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Big business go big on Linux

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Linux is continuing to play a larger and larger role in big business, but it's always nice to see cold, hard proof that this is true. [The Linux Foundation](#), the nonprofit organization dedicated to accelerating Linux's growth, published "[Linux Adoption Trends: A Survey of Enterprise End Users](#)." This report shows that Linux is continuing to grab market share from Unix and Windows, and it's doing it with mission-critical applications.

Admittedly, the 1,900 people surveyed were both from The Linux Foundation's Enterprise End User Council as well as other companies and government organizations, but I feel the results still were valid. And, unlike similar surveys, sponsored by proprietary software companies where you have to dig to find out who paid for the research and who's actually being surveyed, the Linux Foundation comes right out and tells you "

In particular, the Foundation and its partner in the survey, engineering and management firm [Yeoman Technology Group](#), focused on larger enterprise companies and government organizations -- those with $500 million or more a year in revenues or greater than 500 employees.

These businesses are moving to Linux far faster than they are to Windows or Unix. Given that we already knew of their interest in Linux, that's not too surprising. What was surprising was that conventional wisdom is that Unix users are the most likely to switch to Linux. While it's true that Unix users are migrating to Linux, it turns out that, by a few percentage points, Windows users at 36.6% are more likely to be heading to Linux than Unix, 31.4%.

What's bringing big business over from Windows? The flip answer to this question used to always be one word: cost. Linux is cheaper than the alternatives. But while total cost of ownership (TCO) remains a strong number two, the first reason these days for people to switch to Linux is its perceived technical superiority and features.

Curiously, while the recession played a role in people moving to Linux, 58.6% of users said the recession hadn't played a role. I guess it really is the features!

In addition, there's also security, which came in third on the list, followed by in-house

IT Linux staff experience, and not being locked into a single vendor.

I think that last point isn't given enough weight by many companies. If you don't like your Microsoft support and service contract, what are you going to do? It's not like you can quit Windows Server 2008 R2 cold-turkey. If you use say Red Hat's Red Hat Enterprise Linux, Oracle really wants to talk to you about their take on RHEL. There are also open-source communities like CentOS with their RHEL versions that will be happy to support you. In short, you really do have a choice and that means lower costs in Linux are here to say.

While most of this study focused on the server, which is Linux's strongest point, I was interested in seeing that 36.4% of businesses reported some Linux desktop use in their company. The survey didn't dig into this any deeper, but I was reminded once again that it's almost impossible to get accurate number on desktop Linux users. The usual numbers show Linux having no more than 1% or so of all users. I strongly suspect though that there are many more Linux users out there if you only counted technically adept users, developers, and IT staff rather than everyone and their grandma still running Windows 2000 at home.

Looking ahead, the future looks brighter than ever for Linux. When it comes to the cloud, this group isn't jumping into the cloud, but if they are already there, or they plan to sometime soon, over 70% of them plan on using Linux. Windows comes in a distant second at 18.3% with Unix in the rear at 11.4%.

It's not all great news. the survey also showed that Linux still has its problems to overcome as well. I'll save talking about those in my next Computerworld blog.

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