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Linux Looking Forward: Twenty Linux Luminaries Look at Linux in 2004

January 1, 2004

Summary

In the course of putting the January 2004 issue together, the LinuxWorld editors circulated forward-looking questions to a wide selection members of the Linux community whose opinions we respect. Here's what they had to say.

After we saw the response we were getting, we thought our readers might be interested in giving us some of their ideas as well, so we published a short blurb on LinuxWorld.com with the predictions we received from Eric Raymond (Open Source evangelist and author of *The Cathedral and the Bazaar* and *The Art of Unix Programming*) and John Terpstra (cofounder of the Samba project and lead author of *The Official Samba-3 HOWTO and Reference Guide*). We figured a few thousand people would read the predictions and we'd get a few e-mails and comments from our readers with some of their ideas.

Instead of a site magnified when well over 200 people read the comments I thought I'd post a Slashdot thread people behind the future. These people just have to see So following and from our friends Linux in 2004. as well. I hope and read the pr take a few minu

What are my pl with Linux in 2004 will be because of the sweat and excitement of the people in the Linux community (that's you!).

Have a great year!
—Kevin Bedell

Which Linux application area do you believe will grow the fastest in 2004?
I think media players in some form or another - turning your phone into an iPod - will be hot by the end of 2004. Due to the nature of Linux on phones, we'll see a lot more experimentation and creativity applied to this than with the other phone platforms.
—Thomas Reardon

The application area that is well positioned for growth in 2004 is 64-bit applications. With the current and emerging versions of the kernel improving performance issues that are important to the enterprise, like scalability, it will allow customers to run more powerful applications on 64-bit architecture, expanding the use of Linux to more critical areas of a large enterprise, like the data center. Over the years we've seen Linux start in specific areas of a business's IT infrastructure, and as that business experienced the cost and performance benefits of Linux - and as more applications became available - businesses were able to expand their use of Linux to other areas of their infrastructure. In the beginning, Linux was used mainly for file/print and Web server apps. As more apps became Linux-enabled, businesses started running critical applications on Linux, like e-commerce, accounting, CRM, ERP, etc. Now, as 64-bit applications become Linux-enabled, we'll see businesses take Linux to the next level, for example, large database and graphical design applications. Unlike Microsoft Windows, Linux gives enterprise customers the choice of selecting the 64-bit processor that best meets their requirements - Linux runs on Itanium, Opteron, and POWER. 2004 will be the year Linux is used for more powerful, 64-bit applications spanning the data center, departmental server, and engineering workstation areas.
—Adam Jollans

The LAMP (Linux, Apache, MySQL, PHP/PERL/Python) environment will become more recognized as a foundational solution in 2004.
—John M. Weathersby

Office on the desktop. The economies of running OpenOffice.org on a Linux desktop are just staggering. Combined with continuing improvements in various Linux desktop tools, the technology and economies will make a potent mix. This may not be very apparent in the corporate U.S. environment, but it will be very apparent in academic environments, nonprofit organizations, and developing countries.
—Chandler Kant

The Open Government Interoperability Project will be the largest project in the history of open source, including the Internet. We're building 185 applications for state and local governments using LAMP and specifically Project Leopard. The working group consists of a credible mix of renowned academicians, publishers, government CIOs, and industry people. The working group is writing an ISO standard for secure interoperability using the 23950 ISO standard also called Z39.50.

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Will 2004 finally be the year when Linux makes significant inroads on the desktop?
As Linux continues its unstoppable growth, companies around the world are beginning to investigate the possibilities of Linux on the desktop. New markets will develop, and with them, new opportunities for growing revenues. Desktop vendors need to pay close attention to what customers are demanding and have a plan in place when these new markets materialize. Linux was founded on the idea of choice - customers will respond to desktop solutions that use industry-standard components (for better performance) and that work with ISV options; companies who today offer the freedom to use the hardware/software that best fits their business - not lock you into proprietary solutions - will lead Linux onto the desktop and into new markets tomorrow.
—HP Linux Team

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No, although it will get way better by the end of the year, thanks to the work of Nat and Miguel and their team at Novell, who have just hired gobs of people to work on just that. Also, I think that Red Hat will eventually have to retract their previous statements and put some work into the desktop. I think that 2005 might be that year, provided we can do a bit of catch up with Apple and broaden our desktop device integration support.
—Chris DiBona

2004 will be a big year for Linux and other open source applications on the desktop, but I think most of the serious effort will happen behind the scenes. I think that 2005 will be the year that an open source desktop environment will hit it big in corporate and personal environments.
—John M. Weathersby

I don't think so, but Linux Terminal Server Project may be near a tipping point. Once system administrators realize how easy it is to convert a whole building full of systems to a robust Linux solution using LTSP, there's no telling how fast the move will go.

Yes. A lot of IT companies have realized the significance of Linux and have a long-term plan for the market. Notable among them are Sun, Novell, and IBM. The response to Linux events by corporations has been overwhelming. This is evident from the success of expositions like LinuxWorld. In Asia, Linux Asia 2004 (being organized in February) is seeing active interest and participation by corporations all across Asia. I believe these developments are significant and 2004 will be the year when Linux will move from the back end to the desktop.
—Rahul Chopra

2004 will be the year that Sun renames the "Java Desktop System" - in recognition of its SUSE/Mozilla/GNOME 2/Evolution roots - "Sun Linux" or the "Sun Desktop."
—Jeremy Geelan

Yes. Government adoptions happening in Massachusetts, Brazil, South Africa, and all over the Pacific Rim are driving this trend. There's a lot happening in the private sector, too, but the adopters there won't talk about that because they want to hold on to their advantage over competitors paying the Microsoft tax.
—Eric Raymond

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We are very impressed with the community growing around Gentoo Linux. I think you'll see Gentoo start to flourish in 2004.
—John M. Weathersby

SUSE. I like Novell as a Linux company. They certainly have a much better chance of uniting the Linux community than Red Hat. Red Hat has frustrated or upset everyone I know more than once. The only engineer we had who loved Red Hat didn't make the cut as a developer for us, and he doesn't work here any more. I think he is the only engineer we have ever fired.
—J.C. Utter

I'm hoping Fedora will do well, but a lot of people may say, "If I'm offered a Fedora that uses a Debian-like development model, I might as well use Debian." Knoppix is also highly praised for people who are just curious about Linux. SUSE has the biggest recent boost of all the distributions, obviously, but it will take time to ramp up in the U.S. and they're not helping much with their distasteful ads.
—Andy Oram

Red Hat (if you consider Red Hat and Fedora as one) and SUSE (aka Novell).
—Rahul Chopra

SUSE (or is that Novell?) will be the global leader in desktop and server deployments as the VAR channel finally finds confidence in a supported Linux product that will not take away their lunch.
—John H. Terpstra

I think 2004 is going to be a big year for Fedora and SUSE, and a challenge for Debian (because Fedora now offers apt for RPM).
—Eric Raymond

I expect Fedora Core will grow quickly in 2004, once many of the myths and misconceptions surrounding it are dealt with.
—Dee-Ann LeBlanc

