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## Interview with Mark Shuttleworth

### Mark agreed on releasing an interview about anything and everything

By Tony Mobily

Mark Shuttleworth is the founder of Thawte, the first Certification Authority to sell public SSL certificates. After selling Thawte to Verisign, Mark moved on to training as an astronaut in Russia and visiting space. Once he got back he founded Ubuntu, the leading GNU/Linux distribution. He agreed on releasing a quick interview to Free Software Magazine.

## The interview

**Tell us about your early days Mark. You started Thawte, which eventually became extremely successful and was bought by VeriSign. Well, what was the most exciting moment for you, during the development of Thawte?**

The moment at 2am when my Python RSA implementation produced a digital signature that OpenSSL (then SSLeay) then would verify... that was quite a rush :-)

**After selling Thawte, I imagine you had a world of opportunity in front of you. You could have lived in luxury for the rest of your life, multiplying your wealth. Instead, you decided to spend ten months in Russia training as an astronaut and became the first South African civilian in space. I read about it back then, and I remember thinking: my God, that sounds like a hell of a lot of hard work. Then, you decide to create the best GNU/Linux distribution—and again, you succeeded. What drives you towards such challenges, *honestly*?**

Every time I go for a jog I end up huffing and puffing and thinking “hell, if I was a bit fitter, this would be easier”. But the reality is that if I were fitter, I would just want to run further or faster, and end up huffing and puffing anyway. :-)

I think we are all driven to push ourselves in one way or another—to explore some idea or activity that’s interesting. And in each of the cases you describe, my main motivation was to find out what could be done.

**I were fitter, I would just want to run further or faster, and end up huffing and puffing anyway. :-)**

With Ubuntu, it’s still too early to say we’ve been successful. My personal goal is to make the distro sustainable—then there will be a team that pays its own way and can focus on producing the best free software desktop on the planet without my interference!

**As far as Thawte, the space trip, or Ubuntu... is there anything you would have done differently?**

## Interview with Mark Shuttleworth

Well, of course, I've learned a lot along the way. But I'm not inclined to wish for anything different to the set of mistakes I know I made. :-).

Think of how often we think we know what's going to happen, and then life works out totally differently. Imagine, then, if you went back and changed something in your past. You may think that would avoid one glitch in the journey, but the truth is it could take you off somewhere else entirely, and it's impossible to know where that would have been.

**There's a very long way to go before I'm satisfied that Ubuntu is all grown up and can run its own race—until that happens I will likely stay with the project**

So I don't delude myself that I've been anything but lucky to wander on this particular path, and I focus only on choosing which direction I'm going to go today.

**Ubuntu is in my opinion the distribution that will give Microsoft the finishing stroke. What's your final goal with Ubuntu?**

You're very kind, but I think you must see a certainty in the immediate future that I'm missing. There's a very long way to go before I'm satisfied that Ubuntu is all grown up and can run its own race—until that happens I will likely stay with the project, trying my best to help it become sustainable. Once that happens, yes, I think even Microsoft will have to factor it into their plans. A widely available, genuinely free distro of high quality that pays its own way would be a good thing in the world.



Mark Shuttleworth

**You are now based in England. Do you miss South Africa? Do you miss some of your friends or your relatives who still live in South Africa? Or do you go back often?**

Yes, of course, you can never take Africa out of your blood. That makes it so much nicer when I get back every time I visit. It's quite possible that I'll move back to Cape Town someday, at least I like to think so.

**\*\*In other interviews, you mentioned that you believe in reincarnation. Do you practice meditation? \*\***

Yes, I spend a lot of time wondering how the winds of change are blowing in the world, and how to sail them in a way that's fun and useful. That's about as close as I come to meditation. :-)

## Biography

Tony Mobily (/user/2" title="View user profile.): Tony is the founder and the Editor In Chief of Free Software Magazine

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