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Linux reliability
Linux is computer science, Microsoft is computer hobbyist bloatware hacker.

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Many people don't understand what a computer is, or what it could be.Journalists often think computers are just glorified typewriters. If all you do is install the OS (operating system) and Office, Microsoft is just fine and will still be fine for a while. Computers can be so much more. At my brother's fiber optic company HP Unix boxes run million dollar test sets, automatically taking data. The data is sent to a human-readable database on a Unix server. My brother writes scripts that command programs to parse through the data and than automatically generate reports and spool them to the proper printers. All automatic. It operates each and every month. I suppose you could do it in Visual Basic but VB is a bloatware kludge for this type of work. My brother never leaves the command line, he never uses a GUI for this. GUIs don't need a command line but OSs do. Microsoft hides the command line. Microsoft hides the whole OS. They have blended OS, GUI, and application into one blob of code, with disastrous results.

I have a Linux firewall running on my DSL. My buddy set it up for me. I can see it would be a great place to take a backup snapshot of any of my 4 PCs that may or may not be powered on and then store the files on the Linux box, which is the only machine that is always on. It could also be used for taking security pictures and a thousand other scheduled tasks. I would also like to download my mail from my service provider and then distribute it to different workstations. An added bonus is that same machine could let me surf the web using Netscape, compose email, or spool to a printer.

Yet it is ease of use is the reason I have not done anything about this, despite being an engineer, I am terrified of using a system that I have to "mount" a floppy drive. What other voodoo is there? I dare not experiment because if I break it I will lose email and web access, which is a disaster for a small business. The 4-inch thick Sam's book on SUSE I bought will require me to take a 2 month sabbatical to figure out. I still cherish the Linux box because I can see it is closer and more in harmony with the actual hardware, which is what makes it so powerful. I hope to take an old 486 computer and hack on it so I can be less timid.

On the other hand, the Linux box has never crashed in two years-- never. I have had the old Netscape it runs go away but the OS is just fine. I think the entire hobbyist nature of Microsoft products can be summed up in the phrase: "Reboot for setting to take effect." Microsoft is a hacked, thrown-together OS so they could beat everybody else to market. Now it is an unmaintainable piece of corporate bloatware. Linux or Unix will predominate for webservers. Christ, Win2000 has so many memory leaks they recommend you reboot it every day as a server. Pathetic. And Microsoft bet the farm on Win2000 taking over the server market. Oh well. So now Microsoft faces Linux crawling

onto the desktops from the server side and the Palm OS crawling on from the hand-held side. Good. They deserve to get cut to ribbons in the crossfire of a two-front war.

Microsoft is desperately and pathetically trying to hold onto an obsolete business model. Their model is to lock you to proprietary file formats like .doc and invent features that force you to upgrade every year or two. The problem is that most programs have more features and complexity then most users, especially that admin, ever need or want. Does anyone OLE a bunch of Microsoft documents together? Nobody I know, including my PhD pals. Just too ugly to tie everything up like that.

It's like the emperors new clothes, where the only reason anybody upgrades is because other people upgrade and you have to in order to be able to read this year's file formats. Unconscionable. Linux is a part of a much bigger thing-- standard file formats. To say that Microsoft standardized is like saying Attila the Hun standardized-- his way or die. ASCII and HTML and .gif and .jpg and .mp3, those are real standards and Microsoft hates them because file format standards free us from the need to slam that upgrade needle in our arm every year.

Microsoft is rapidly becoming as evil as the government because they expect to be a taxation entity. They expect us to sent a few hundred bucks to Microsoft every single year. Not a few of us. All of us. Forever. Their .net initiative as well as their breaking and now bastardizing JAVA was to keep us as bond slaves and keep that easy money rolling in. Proprietary server OS serving proprietary Active Server Pages that can only be read on proprietary browsers all made by Microsoft.

Every businessman is faced with the choice: Do I do what's best for my customers, even if it does not maximize my revenue today, and trust that they will support me in the long run or do I screw them while pulling their wallet out of their back pocket? Bill's decisions are always to screw us in order to keep this quarter's financials nice and rosy. Well that was OK as long as he outperformed the morons at WordPerfect and Novell who never got it and probably never will. But I really don't need an Excel spreadsheet that has streaming media in the cells or whatever bullshit Microsoft is figuring will make me upgrade one more time.

Linux is close. Very very close. My mail is already Netscape. If I publish in HTML and pdf and find a decent spreadsheet I'm there. I will need Microsoft for my engineering CAD tools but remember, a lot of the most hardcore tools were done in UNIX and only lately went to NT. How poetic that they will be getting ported back. One force driving me is that I am one of those stupid Midwesterners who is honest. I actually buy all my software legal. If I want to grow my business and not buy more Microsoft products, Linux will free me from that odious task. Even if the Linux office suite is 80 bucks that's way better then Microsoft. The important thing is that the OS is free, robust and maintainable.

Once the dam breaks and we see the emperor without clothes [how's that for a mixed metaphor?] Microsoft will shrink to whatever size a much smaller market dictates. My young college buddies look at Microsoft the way I looked at IBM 20 years ago--the old-school, bloated, dull, vaguely evil place that hires a few smart kids who will spend the rest of their lives perennially screwing their classmates in order to have their palms crossed with silver. Microsoft's glory days are ending. Good riddance. Remember that the micro-channel

and OS2 was the proprietary monstrosity IBM hoped would blunt the open-system PC. That, and the mentality that fostered it, set IBM back 10 years and billions of dollars. The .net initiative is Microsoft's micro-channel. Serves them right. And is serves them right from a Linux box running Apache.

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