular software project. “In most corporations you don’t have such community initiatives. Again, the term ‘project’, in the open source world, has a long-term connotation to it. Whereas ‘project’ inside a corporation means a relatively short series of tasks with a start and a stop,” said Behlendorf. Another important lesson the proprietary world can learn from the open source community is the fact that developers who are working on a particular project, aren’t there out of compulsion. They are there because they want to improve things. “There is this emotional tie attached to it, which you do not see in corporate projects,” he says.

Linux gaining momentum

In an inspiring keynote address at LinuxAsia 2005, Jyothi Satyanathan, country manager, Power Series, IBM India was very upbeat on the way

The Workshops >>

LinuxAsia 2005 held workshops on various Linux and LOSS topics. The workshop track included migrating to Linux, using development and collaborative tools in a hands-on environment, and building a high-performance 64-bit computing platform. These workshops provided a classroom setting for collaborative learning and the opportunity to discuss and experience the power of latest Linux-based technologies.

Migrating to Linux Made Easy

A full-day workshop on “Migrating to Linux Made Easy” was a hit with the audience and the crowd overran the capacity of the assigned conference hall. This workshop focused on how to migrate core infrastructure and applications to a Linux environment from proprietary systems such as Windows, Unix or Netware. Conducted by Biswajit Banerjee, director, Tetra Information Services, the workshop had a diverse audience,



Tetra's Biswajet conducting the migration workshop to a packed house

from developers to system administrators. Attendees from a broad spectrum of industry—Intra Technologies, Adobe, TERI, Godfrey Phillips Ltd, ST Micro-Electronics participated in the workshop. Topics covered file sharing, e-mail and communication, migrating from NT file sharing services to Samba, Exchange to Q-mail, security and network monitoring. The discussion included migrating NT domains to Samba-3, migrating a DHCP environment from Windows to Linux, migrating a DNS environment from Windows to Linux,

configuring Samba, network browsing and authentication, file and print sharing, and migration using LDAP concepts. Using Open LDAP in Linux and migrating to a Linux-based Q-mail server were also highlighted. After attending the workshop, Ankur Jain and Ashish Singh, both software developers, said with newfound confidence, “We now know which way to go!”

Linux business is catching up across the world, especially in the government sector. Citing India, he noted, "The state governments of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Delhi and government agencies like C-DAC and National Informatics Centre (NIC) are all embracing Linux in a big way. I think it is only a matter of time when Linux will be the standard operating system in South Asia." He emphasised three key points—resilience, innovation and open standards in the IT industry. "IT is something that is driving businesses today. One can't think of a company that doesn't have an IT infrastructure. However, in developing countries, the governments especially can't spend enormous amount of money. So what we really need is a kind of computer which we switch on, use, pay for and switch off." Satyanathan further said



JYOTHI SATYANATHAN,
Country Manager,
Power Series, IBM

that resilience is something that is driving Linux today. The open source community has created an ecosystem where thousands of minds work together to create innovations for society. And IBM has realised this. According to him, "We believe we cannot create everything that the world needs. So the only way is to tap into millions of minds across the world for resources." He added that it is this universal truth that has made IBM open source its power technology in April 2004. "We believe that millions of minds will now work on the architecture and create products that are relevant to the society." He concluded his talk by stating, "If innovation has to thrive, we need open standards. But we should also be very clear that the technology we use should be able to communicate with everyone."

The future is open source

In her special address at LinuxAsia 2005, Danese Cooper, Board Member, Open Source Initiative (OSI), talked about how the fundamental features of the open source model at times clash with the interests of proprietary companies. She suggested a midway approach to balance out both models. She stated that the idea behind open source is that the basic technology has got to be right at any cost. That is why it is more academic oriented and attractive to developers. "But it's quite frightening to proprietary companies because they are not sure how much control to give up." For proprietary companies, it is all about competition. Now there is competition in the open source model as well. In fact, there is a special term coined for competition in



DANESE COOPER,
Board Member, Open
Source Initiative (OSI)

Subversion: Software version control done right

The half-day workshop on Subversion was conducted by V.K. Sameer of Collabnet Software Pvt Ltd, Chennai. The workshop covered version control software systems (specifically, Subversion) and how to access files using the subversion repository. Also covered was advanced subversion usage. The workshop was attended mostly by IT professionals who were in the process of setting up Subversion in their organisations.

Building a 64-Bit Eco system

This half-day workshop featured how to build and deploy a 64-bit white box solution with Linux and Opteron hardware. It clearly demonstrated the performance gains of such a platform. The workshop also featured a Red Hat demonstration. Conducted by Manoj David, Server Alliance Manager,



IT-heads preparing to migrate to Linux



V.K. Sameer (Collabnet) explaining the nuances of software version control

AMD, the workshop highlighted the classifications that support the AMD 64 Eco system, ranging from platform software, development tools, infrastructure software and database tools, to mission-critical applications, scientific and engineering applications, digital media and entertainment. The audience included IT administrators, system integrators, decision-makers and students. "It was a very interactive session, where you were talking to a really informed audience. We discussed the opportunities and bottlenecks in enabling Eco systems; benchmarking on a 64-bit Eco system; how it compared today to what it was earlier, and how it would be in the future," said Manoj David. Shishir Shobhan, a systems programmer doing his MCA, was very satisfied with the workshop. According to him, "It was really informative, especially since the presenter could put across his ideas well."