10 reasons why Linux will triumph over Windows

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Windows 7 may be generating some positive buzz, but Jack Wallen remains skeptical. In fact, he says it's only a matter of time before Linux takes its rightful spot at the top of the OS heap.

I have an announcement. The error of Microsoft's ways is finally catching up and will cause the once-invincible juggernaut to kneel before that which is Linux. How is this? Microsoft started a tiny snowball when it released Windows Me. That snowball did nothing but gain momentum. There have been ups and downs along the way (XP being an up, for sure). But for the most part, the court of public opinion has steady lost faith in what once was considered the heart of personal computing.

If you don't believe me, read on.

Note: This article is also available as a PDF download.

1: Inconsistent Windows releases

One of the things you can always count on from Microsoft is that you can't count on its new operating systems to be reliable. Let's take a look at the individual releases:

Windows 95: Revolutionized personal computing.
Windows 98: Attempted to improve on Windows 95; failed miserably.
Windows Me: A joke, plain and simple.
Windows NT: Attempted to bring enterprise-level seriousness to the operating system; would have succeeded had it not taken Steven Hawking-like intelligence to get it working.
Windows XP: Brought life back to the failing Windows operating system. It hadn't been since Windows 95 that the operating system was this simple.
Windows Vista: See Windows Me.

With this in mind, what do we expect from Windows 7? Myself, not much.

2: Consistent Linux releases

Converse to number 1, you have the far more consistent releases of the various Linux distributions. Yes, there have been a few dips along the way (Fedora 9 being one of them). But for the most part, the climb for Linux has been steadily upward. Nearly every Linux distribution has improved with age. And this improvement isn't limited to the kernel. Look at how desktops, end-user software, servers, security, admin tools, etc., have all improved over time. Once could easily argue that KDE 4 is an

example of a sharp decrease in improvement. However, if you look at how quickly KDE 4 has improved from 4.0 to 4.3 you can see nothing but gains. This holds true with applications and systems across the board with Linux.

3. Continuing Windows price hikes

Recently, I have had a number of long-time Microsoft administrators asking my advice on solid replacements for Exchange. The reason? Microsoft changed its licensing for Exchange to a per-user seat. Now anyone who logs on to an Exchange server must have a license. You have 100 employees (including administrators) who need to log on to Exchange? Pony up! This gets serious when your company starts having to cough up the money for 500+ Exchange licenses. The very idea that Microsoft would make such a bold change to licenses is made even more ridiculous considering the current state of the economy. Companies worldwide are having to scale back. And like Exxon Mobile celebrating record profits amid the catastrophe known as Hurricane Katrina, Microsoft creating such a cost barrier while the globe is facing serious recession is irresponsible and reprehensible.

4. Stable Linux "prices"

Converse to number 3, the prices of open source software licenses have remained the same — $0.00. When those administrators come to me asking for open source replacements for Exchange I point them to eGroupware and Open-X-Change. Both are outstanding groupware tools that offer an even larger feature set than their Microsoft equivalent. Both are reliable, scalable, secure, and free. The only cost you will have with either is the hardware they are installed upon. And with both packages, there is no limit to the amount of users that can be set up. One user, 1,000 users — it's all good with open source software.

5: Windows hardware incompatibility

Microsoft Vista was a nightmare when it came to hardware compatibility. Not only was Vista incompatible with numerous peripherals, it took supercomputer-level iron to run the operating system! Sure this was a boon to Intel, which stood to make a pretty shiny penny. Intel knew a good amount of the public would be shelling out for new hardware, and the new hardware would cost more because it had to be faster to run Vista in all its Aero glory. But even hardware that would run nearly any other OS with lightening-fast speed was brought to a slow, grinding halt with Vista.

6: Linux hardware compatibility

Converse to number 5, Linux continues to advance in the category of hardware compatibility. Take Xorg, for example. Recent developments with the star of Linux' graphical desktops have the X Windows server running sans xorg.conf. This was done primarily because the system had grown so good at detecting hardware. And so long as there wasn't a cheap KVM between your monitor and your PC, Xorg would easily find the mode for your display and run X properly. With new distributions (such as Fedora 10), X configuration is becoming a thing of the past. Most other pieces of hardware are finding the same level of recognition.

7: Windows promises

I wanted to save this for last, but seeing as how it is number 7... We've all heard the pundits proclaiming Windows 7 will be the resurrection of the Microsoft operating system. But I recall this same proclamation with nearly every release from Redmond. Windows Vista was going to revolutionize the way the user interfaced with the computer. Vista was going to be the operating system you would never notice. Instead, Vista refused to NOT let you notice. And Windows Me was going to take Windows 98 and make it far more simple for the average user. What did it really do? Remove nearly every actual functioning system in the operating system, leaving little more than a browser and an e-mail client.

Everyone is always fond of saying the next Windows release will redefine the personal computer. But the public has finally reached such a point of apathy for Microsoft's up and coming, the majority doesn't even realize something new is coming out. The media can continue to push Windows 7, but the public will continue using XP until Microsoft pries it from its cold, dead fingers. And of course no one really knows when Windows 7 will land. How many dates Microsoft announces vs. how many dates change will probably be a 1:1 ratio.

8: Linux transparency

Converse to 7... The next release of any Linux distribution is never shrouded in mystery. Because of the nature of open source, the release candidates are always available to the public (and not on a limited basis), and the timeline is always made available. Any user can know exactly when a feature-freeze happens for a release of any distribution. And all Linux distributions work under the "full disclosure" model. Because of this, there is little false advertising going on with Linux. And unlike with Microsoft, you will never hear of a distribution claiming that its next release will revolutionize computing. If you go to the Fedora Project Wiki, you can view all the proposed and accepted features that will be included in the next release. You can also view the completed release schedule, where you will see that Fedora 11 has set an alpha release of 02/03/09, a beta release of 03/24/09, and a final release of 05/26/09. These dates are fairly firm and almost always on target.

9: Feature comparison

Let's compare the feature lists of Windows 7 and Fedora 11.

Windows 7: OS X-like Doc, Multi-touch screen, mapping application similar to Google Earth, Hyper-Visor virtualization, location-aware apps, User Access Control improvements, Sidebar removal.
Fedora 11: 20-second boot time, btrfs file system, Better C++ support, Cups PolicyKit integration, DNS Security (DNS SECurity), ext4 default file system, Fingerprint reader integration, IBUS input method replaces SCIM (to overcome limitations), GNOME 2.26, KDE 4.2, Windows cross-compiler inclusion.

If you look at those features in and of themselves, you could easily argue that either one could be the more impressive list (depends upon your bias). But understand that the Fedora 11 features are added on an already outstanding operating system, whereas the Windows 7 features are being added to a lesser operating system. And what Microsoft is proclaiming to be the biggest improvement (multi-touch) doesn't actually improve the operating system and also requires, surprise, new hardware! To get the most out of Fedora 11, you'll be good to go with what you already have.

10: Hardware requirements

Vista-lite? Out of the mouths of Microsoft comes the proclamation that Windows 7 will run on any hardware that would run Vista and even slightly less powerful hardware. Slightly less powerful? What exactly does that mean? Well for one, Windows 7 will have no luck in the netbook market. And since XP is dying, the netbook market will be owned by Linux. Netbooks are not gaining enough power to run anything from Windows but the watered-down version of XP. Netbooks are not going anywhere, and consumers (both home and corporate) have their limits on how many hardware upgrades they will make to fulfill an operating systems' needs. As of Fedora 10, the minimum system requirements look like something out of the mid '90s.

Your take

In your opinion, has the court of public opinion already condemned Microsoft to failure or will Windows 7 pull Microsoft out of the muck and mire created by Vista? Will Linux continue its climb above Microsoft?

Jack Wallen was a key player in the introduction of Linux to the original TechRepublic. Beginning with Red Hat 4.2 and a mighty soap box, Jack had found his escape from Windows. It was around Red Hat 6.0 that Jack landed in the hallowed halls of TechRepublic. Read his full bio and profile.

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If we moved away from office NEW SinisterSlay | 02/17/09

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yeah it sucks NEW SinisterSlay | 02/17/09

That is one reason many of us look for options NEW jdclyde | 02/18/09

Never limit yourself by blind brand loyalty??? NEW long@... | 02/17/09

Have never had issues with the Domino server NEW jdclyde | 02/17/09

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SinisterSlay NEW skascooter007@... | 02/17/09

The problem with switching it with linux is NEW SinisterSlay | 02/17/09

I buy based on support NEW Neon Samurai | 02/17/09

It has all been said here but I'll add my 2cents as well NEW rclark@... | 02/18/09

It's just not going to happen. NEW marvin.novello@... | 02/18/09

why corporates won't adopt linux on the desktop NEW paul+techrepublic@... | 02/18/09

"I cut our IT costs from .25 million to 75 thousand .." NEW Neon Samurai | 02/18/09

A question, paul NEW jdclyde | 02/18/09

incompatible hardware changes perhaps NEW SinisterSlay | 02/18/09

Populartity will be Linux downfall NEW mengland@... | 02/18/09

Always with the free = no cost corollaries NEW Tony Hopkinson | 02/18/09

back to XP NEW charl.asia@... | 02/18/09

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Bundling and Familiarity NEW BayernEagle@... | 02/14/09

Actually I quite like Vista NEW Tony Hopkinson | 02/14/09

Don't like Fedora either. NEW boxfiddler | 02/14/09

It worked on a live CD NEW Tony Hopkinson | 02/14/09

I had that problem, too. NEW boxfiddler | 02/14/09

I prefer NEW mamies@... | 02/15/09

I used to... but when one BIOS upgrade has Vista demanding reactivation, NEW HypnoToad | 02/17/09

An OEM, presumably ? NEW Tony Hopkinson | 02/17/09

You Missed Windows 2000 NEW PVBenn | 02/14/09

And the "Nutshell Summation Award" goes to NEW Palmetto | 02/14/09

The corporate application set and Linux NEW NickNielsen | 02/14/09

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Beautifully put Nick NEW magic8ball | 02/16/09

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Well, for years Adobe support Mac... NEW HypnoToad | 02/17/09

The same type of thing is holding me back NEW JackOfAllTech | 02/17/09

If They Could NEW FastEddie2009 | 02/15/09

Quibbles NEW Palmetto | 02/14/09

2000 and XP NEW SinisterSlay | 02/14/09

2k never gave me any trouble. NEW boxfiddler | 02/14/09

2k never game me troubles either NEW computermacgyver@... | 02/15/09

2K was great NEW magic8ball | 02/16/09

Sigh NEW Oz_Media | 02/16/09

damn you NEW jdclyde | 02/16/09

They are the best notebooks by a long shot NEW Oz_Media | 02/16/09

I've got a usb to serial dongle NEW Forum Surfer | 02/17/09

9" sticking out? shocked NEW jdclyde | 02/17/09

Yeah I wanted a ThinkPad or a MacBook NEW Forum Surfer | 02/17/09

Newer laptops don't have a printer port either NEW NickNielsen | 02/17/09

com ports... NEW JackOfAllTech | 02/17/09

We discussed those NEW jdclyde | 02/18/09

Win2K and later. NEW craftamics@... | 02/18/09

Lots of reasons for that crash NEW jdclyde | 02/15/09

Excellent article, Jack NEW NickNielsen | 02/14/09

2000 was not a desktop OS NEW zaine_ridling | 02/15/09

'Scuse? NEW NickNielsen | 02/15/09

Negative. NEW Palmetto | 02/15/09

Laughing with you, not at you.... NEW jdclyde | 02/15/09

Gotta disagree. NEW Palmetto | 02/17/09

Ok ok ok NEW jdclyde | 02/17/09

2000 WAS a desktop os NEW computermacgyver@... | 02/15/09

Uh... "2000 was not a desktop OS"? Really? NEW Parrish S. Knight | 02/18/09

laugh laugh NEW NickNielsen | 02/18/09

Have you followed... NEW DHCDBD | 02/14/09

Maybe, but I don't see it that way. NEW alka_trash@... | 02/14/09

RE: 10 reasons why Linux will triumph over Windows NEW davidimoore@... | 02/14/09

Not so fast NEW zaine_ridling | 02/15/09

Not So Fast - Not so fast NEW thonea@... | 02/15/09

Visual studio, coding for dumbies? NEW SinisterSlay | 02/15/09

COBOL, coding for dummies? NEW NickNielsen | 02/15/09

One of my favorite quotes: NEW JackOfAllTech | 02/17/09

How does readability make COBOL a language for dumbies? NEW Palmetto | 02/15/09

if it does the job, why change NEW SinisterSlay | 02/15/09

At least you're willing to admin your ignorance. NEW Palmetto | 02/15/09

Think about it NEW NickNielsen | 02/15/09

There have been thousands of languages NEW jdclyde | 02/16/09

When clueless, one should keep his mouth shut NEW adornoe@... | 02/18/09

Python NEW Oz_Media | 02/18/09

"Easy maintenance was the intent." NEW Palmetto | 02/18/09

Care to back any of your points up with more than snide remarks? NEW estcst@... | 02/16/09

Quibbles NEW Tony Hopkinson | 02/15/09

Nutshell? NEW davidimoore@... | 02/15/09

I assumed you were citing some strengths, NEW Tony Hopkinson | 02/15/09

Any Different NEW FastEddie2009 | 02/15/09

Upgrade woes are indeed expected NEW Tony Hopkinson | 02/16/09

Display? NEW FastEddie2009 | 02/16/09

Have n't pinned it down yet NEW Tony Hopkinson | 02/16/09

RE: 10 reasons why Linux will triumph over Windows NEW 24dhruv@... | 02/15/09

Nothing in IT is 'FOREVER'. NEW Palmetto | 02/15/09

except for the waste NEW mamies@... | 02/15/09

Hasn't Linux been "triumphing" Windows for around 12 years now? NEW charles.bundy@... | 02/15/09

Depends on your victory NEW Tony Hopkinson | 02/15/09

Curious, why did Nix lose the world? NEW SinisterSlay | 02/15/09

The world changed. NEW Palmetto | 02/15/09

no, not the way it worked. NEW jdclyde | 02/15/09

But if not for 1-2-3, NEW Palmetto | 02/15/09

Horse and cart NEW jdclyde | 02/15/09

because you had to know something to use it NEW jdclyde | 02/15/09

Huh? NEW Tony Hopkinson | 02/15/09

Unix never lost server base, never won desktop. NEW charles.bundy@... | 02/15/09

For servers, yes. NEW jdclyde | 02/15/09

Indeed you are correct about UNIX servers JD! NEW charles.bundy@... | 02/15/09

Issue with desktops NEW jdclyde | 02/16/09

Don't 4get the leak of resources it suffers after hours/days of use NEW renecastillo75@... | 02/15/09

Repeat after me nerds... NEW lethality@... | 02/15/09

Hate when people talk in third person NEW jdclyde | 02/15/09

No AV? NEW The 'G-Man.' | 02/17/09

at that pesky server market? NEW Neon Samurai | 02/17/09

With you there NEW The 'G-Man.' | 02/17/09

Because of many things NEW jdclyde | 02/17/09

Pay attention, dweeb NEW NickNielsen | 02/15/09

It is now NEW Tony Hopkinson | 02/15/09

Nice first post, newbie. NEW Palmetto | 02/15/09

Windows NEW mamies@... | 02/15/09

Why am I replying to this flame-bait ? NEW charles.bundy@... | 02/15/09

Simple, really NEW jdclyde | 02/16/09

Maybe that's the approach Linux needs. NEW Palmetto | 02/16/09

The problem with shrink wrapping NEW jdclyde | 02/16/09

so painfully true NEW Neon Samurai | 02/17/09

That is why the packages have books included NEW jdclyde | 02/17/09

Slack-In-A-Box for me NEW Neon Samurai | 02/17/09

The big difference for me, and questions NEW jdclyde | 02/17/09

Debian Stable and Mandriva 2008.1 NEW Neon Samurai | 02/17/09

Tone is everything NEW FastEddie2009 | 02/15/09

Of course it is NEW Oz_Media | 02/16/09

you have fun with your overinflated software license costs NEW Neon Samurai | 02/17/09

Never be a desktop OS? NEW Lady Vadalon | 02/18/09

And a PC will NEVER need over 640K memory NEW rcfoulk@... | 02/18/09

Disagree on Point #1 NEW jdclyde | 02/15/09

RE: 10 reasons why Linux will triumph over Windows NEW rascilon | 02/15/09

Oh, that is SO funny! laugh NEW NickNielsen | 02/15/09

Games for linux NEW jdclyde | 02/15/09

Computers as toys NEW jdclyde | 02/15/09

Ignored ? NEW Tony Hopkinson | 02/15/09

Gaming on Linux Workstations NEW wvczombie@... | 02/15/09

Who Actually Does That ? NEW FastEddie2009 | 02/15/09

#6 amd #7 NEW jdclyde | 02/15/09

The third path NEW SinisterSlay | 02/15/09

Many will go that route, of by-passing Vista NEW jdclyde | 02/15/09

Dream on Mr.... NEW LoveVista+BMW | 02/15/09

RE: 10 reasons why Linux will triumph over Windows NEW WTRT | 02/16/09

RE: 10 reasons why Linux will triumph over Windows NEW jlavellx@... | 02/16/09

Well...as long as ? NEW LoveVista+BMW | 02/16/09

Usually you dont leave a computer to workers in such a situation NEW SinisterSlay | 02/16/09

Seriously? NEW daileyml | 02/16/09

Huh? NEW Palmetto | 02/17/09

OpenSuse NEW jlavellx@... | 02/17/09

Windows 7 Beta vs Windows Vista NEW Cress | 02/16/09

Its always safe to dream NEW Oz_Media | 02/16/09

Quoted for Truth "Its always safe to dream" NEW SinisterSlay | 02/16/09

Well done! NEW Oz_Media | 02/16/09

Was there a point to this? NEW Palmetto | 02/17/09

Of course there's a point NEW Oz_Media | 02/17/09

Quit looking for reasons to fight NEW SinisterSlay | 02/17/09

Your point was lost. NEW Palmetto | 02/17/09

Okay, perhaps its my mistake then NEW Oz_Media | 02/17/09

apology accepted NEW SinisterSlay | 02/17/09

Hey Ozzie! NEW Palmetto | 02/18/09

Good old Palmie (there's a nickname I can do without), I can accept that NEW Oz_Media | 02/18/09

RE: 10 reasons why Linux will triumph over Windows NEW armandofreyre@... | 02/16/09

1 reason my home PC still runs Windows: NEW wstep_bronislaw@... | 02/17/09

No one here NEW Tony Hopkinson | 02/17/09

could VM or WINE the game NEW Neon Samurai | 02/17/09

Wow - I want to pllay the game NEW The 'G-Man.' | 02/17/09

Good choice NEW jdclyde | 02/17/09

hey, why won't my netbook run Crysis? NEW Neon Samurai | 02/17/09

Maybe "geek squad" can fix it? NEW jdclyde | 02/17/09

Could you please direct me to the sales staff working on commission? NEW Neon Samurai | 02/17/09

laugh grin laugh grin laugh grin laugh grin laugh NEW jdclyde | 02/17/09

that's why it was a hypothetical recommendation.. NEW Neon Samurai | 02/17/09

What with all the Windows 7 references? NEW The 'G-Man.' | 02/17/09

Name the functions NEW jdclyde | 02/17/09

OK NEW The 'G-Man.' | 02/17/09

yes NEW Neon Samurai | 02/18/09

Suse, Red Hat, Mandriva Enterprise NEW Neon Samurai | 02/17/09

DVD playback NEW HypnoToad | 02/17/09

Ubuntu, Mandriva Powerpack, Suse NEW Neon Samurai | 02/18/09

well said NEW twoguns66@... | 02/18/09

so, popularity makes a solution more applicable? NEW Neon Samurai | 02/18/09

not at all NEW twoguns66@... | 02/18/09

Being Better Hasn't Worked So Far, What's Changed? NEW damon@... | 02/17/09

only eight years? Your a yong'n NEW Neon Samurai | 02/17/09

better choices? NEW Oz_Media | 02/17/09

You're completely NUTS !!! NEW GetReal-mac.com | 02/18/09

I give a hoot about security NEW Tony Hopkinson | 02/18/09

I'd let him near my rig NEW Neon Samurai | 02/18/09

He didn't say that NEW Oz_Media | 02/18/09

most users can't open a box and install an OS NEW Neon Samurai | 02/18/09

Who are you preachign to? NEW Oz_Media | 02/18/09

mostly just making noise on that one NEW Neon Samurai | 02/18/09

Kinda like Steve Carell NEW Oz_Media | 02/18/09

How many of all those thousands he supports NEW Tony Hopkinson | 02/18/09

You've still missed the point here NEW Oz_Media | 02/18/09

I was just having a wee dig at a tech NEW Tony Hopkinson | 02/18/09

Security its the age old Mac rant, thier only one NEW Oz_Media | 02/18/09

MAC cornered a lump of the market NEW Tony Hopkinson | 02/18/09

you seem deeply offended NEW Neon Samurai | 02/18/09

Honest analysis is lacking, clearly NEW jdclyde | 02/18/09

I was deeply offended NEW Oz_Media | 02/18/09

hehe.. I have those moments NEW Neon Samurai | 02/18/09

Oh I have stuff to do NEW Oz_Media | 02/18/09

You're forgetting Apple NEW reggaethecat | 02/18/09

You're forgetting the Apple price tag. NEW Palmetto | 02/18/09

Why bother with this anyway NEW The 'G-Man.' | 02/18/09

RE: 10 reasons why Linux will triumph over Windows NEW cra69_2000@... | 02/18/09

Symptoms of MS Market dominance NEW Tony Hopkinson | 02/18/09

Yep. NEW Poordirtfarmer | 02/18/09

Been hearing this B.S. for 10 years NEW Bret Bingham | 02/18/09

Could not agree more! NEW felipeex@... | 02/18/09

Allow me to make up my own numbers... NEW NickNielsen | 02/18/09

OSX NEW reggaethecat | 02/18/09

Why are those the success criteria? NEW Tony Hopkinson | 02/18/09

I'd have to agree NEW jasondlnd | 02/18/09

Yes, but then it would be windows NEW Tony Hopkinson | 02/18/09

Where do blue screens fit in your "just works"? NEW jdclyde | 02/18/09

Blue screens are "usually" the result of bad drivers NEW SinisterSlay | 02/18/09

Well if you listen to what college professors NEW Tony Hopkinson | 02/18/09

Blowing our noses? NEW NickNielsen | 02/18/09

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