

Putting Linux to Work in Ireland

Almost every computer industry survey shows that the use of Linux as an enterprise-class operating system is increasing strongly year on year - but what does that mean for Irish businesses? SecureLinx, IBM's "Leader for Linux" Business Partner in Ireland reckon they have the answer -and it's an answer based on real project successes and experiences with Linux.

Linux has always been hailed as a shining example of Open Source collaboration between thousands of developers, resulting in a rock solid enterprise class operating system. "Most people accept that Linux is a great technology - but how it best fits in their own IT environments isn't always immediately obvious to them. That's where our expertise comes into play" says Brian Farrell, Technical Operations Director for SecureLinx.

SecureLinx has been actively deploying Linux solutions and projects in Ireland since 2002, building a reputation for excellence amongst its growing list of customers. "Our goal from the start was to take global adoption trends for Linux and adapt them to suit local market requirements here in Ireland" explains Farrell, "There was an information and technology gap between the benefits that people could see happening elsewhere and how they could apply these to their own business". SecureLinx was the first organisation in Ireland to offer formal Linux Strategy Workshops to Irish businesses, a service it finds in growing demand today. These workshops highlight the areas where Linux benefits and cost savings can most readily accrue for the individual customer.

Farrell reckons that customers are now far more aware and accepting of Linux and its capabilities, and the desire to deploy it for business advantage has risen accordingly. He observes that



Brian Farrell, Secure Linx.

"These days it's less about advocacy and more about project identification and delivery." - and the projects are happening- SecureLinx has deployed Linux solutions across Government, Financial, Media, Health care and Insurance sectors.

So if Irish customers appear to be prepared to commit to Linux far more readily than they have done in the past, what areas are "hot" for Linux adoption right now? SecureLinx sees six key solution areas driving Linux adoption in Ireland - Infrastructure, Migration, Applications, Server Consolidation, Clustering and Linux Desktops.

Server Infrastructure is generally the first Linux project for most organisations - File and Print with SAMBA on Linux is a simple low risk starting point that provides a quick return on investment. Larger migration projects, involving a step-by-step move away from proprietary operating systems are becoming more widespread, as users gain confidence with Linux. Applications such as email, Databases and ERP solutions on Linux are also far more common, with more and more enterprises trusting Linux for these mission critical environments. Server Consolidation is still a pressing issue for many companies, as traditional "one

application per server" doctrines have left them with sprawling management and cost issues. The consolidation of IT services on Linux allows for greater efficiencies and server density, either through Blade technology or via offerings like IBM's Linux based Open Power platform. Observed savings through consolidation can range from 35-60% depending on the environment. High Availability clustering, once the preserve of only the largest organisations is a great price performer on Linux and is now within the reach of the SME sector, while Linux Desktop adoption looks to be maturing fast. "We've been very encouraged by recent trends in Ireland for Linux Desktop adoption. Customers are prepared to really look hard at Linux on the desktop now, believing it will be a good enough fit for their needs, and when the maths makes sense, everything else tends to follow".

So Linux is everywhere - it's just a question of how best to reach out and grasp it...

But is Linux just a point solution to a point problem? Farrell believes not. He says that while some of the customers who are now enjoying the benefits of Linux may have started in point-mode, they soon progressed beyond that level when they realised that the flexibility, reliability

and security that Linux offered could be turned into tangible cost savings by further strategic adoption. "The capability to re-purpose and re-apply Linux solutions at very low cost across the enterprise is a key factor" says Farrell. "Lower cost computing without compromising performance helps create business agility, an issue of growing importance for the years ahead"

A good example of successful strategic Linux adoption is Ogilvy & Mather, the worldwide advertising agency, who on the back of successful project work with SecureLinx in Dublin have begun rolling out identical Linux platform solutions globally, with SecureLinx acting as the key skills provider. The solution has been so successful that IBM Corporate selected it as a reference model of Linux adoption, and in a published IBM Case Study Yuri Aguiar Worldwide CTO of Ogilvy & Mather states, "We made a strategic decision to adopt Linux globally, and teamed up with SecureLinx to start the rollout."

IBM in Ireland appear to agree with Mr Aguiar's assessment as they recently presented SecureLinx with their inaugural Open Source Business Partner of the Year award for 2004. "This recognition from IBM is a great vote of confidence in our capabilities as an Irish company to deliver genuine business value with Linux for our customers" says John Gray SecureLinx Managing Director.

Making Linux understandable and valuable to businesses in Ireland, looks to be paying off for SecureLinx and its customers and if the analysts are right both groups look to be headed in the right direction. If this topic strikes you as relevant to your own business, call SecureLinx on (01) 2059878, or visit us at www.securelinx.com