

# Novell Plans to Open SuSE Linux Pro to Community

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Novell will be launching a community-based Linux distribution, OpenSuSE, at next week's LinuxWorld in San Francisco, according to sources close to the company.

Following in the footsteps of Red Hat Inc. with its successful Fedora Project Linux distribution, Novell Inc. will be opening up its Linux development efforts with OpenSuSE, sources said.

A site, opensuse.org, has already been set up for the project by Novell under the name of Batman's alter ego, Bruce Wayne. The site, however, is not open for business yet.

Continuing in this humorous vein, sources said, the initiative's launch will go by the name of "The Lizard Blizzard" and SuSE's original "Geeko" lizard mascot will be reappearing at LinuxWorld.

More seriously, the true name of the deliverable distribution will be SuSE Linux, while the SuSE Linux Pro line will be rebranded to share the SuSE Linux name.

The possibility of Novell trying a community-based, open-source approach has been discussed before in the Linux community. Jason Perlow, an author and a systems architect with Unisys' open-source solutions practice, wrote in May's Linux Magazine, "It's pretty darn clear to me that to make mojo, SuSE Linux Professional needs to look deep into its roots and re-birth itself as a public, open-source project similar to Fedora."

Perlow argued that Novell's keeping its open-source technologies close to its vest had not served the company well. With an open, community-based approach, he said, "key SuSE/Ximian/Novell technologies such as Mono, Evolution, Red Carpet, NDS, ZENworks, and Hula [will come] to the fore, allowing even more extensive field testing within the community."

Citing the popularity of Thunderbird over Evolution, among others, Perlow further argued that the easier access is to a project for testing and development, the more developers will use and extend it.

Perlow's arguments may not have fallen on deaf ears. Certainly, it is possible that Novell may have been influenced by Red Hat Fedora's growing success.

In the Fedora community-based approach, the development cycle is driven not just by the company's engineers working on Linux, but by the larger open-source community. The result is a cutting-edge Linux for enthusiasts.

Once the code matures to the point where enterprises can use it, it is then locked down, given a final coat of polish and quality and assurance testing, and released as a commercial product with support.

In Red Hat's case, the final stage of each version of Fedora becomes the basis for RHEL (Red Hat Enterprise Linux).

For Novell, according to sources, the SuSE Linux code will become the foundation for the next version of SLES (SuSE Linux Enterprise Server), the Linux component of OES (Open Enterprise Server) and NLD (Novell Linux Desktop), while the first version of SuSE Linux will consist of the Linux 2.6-based beta for SLES 10. This will be roughly equivalent to what would have been SuSE Linux Professional 9.5.

The expected distribution model isn't quite the same as Red Hat's, though; unlike Red Hat, which only makes Fedora available as a download and doesn't offer support for it, Novell will also sell SuSE Linux in a boxed retail version with manuals and paid technical support, sources said.

The full version will be freely available from the OpenSuSE site as both source code and in ISO download form. Sources said the dual approach was chosen because Novell wants SuSE Linux to be both worked on by the community and run by users who don't want to develop but do want a supported, cutting-edge Linux.

As with Red Hat and Fedora, Novell will initially be running the SuSE Linux show, but control will eventually be ceded to a steering board, sources said.

Novell executives declined to comment on this report. Bruce Lowry, director of public relations for Novell, did say that any potential changes in Novell's Linux development approach had nothing to do with announced European employee cuts.

"Novell's European financial performance has been disappointing and [the cutbacks are] part of the effort to turn this around," Lowry said. "This is in no way connected with SuSE engineering and development staff. It is directed at our redundant sales force. This move is designed to make Europe more profitable."

[Source](#) [2].

[SUSE](#)

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