

Linux on Desktops In Australia

This study was undertaken to establish a more accurate picture of current installations of Linux on desktop systems, deployment intentions for both Linux and StarOffice/OpenOffice, and how IT decision-makers rated potential benefits for Linux on the desktop.

Methodology

On 19-26 March 2003, S2 conducted an e-mail based survey of IT Managers across randomly selected, large Australian enterprises. 71 responses were received and tabulated.

Current Penetration

The vast majority of respondents reported no Linux desktop installations and just over 14 percent reported between 1 and 10. Only two out of the 71 respondents reported installations of over 50 units (one of these was approximately 200 units, the other 100). Given that our survey targeted very large organisations these two were the only installations of any meaningful scale. Nevertheless this result suggests that small pockets of desktop Linux can already be found in production in approximately 3 percent of large Australian enterprises today.

Deployment Intentions

Our second question was designed to identify the likelihood of Australian organisations deploying Linux and StarOffice / OpenOffice on any scale (in our case we used a threshold of 10 percent of their total desktop population) within the next two years. Deployment intentions are very thin for both Linux and StarOffice/OpenOffice with average scores of 1.59 and 1.64 respectively (on a scale of 1-7). A single respondent reported that they will almost certainly have Linux on more than 10% of machines. No respondent did so for Star Office/OpenOffice.

Benefits From Deployment

Respondents were asked to rate a series of possible reasons for deploying Linux. The greatest benefit from deploying Linux is seen as reduced dependency on Microsoft. Cost, which is a more widely discussed factor in the media, rates an equal second with direct negotiation leverage with Microsoft. All benefits directly related to the technology received significantly lower scores than these three. The results underscore the capacity for Microsoft to control Linux desktop penetration by adjusting its prices and/or licensing model should it choose to do so. Suitability for a specific software application, a factor frequently mentioned in relation to deployments of Linux on servers, was ranked last as a reason for deploying Linux on desktops.