



OPINION BY STEVEN J. VAUGHAN-NICHOLS

## Open source has won, and Microsoft has surrendered

Many Linux users are ticked off and anxious about Microsoft joining the Linux Foundation. They are missing the real significance of that move.

By Steven J. Vaughan-Nichols | Follow

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Many Linux fans greeted the news that Microsoft is joining the Linux Foundation with anxiety-fueled anger.

For example, spooling through Reddit and my Google+ comment feed, I found these sorts of reactions:

"This will destroy Linux."

"Trump is elected president and now this..."

"Do people not realize that Microsoft has a strong economic incentive to see Linux fail? ... That blows my f\*\*\*ing mind that anything good can ever come out of this."

"That's the, 'embrace' part. Next is, 'extend.' [And, then extinguish]"

I asked Roy Schestowitz, editor of TechRights, what he thought about the deal. He told me:

*I have covered Microsoft's interference with FOSS [free and open-source software] for over a decade and carefully studied even pertinent antitrust documents. I know the company's way of thinking when it comes to undermining their competition*

*The pattern of embrace and extend (to extinguish) — all this while leveraging software patents to make Linux a Microsoft cash cow or compel OEMs to preinstall privacy-hostile Microsoft software/apps with proprietary formats (lockin) — never ended. What I see in the Linux Foundation right now is what I saw in Nokia 5 years ago and in Novell 10 years ago — the very thing that motivated me to start BoycottNovell, a site that has just turned 10 with nearly 22,000 blog posts. It is a saddening day because it's a culmination, after years of Microsoft 'micro' payments to the Linux Foundation (e.g. event sponsorship in exchange for keynote positions), which will have Microsoft shoved down the throats of GNU/Linux proponents and give an illusion of peace when there is none, not just on the patent front but also other fronts (see what Microsoft's partner*



Here's an excellent job of summing up why many Linux people are having fits about Microsoft joining the Linux Foundation. I've been covering Linux since the beginning, 25 years ago, and I can add to his list Microsoft's sponsoring SCO's Linux attacks. Let's face it: Microsoft didn't earn its nickname, "The Evil Empire" for nothing.



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Microsoft was scared of Linux for years. And it did what any frightened animal does: It attacked and attacked and attacked.

But that was then. This is now.

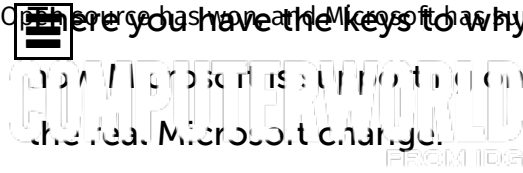
Where I disagree with Schestowitz and company is I believe Microsoft has fundamentally changed. Sure, Microsoft is still collecting money for its bogus Android/Linux patents. That won't stop. Microsoft is a public company, and it makes more money from Android than it ever did from its own Microsoft mobile operating systems. And, yes, Microsoft still wants you to buy Windows for your desktop.

But — and this is a big one — neither of those are going to grow revenue. Microsoft's future is in servers, services and the cloud. And what do all those run on? Ding! Ding! Ding! Open source and Linux.

Take a good hard look at Microsoft's last quarter. Azure's revenue grew by 116% year over year. Microsoft's profit margin from its cloud platform? A whopping 49%.

Guess what. Four out of 10 server instances running on Azure are Linux. Their numbers are increasing by leaps and bounds. The foundation may be Windows Server, but the building is Linux.

Wim Coekaerts, until recently corporate vice president of Microsoft Enterprise Open Source Group, recently told me, "Satya [Nadella, Microsoft's CEO] is very customer-centric. If [our customers] run Linux, and they often do, we want to make them happy. We have to play in an open, heterogeneous world." He added, "Microsoft actually uses a lot of Linux in-house. It's no longer everything has to be run on Windows internally." Microsoft is doing this, he said, because "we're solving business problems and we're very pragmatic."



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Microsoft realizes that Linux and open-source software have won. It knows that its customers want it, and it wants to make them happy. It's really that simple.

Embrace, extend and extinguish worked for Microsoft when it took over the Internet browser market. But the Web was just coming together and there were no standards. Linux, on the other hand, is long established. Open source, by its very nature, makes it easy to extend software but nigh on impossible to extinguish it.

No, Microsoft had two choices. It could try things the same old way — the way that many Linux fans are sure it's still doing. Or it could change its ways and work with Linux and open-source software.

This isn't Bill Gates' or Steve Ballmer's Microsoft. They were all about total market domination. This is Nadella's Microsoft, and he wants to work with others. As Jim Zemlin, the Linux Foundation's executive director, told me, "Microsoft has grown and matured in its use of and contributions to open-source technology. The company has become an enthusiastic supporter of Linux and of open source and a very active member of many important projects."

Today, believe it or not, we're no longer caught in a war between proprietary and open-source software. Open source has won, and Microsoft wants to be on the winning side.

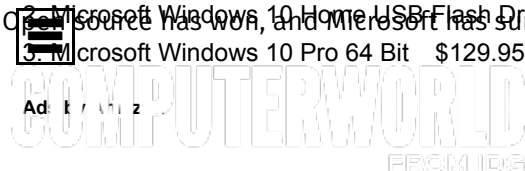
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*Steven J. Vaughan-Nichols has been writing about technology and the business of technology since CP/M-80 was the cutting-edge PC operating system, 300bps was a fast Internet connection, WordStar was the state-of-the-art word processor, and we liked it!*

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