

M\$ vs. Linux: Execs Talk Detente

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The often-hostile relations between Microsoft and the open-source community are thawing, and new dialogues appear to be opening between senior officials in both camps.

In continuing its outreach to the most prominent members of the open-source community, Microsoft has invited Michael Tiemann, president of the Open Source Initiative and vice president of open-source affairs at Linux vendor Red Hat, to meet and start a constructive dialogue.

"Microsoft reached out to me as president of the OSI, and they basically said they wanted to begin a productive conversation, and we agreed to take that at face value," Tiemann told eWEEK in an interview at the Red Hat Summit here Thursday.

While Tiemann has not yet met with anyone from Microsoft, most likely to be Brad Smith, its general counsel, they have exchanged e-mails and a meeting is likely to occur.

Earlier this year, Smith extended an olive branch to the open-source community, asking for a sit-down meeting to see how his company can better work with them.

Asked why he thinks Microsoft wants to meet with him and what he thinks they are interested in discussing, Tiemann said he still thinks the Microsoft Shared Source program represents an "attempt to quell an internal civil war" at Microsoft.

"There are smart people at Microsoft who realize there is another side to the argument," he said.

When Tiemann first said this in 2001 while debating Craig Mundie, Microsoft's chief technology officer, Mundie responded that "there is no dissent at Microsoft."

Whether an internal war is going on or not, Tiemann said, "We are happy if they are willing to take a new position and a new look. Nothing could be better than for Microsoft to embrace fair competition and abandon their so unsuccessful past practices."

"I think there is also a recognition that Linux and open-source software is a reality that is here to stay and is not going

to disappear. They could also be introductory discussions about business," Szulik said.

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