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Linux is being Kicked Around: Why?

Today I read an article by a journalist with quotes by analysts about Linux and how difficult that it will be to move to Linux from Windows and from UNIX in some cases. Then there is this book written by someone named Kenneth Brown based on a study of Linux and its derivation. Mr. Brown says that Linux may have been derived from UNIX and that some open source types do not respect others IP. UNIX code is in various operating systems. In the early 1980's when I was learning to be a UNIX kernel programmer, I picked up a copy of Lyon's annotated UNIX book. His book had the source code for one of the early releases of UNIX from Bell Labs along with a description of what many of the C statements meant. Anyone could have used that code and most likely did.

So, what is really new here? Basically, nothing as far as I can tell. We already know that Bell Labs code was the basis for BSD UNIX. BSD UNIX and UNIX System V traded code back and forth for several years in the 1980s. When BSD UNIX shops decided to move to System V as their commercial platform, they sometimes moved BSD code with their application just to make the porting process easier. This is common knowledge.

I don't expect to see many users migrating from Windows to Linux and so far that has been the case. It is a difficult task to move from a shop filled with Windows platforms to Linux for various reasons. One of which is that the people in the shop probably don't want to move (they might be replaced with Linux folks), and then there is the question of application availability, re-training, etc. All of which may be expensive. The real battle between Linux and Windows has not taken place. We are in a staging position on that one. In two or three years, when UNIX begins to drop even more market share, Linux and Windows will begin a death struggle to replace UNIX. And Linux will win.

Based on the work that I have done over the past few years, few UNIX shops would drag their feet on moving to Linux. But we have to wait until Linux is ready to replace UNIX. We are certainly moving in that directly, and moving quickly. Linux is already dominating new sales in high performance computing, and it is moving UNIX aside in financial services and in other market segments where compute and data-intensive applications exist.

Did we really expect Linux to be where it is today back in 2000? I didn't. Linux is basically a new operating system when compared to UNIX and Windows. But it is being developed faster than any other operating system in history. Why? Because of open source. The business value of open source for users, software suppliers, and ISVs is overwhelming. I won't go into that here, but you can read my upcoming article in *LinuxWorld Magazine* on the business value of open source.