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IBM Linux on Power London evening

A diary entry of an attendee of IBM's Linux on Power evening at the London Planetarium on 22nd September 2005

By Edward Macnaghten

IBM's London "Linux on Power" event, held on the evening of September 22nd in central London at the Planetarium, began at 7.00 p.m.

The start of the night

I, along with about another fifty attendees were marched inside, issued with a badge with our name on each and told to make our way to the foyer where IBM treated us to free drinks and hors d'oeuvres. We mingled, chatted and drank for about an hour. There were a couple of PCs running a web browser pointing at IBM's OpenPower Project home page and an IBM technician showing off and explaining a new Power dual-core PC and answering questions about it.

=IMAGE=drinks.jpg=

Free food and drinks were supplied

"Linux on Power"?

At about 8.00 p.m. we were herded into the main Planetarium itself, where after a very generalized introduction we were treated to an excellent show demonstrating some of the latest Digistar technologies used to generate Planetarium shows. First up was "Journey to Infinity", where we "travelled" through our solar system, then the galaxy and finally the universe. We were then given a demonstration of graphical abilities that the presenter had put together which successfully emulated a white knuckle ride through space. Impressive as these shows were, there was some confusion as to what they had to do with "Linux on Power". The IBM reps didn't seem to be able to enlighten us to that either.

The night concludes

After the show, and some questions about it, we were guided back down to the foyer where we had a choice of an Italian or English buffet, or in the case of greedy people like myself, both. After another hour and a half of mingling, eating, drinking, talking and generally having a good time, it was time for me to leave and go home. On the way out IBM gave all attendees a Linux t-shirt.

=IMAGE=mingle.jpg=

The night concludes

Eating, drinking, mingling and being merry

Hang on! What just happened?

The evening was pleasant. We were wined, dined and generally entertained well. And, I appreciate the effort IBM put into the event, both in terms of manpower and cost (they didn't charge for the evening). However, I felt they could have focused more on Linux for Power than they did. We were given no literature. And although the Planetarium show was entertaining it had nothing to do with Power itself. In fact, during the event, I needed to hunt down the IBM rep in order to ask him for information about it.

Further confusion was caused by the fact that the PCs displaying OpenPower's home page were running Microsoft's XP Professional and Internet Explorer! Needless to say that the *attendees* made sure that Mozilla Firefox had been installed on each machine by the end of the night, as had PuTTY. It would've been far more appropriate if these machines were running a Linux desktop. It wouldn't have been difficult to arrange—booting from a Knoppix or Ubuntu-Live CD would have done the trick if nothing else.

=IMAGE=ibmguy.jpg=

IBM expert answering questions regarding his Power machine

From what I understand through my conversation with the IBM rep, IBM are pushing Power hard, and integral to that is the presence of GNU/Linux and free software. What they're trying to do, among other things, is engage the free software community to port applications to that platform, and to encourage them to write new applications for it. So it seems the planetarium event was an attempt at a bond-forming exercise between IBM and the free software community in order to assist with this goal.

In order to promote porting and creation of applications within the community, IBM have created "OpenPower". Once I discovered what it was I actually found it to be quite exciting. I was told that what IBM have done is make available a few Power servers free of charge for people to port, compile and test their programs, in order to ensure they function on them. Whatever IBM's faults were in getting their message across during the evening, I can assure anyone interested, that they are re-stating their commitment to the free software community and GNU/Linux and placing their money where their mouth is.

Conclusions

All in all it was an enjoyable evening, although it seemed to be more of a "community bonding" exercise rather than a presentation of "Linux on Power" and "OpenPower". As far as I was concerned, it was a success (but then I asked the right questions). Whether it will be a success for IBM will depend to a large extent on the response the free software community gives them.

=IMAGE=model.jpg=

My daughter's first job as a model showing the free tee-shirt

My daughter's first job as a model showing the free tee-shirt

IBM's OpenPower home page is well worth a visit if you are involved in free software development. And it's a concept to be supported if you are a free software advocate.

Biography

Edward Macnaghten (/user/18" title="View user profile.): Edward Macnaghten has been a professional programmer, analyst and consultant for in excess of 20 years. His experiences include manufacturing commercially based software for a number of industries in a variety of different technical environments in Europe, Asia and the USA. He is currently running an IT consultancy specialising in free software solutions based in Cambridge UK. He also maintains his own web site (<http://eddy.edlsystems.com>).

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