Re: [announcement] SYSAPI and SYSSVC for Windows

Source: http://coding.derkeiler.com/Archive/Ada/comp.lang.ada/2003−12/0461.html

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"Ekkehard Morgenstern" <ekkehard.morgenstern@onlinehome.de> writes:
> BTW, my SYSAPI / SYSSVC library is fully open−source! I yet need to add
> a GPL license, however. The source is included in the archive as I stated.

That's a good thing to hear. It is very important that you do include
a copyright statement.

> I have plans for a new kind of open−source operating system, and it might
*> support running GNU/Linux, *BSD, and Windows apps. For example, I might*
> provide an interface to load GNU/Linux drivers. I will use Ada as an
> implementation language. For now, it will run on top of some host OS,
> currently Windows, and GNU/Linux and/or FreeBSD in the future.

Is this related to the AdaOS[1] project? I thought that it was
stalled.

[1] http://www.adaos.net

> A server with memory, processor(s), disk and ethernet is a different
> kind of beast than a multimedia desktop for watching TV, playing
> movies and DVDs, creating and listening to music, or playing or
> authoring 3D games, plus plenty of add−on hardware for PCI, AGP or
> USB buses. That's why it might be a problem for some people to decide
> for one of the free OSes if there's no clarity about whether the
> hardware is supported.

I agree that GNU/Linux distributions lag behind in terms of support
for the latest multimedia hardware, especially on laptops. I think
that the BSD's support even less fancy hardware than Linux does. But
hey, if you want multimedia, you should be using a Macintosh anyway :)

> It happened once, at my former employer, when I installed a server
> with some GNU/Linux and the machine hung every now and then. If you
> don't have time to fix the problem, you wipe GNU/Linux off your
> harddisk and install Windows 2000 or something, which works right

> out of the box, and even better after an update.

The last time I had a machine that would hand every now and then was in the Linux 1.0 or 1.2 days back in 1994/5. I also had cases where running Linux or OS/2 on some machine would reveal hardware bugs which Windows could live with. Nowadays this does not happen as much anymore.

> There should be something like a GNU/Linux software quality
> assurance group that makes sure that all available packages do indeed
> work.

There is the Debian QA group[2] that does just that, not only for the kernel but also for all the apps. The BSD's have QA groups for the operating system but not for the apps.

[2] http://qa.debian.org

> I knew the GNU project even before the Linux kernel was developed,
> and I had GNU ports for AmigaOS. And I still remember that GCC didn't
> work, because it was compiled with itself and every GNU tool suffered
> the same problems. And the only comment from the distributor in the
> "ReadMe" file was "here's the latest version, I didn't get around to
> test it". ;) −− of course, later on, there were some good GNU ports
> for AmigaOS, also before GNU/Linux was a topic.

Yes. The GNU project never said they were making "products". They are "sharing experiences and knowledge". They encourage users not to have a consumer attitude, but to participate in enhancing the software, and to stand up for their freedom.

> Now, which one to choose? GNOME or KDE? And which apps run where?

GNOME apps run on KDE; KDE apps run on GNOME. They just load different libraries in memory. As for which one to choose, this is a matter of taste. If you want to program in Ada, GNOME is the way to go because there is no Ada binding for KDE.

> I'm surprised you think that they're easy to use. Perhaps some things
> changed. I haven't used GNOME yet, and the latest KDE I've seen was 2.0.

Things have definitely changed. GNOME is at version 2.4 and KDE at 3.1 (with 3.2 due out real soon now). You should really check them out before you make such bold statements as "they're not easy to use".

> > Besides, I do not want an easy−to−use system. I want a powerful
> > system which I can control and modify to suit my needs. This is
> > particularly important, IMHO, when developing software that depends on
> > gigabytes of other software.
>
> Yeah, but how often do you actually modify it?

It has happened several times. Other times, by inspecting the souce code, I was able to discover a workaround for particular problems, or even saw the bug in *my* software.

> I certainly don't have enough time to write my own sound card driver
> for GNU/Linux or a better kernel that works properly (I haven't seen
> the new 2.6 yet, but the versions of the 2.4 that I've seen and/or
> their drivers weren't reliable).
>
> I want to write application software and development tools foremost,
> and then I have to rely on the underlying system.

Then, Debian is for you. Use the stable distribution. It does not change often, so your target platform is not a moving target (the moving target syndrome plagues distributions that are updated every 6 months).

> Yes, I once bought a Debian distrib, and the installer wasn't working.
> This gives you the tech Debian feel that makes you wish for a hammer.
>
> Not that I'm impatient or anything, but after a couple of days of
> messing with it I returned to good old Windoze. ;)

Was that on a laptop with plenty of recent hardware? Was that the stable distribution? Did you ask for help? You should also check out Knoppix, which is renowned for its outstanding hardware detection feature. FWIW, the beauty of Debian is that you don't normally have to install more than once per machine.

> Untested distributions, mmmm! ;)
>
> Perhaps next time I will download and compose my own distribution to
> avoid such problems.

Yes, that would help you understand how hard it is to put a distro together.

> > And most of the distros have package management systems (apt or RPM)
> > that put Microsoft to shame.
>
> Don't forget that Windows has a simpler organization and nowadays,
> Setup programs like InstallShield do all the installing jobs for the user.

I was not referring to "setup programs". I was referring to "package management". This is different altogether. Package management means taking care of conflicts and dependencies between packages, and keeping track of which package owns what file. Windows is known for DLL hell, which proper package management handles nicely. (IBM's AS/400 machines now called iSeries have had such a feature since 1988, BTW, so there's really no excuse for Microsoft not to have it in 2003).

> The cross−depency stuff in the RPM's works only if it's configured
> and tested properly. I often had it that an RPM installation broke
> more than it added to the system. Perhaps it's a bad idea to rely
> on scripts for installing.

Indeed. I switched from Red Hat to Debian because the RH distribution did not contain some packages I wanted, and when I found RPMs from other distros they would often break things. Debian is the largest of all distributions and does not suffer this problem to the same extent, because most everything I want is just there already.

> That's true for most parts, but things like sendmail or the network
> configuration can provide security risks too. Or bad access rights.

But you'd only run sendmail on a server. For a workstation you can pretty much rely on things working just right.

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−−
Ludovic Brenta.
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