

Linux Foundation takes Linux pulse in progress report

April 5 2012, by Nancy Owano



(PhysOrg.com) -- A white paper updating 2011 highlights and progress in Linux kernel development has been released by The Linux Foundation, the vendor-neutral base for collaborations on the Linux kernel. "Linux Kernel Development: How Fast it is Going, Who is Doing It, What They are Doing, and Who is Sponsoring It" is authored by Jonathan Corbet, LWN.net, Greg Kroah-Hartman and Amanda McPherson, the latter two of The Linux Foundation.

This report covers a wide range of stats, from the number of files and lines in each kernel version to individual changes that go into each kernel release, to numbers of developers doing kernel development, to companies working on kernel improvements.

The number of different developers who are doing Linux kernel development and the identifiable companies who are sponsoring this work have been increasing over the different kernel versions, says the report. Statements like that really stand out, if one considers the earliest days of Linux, when coders down in the trenches of computer labs at big companies were warned not to do “Open Source stuff” during office hours. Corporate finance executives who did not grasp programming thought of Linux as a cult-like threat to capitalist growth. If Ballmer was calling Linux a “cancer,” some businesses also saw Linux as a threat to the way they thought businesses need to survive. The very idea of sharing changes with people across companies was far less familiar than staying proprietary. The difficulty in seeing the benefits of Open Source software development practices, and not just the operating system, threw up walls against Linux.

The walls are history. In addition to Red Hat stepping up to the plate to expand Linux for business, IBM also was one of the earlier industry heavyweights turning partners and clients on to Linux. Similar turnarounds happened quickly; in 2012 Linux is everywhere, running supercomputers, financial trades, and mobile devices.

This is the fourth update of the status report and in addition to stats the report talks about 2011 highlights, one among them being that the Linux kernel celebrated its twentieth anniversary along with the release of the 3.0 kernel. Another notable in 2011: Microsoft appeared on the list of the top-20 contributors for a kernel release. Microsoft ranks 17th, with a contribution estimated at 1 per cent of the whole.

The report not surprisingly names Red Hat, IBM, Intel, Novell, Oracle, and others as among key company contributors. The latest twist, as shown in the report’s graph, is that Samsung and Texas Instruments are rising stars as key contributors.

“There is an interesting trend to be seen in the following plot,” says the report, referring to the graph. “They correspond to the contributions from Samsung and Texas Instruments, both of which are prominent mobile and embedded companies. In recent years, the level of participation from this sector has been growing rapidly. It is worth noting that these companies are not only adding more hardware support to the kernel, they are also taking more responsibility for the advancement of core kernel areas like the scheduler and memory management.”

The report also accounts for [Linux](#) downs as well as ups last year. The [report](#) did not neglect to mention that in 2011 the central repository and distribution site for kernel [development](#), kernel.org, suffered a severe security breach and was offline for several weeks.

More information: www.linuxfoundation.org/publications/linux-foundation

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