

LinuxWorld: Savings, Stability Make Strong Business Case

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As several hundred of the Linux and open-source faithful gather for the two-day LinuxWorld Summit here, the message that Linux has not only come to Wall Street but has been embraced by it is resounding loud and clear.

The sessions on Wednesday and Thursday focus primarily on the business case and security issues around the open-source operating system, both of which are areas of great interest to Wall Street and to the financial industry in general.

As a panel of enterprise Linux users, primarily from the financial sector, took the stage Wednesday to talk about their Linux usage, the common thread was the huge cost savings and stability they achieved because of the switch.

Robert Wiseman, chief technology officer at Cendant Travel Distribution Services, which has more than 5,000 employees in 110 countries around the world, said that in the early 2000s, the company was planning to move from a mainframe environment to proprietary Unix.

At that time, Linux was still regarded as immature, he said, "but we certainly don't regard it that way anymore." But Cendant, which owns brands such as Galileo International, Travelport, Travelwire, Cheap Tickets, Orbitz and Lodging.com, decided to examine the cost benefits of moving directly from the mainframe to Linux. The company found that the primary benefit came from the using the low-cost x86 hardware platform.

Aaron Graves, a senior vice president at Citigroup Technologies Inc.'s data center for technical services, said that while Citigroup had decided to stay on the mainframe, it had looked at Linux to bring distributed workloads into its mainframe hardware environment.

This had proven to be very reliable, Graves said, adding that Citigroup is getting good support from software vendors and is pushing other software vendors to port their applications to Linux, particularly Linux on the zSeries.

Josh Levine, chief technology and operations officer at E-Trade Financial, said that in the early 2000s, after the dot-com bubble burst, the focus was on making money and improving operating margins.

"We started porting our applications to Linux and were surprised by how fast it was. We found it compelling and when you find something that compelling, you overcome all obstacles, and that is what we did," Levine said.

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