Linux Expo @ UBS

Martin Sjölin abc

May 8, 1997

1 What is UBS?

Union Bank of Switzerland, or shorter UBS, is one of Switzerland three largest banks, with offices all around the world. The number of employees are 30000 in total. Currently, UBS has 25000 PC running mainly Windows 3.11; 800-900 Novell NetWare server (3.11 or 4.11); around 800 applications server and around 1000 workstation running Solaris; and at least 3000 printers.

I work in the system development section (SYBS[1]) where we are mainly using workstations and server running Solaris 2.5.1 in UNIX universe. We produce our own "repackaged" Solaris release, named OpenLAN, which is used on the productive UNIX servers. The OpenLAN release includes perl, tcl/tk, etc., in other words the normal set of UNIX tools, but in package format. Notice the world "package" above. All software is delivered and installed in a Solaris (Sys V) package for easy installation and removal.

2 Why LINUX?

Quite a few of the employees have a PC at home and for those working with or on the UNIX side, it is (or would be) quite natural to install Linux at home. Linux provides an ideal environment for learning more about UNIX in general, about system administration, and the UNIX tools. Also, a Linux system is not resource hungry, nor expensive to setup. Today it is possible to buy a shrink wrapped installation on a CD-ROM, and you do not need to be technical export to install Linux on your machine (not like the good old time with release 0.11, right?).

3 Preface

In the building where our section is located, there is an area which is used for one month long exposition about different subjects. The subjects ranges from information about different parts of UBS; about security policies; or about employees personal interests: astronomy (prompted by the Hale-Bopp comet ?); model plan flying etc. The available area is approximately four by four meters, with two panels for posters.

Last summer, Alois Camenzind thought that a small expo about Linux would be a nice idea. This would enable us to spread information what Linux is; what is useful for; and that Linux is a "real" UNIX system. After getting the "OK" for Linux expo, Camenzind contact different employees within the section who had expressed knowledge or interested

[1]System and Basic Services

about Linux. We formed a inofficial working group, which began to prepare the expo. The main work would be to produce posters with information about Linux (and Linus T.), getting resources (machines), setting up the machines, and contacting interesting companies for information and products.

4 The Linux Expo

We ended up with two Intel 486 Compaq boxes which were setup running the Linux kernel version 2.0.12 (the last stable release at that time). We used the RedHat Rembrandt Beta II distribution as provided from RedHat. A SPARCstation 5, running kernel version 2.0.16 with the SPARC Redhat distribution, was also on display, to show the multiple platform support.

We setup a Apache 1.1.1 WWW server running on of one of the Compaq machines. The WWW server had a "preloaded" cache with HTML pages from the SSC web site, `sunsite.unc.edu`, the Swiss Linux User Group, as well as other interesting Linux related web-sites [2].

The WWW server also served as NFS server for the smaller Compaq w for binaries and sources. The NFS server made it possible for interested people witin UBS to get more information via HTTP, or mounting the exported file system via NFS to get up-to-date kernel sources.

X11 was running on all machines, and we also a subset of the (application) packages provided in distribution to give an example of what is included in a typical Linux distribution. To show an example of an commercial application running under Linux, we installed a demo copy of Applix. We configured the machine to start Netscape, when a user logged in, displaying our WWW server home page with pointer to the cached pages and other collect material. Thus inviting the user to start browsing and discover more information about Linux.

Behind the machines (see the photograph) was the panels with posters about Linux (all in German): What is Linux?; Information sources for Linux; The GNU General Public License (GPL); Linux development history; Linux Time Line; and Who is Linus Torvalds? We also made information provided by SSC and RedHat available besides the machines.

During display, anyone could just walk up to one of them and login. Then (s)he could playing with the system, start X applications or just browse the local web via Netscape. We also provided a mirror of the latest release of kernel as well as a Linux distribtion which the user could make a copy of.

5 Summary

The machines and materials where on displaying without anybody from the working group watching or being there, expect during lunch time or the coffee breaks, but the whole idea was to make a display which invited people to sit down and expore the Linux systems.

Walking by the area at different times during the day (or for some of us - night or evenings), we saw people sitting down, logging in, and playing with the Linux machines. And taking into account that most of the material (SCC flyers etc) put on display had to be renewed every week, people were quite interested in what Linux could provide.

[2] We are behind a firewall and to make information generally available during the Expo, we selected to load the cache on Apache proxyserver.

What consumed most of our time were getting the information about Linux and the history from the net, preparing the demonstration machines; making the presentation panels; and setting up the WWW cache. Once everything was in place, we only had to update the mirror material and once in a while reboot the machines to insure proper operation.

6 Acknowledges

The Linux Expo would never have been a reality without the work of Alois Camenzind who was the driving force behind the project. Further, we are thankful to the help from our section, SYBS, which provided the Compaq PCs for running Linux. Also, thanks to RedHat, Linux Journal and SSC for providing material and software.

At last, thanks to the people who spent endless time preparing the hardware, setting up the software, keeping an eye on the expo during during one month and also prepared the material. In alphabetic order: Joe Amman (`Joe.Amman@Ubs.CH`), Alois Camenzind (`Alois.Camenzind@Ubs.CH`), Thomas Oettli (`Thomas.Oettli@Ubs.CH`), Jürg Wanner (`Jurg.Wanner@Ubs.CH`), and Hansjörg Zürcher ((`Hansjurg.Zurcher@Ubs.CH`).

Author

Martin Sjölin moved to Zurich (Switzerland) in July 1995, where he works at UBS (Union Bank of Switzerland) with System Management issues for Solaris machines and recently started to explore the NT 4.0 univese. In his spare time he enjoys telemarsk skiing, cooking, running, windsurfing or reading when he is not hacking on of his Linux systems.