

Ubuntu carves niche in Linux landscape

By *srlinuxx*

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It's not easy building a new version of Linux and establishing a large following. But with the Ubuntu project, one team of programmers has managed to do just that.

The fact that there are at least 386 available versions of Linux shows just how many groups want to launch their own "distributions"--Linux combined with other open-source software into a full-fledged operating-system product. But the fact that few people are familiar with distributions other than Red Hat, Suse and Debian is a testament to how hard it is to be successful.

Ubuntu is an offshoot of Debian. It began with an emphasis on easy-to-use PCs, but there's also a server version. Development comes from volunteers and those funded by Shuttleworth's 50-person start-up, Canonical, and the Ubuntu Foundation.

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