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Steering Linux through litigious waters

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Linux is on the move -- and under attack.
At a major San Francisco technology conference that sometimes has the feel of a geek squad pep rally, complete with mascots dressed as penguins and companies preaching to true believers about the open-source system's phenomenal growth, a few dark notes were sounded Tuesday.

Linux developers need to be wary of lawsuits, advocates warned, as well as the tactics of large software companies whose livelihood may be threatened by the growth of the upstart operating system.

"You can't go from a $14 billion business in 2004 to a $36 billion business in 2008 without there being competitive ramifications," said Stuart Cohen, chief executive of Open Source Development Labs, a nonprofit industry consortium.

He was citing a study from market research firm IDC predicting growth in the market for PCs and other devices running Linux, an operating system partially developed by the Finnish programmer Linus Torvalds that no one company owns, but which is constantly updated and tweaked by an army of volunteer programmers.

Cohen said the task at hand is to increase that share as much as possible, although, "That all can't come as new incremental business. That creates competitive issues, business issues, legal issues and market issues."

Full Story [2].

Linux

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