Red Hat Shuns 'Windows Clone' Model for Global Desktop

May 10 2007

The new Red Hat global desktop is based on a stripped-down version of the existing Red Hat Enterprise Linux Desktop 5 and contains applications like Firefox, OpenOffice and Evolution.

Red Hat officials gave more details about the company's new global desktop on May 9, revealing that it is based on a stripped-down version of the existing Red Hat Enterprise Linux Desktop 5 and contains applications such as Firefox, OpenOffice and Evolution.

"Our enterprise desktop has some 1,500 applications, so we stripped this down to about 700 by getting rid of a lot of things like developer tools and compilers, which helped reduce the hardware requirements for the system," Gerry Riveros, head of Red Hat client solutions marketing, said at a press conference here at the company's annual summit.

The product initially will be targeted at small businesses and governments in emerging countries, a market that partner Intel and its associates knows very well, Riveros said.

While the desktop is not another "Windows clone, it is also not a new desktop environment as it is based on RHEL Desktop 5. The key for us was getting the feature set these customers wanted, and then getting it into the channel for distribution," he said.

"We have partnered with Intel on this front, as the target customer tends to buy from white-box vendors, and Intel understands that market and its

market set extremely well," Riveros said. "The idea is to enable Intel's base of fast system builders with this desktop product."

Red Hat is also working closely with Intel to support and certify the wide range of hardware these system builders use, as this huge distribution channel is key to the success of the product and its reach. "The Red Hat global desktop has the ability to change the accessibility of technology for this market," he said.

Red Hat is training and enabling those system builders to do front-line support, which would escalate to Intel if not resolved, and finally to Red Hat.

"Intel is one of the largest certifiers of white boxes in the world, and so certifying to its products is crucial. Also, remember, it deploys systems that are much less expensive than traditional desktops," Riveros said.

Jonathan Blanford, a desktop engineer at Red Hat, said that a lot of the same components are being used in the One Laptop Per Child initiative and the global desktop, which is a very channel-friendly distribution.

The current plan is to release a new version every year so it will progress very quickly. It will only be supported for two years, compared with the seven for RHEL Desktop 5, which is on a two-year development schedule, designed for enterprise customers, and made available under a subscription plan, he said.

With regard to Fedora and the new desktop, Blanford said the two will continue to be developed in tandem, and the features and technology developed for Fedora will find their way into the global desktop. "They will be developed hand-in-hand, and what you see in one will be available in the other," he said.

Scott Crenshaw, vice president of Red Hat's Enterprise Linux platform business, said that when Red Hat first talked to customers about the new desktop plan, they told the company that pricing was one of the top considerations for it to be successful, "so we have made this very attractive for the system builders." Pricing will not be announced until July, when the product ships.

The new desktop is designed for system builders and will not, at least initially, conflict with Red Hat's own channel. "But we may, going forward, make this available to our own channel, but there should be no inherent conflict," Crenshaw said.

While there has been "extraordinary demand" for the product in Europe and the United States, Red Hat will first roll it out where it is most needed - with emerging countries, he said.

In an interview with eWEEK, Crenshaw bristled at the suggestion by some that the company is not serious about the desktop market.

"With this deal we have built a new and innovative support network that involves training qualified resellers, Intel and Red Hat. While there is no strong value proposition around Linux now for going after your grandfather and grandmother who might want to buy a computer, this initiative is a major expansion of our desktop into emerging markets," he said.

It would be hard to find another company making as many investments in the Linux desktop space as Red Hat, he said, noting that the global desktop is all open-source and is about providing offerings that people actually need.

While Red Hat is not interested in providing a Windows clone, its investments and delivery in the space are "unparalleled." It is also

important to remember that the global desktop is a for-profit initiative, he said. "The numbers are staggering, and we think we are going to do quite well," Crenshaw said.

Riveros said that the new desktop will help democratize technology, which is why the initial focus is on delivering it to emerging markets. "We want to see wide adoption of Linux desktops around the world, but providing a Windows clone has no value," he said.

Until now, this customer segment had three product choices: Buy Windows Starter edition, which does not have the functionality or applications they need; purchase Windows Vista, which is too expensive and requires an upgrade of their existing hardware; or download Linux, which did not give them the support and certification they needed, or have a brand name behind it, he said.

"We want to reach as many people around the world as possible. We believe that with this new distribution model, which is wider than anything that has been done in the past, and available on as many hardware platforms as possible, big and small, through our partnership with Intel, that we will be able to deliver this solution across the globe," Riveros said.

Copyright 2007 by Ziff Davis Media, Distributed by United Press International

Citation: Red Hat Shuns 'Windows Clone' Model for Global Desktop (2007, May 10) retrieved 24 April 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2007-05-red-hat-shuns-windows-clone.html

provided for information purposes only.