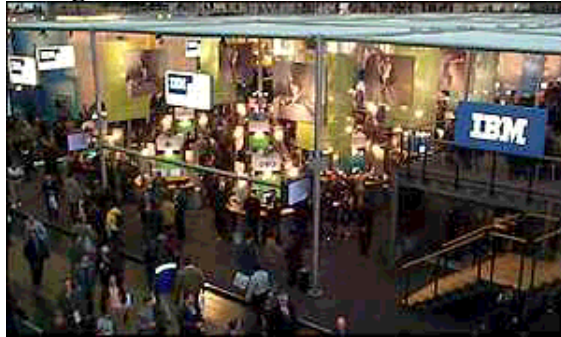


You are in: **Business**Front Page Sunday, 25 March, 2001, 09:43 GMT 10:43
World UKUK **Life gets serious for Linux**

IBM is one of the industry giants backing Linux

By BBC News Online's Ivan Noble in Hanover

Linux, the free computer operating system loved and tended by the T-shirt and beard geek community on the internet, has cast off its scruffy image and donned a corporate suit.

From IBM to Nokia, from Sap to Sharp, the giants of the CeBIT technology fair in Hanover are all showing products based on the system which began life as a Finnish student's hobby.

“The industry is screaming for an alternative.”

Ransom Love
Caldera CEO

Ransom Love, Chief Executive Officer of Linux company Caldera International, told BBC News Online why he believed Linux had left the bedroom for the boardroom.

"The industry is screaming for an alternative," he said, referring to the domination of the operating system market by Microsoft's Windows.

Mutant penguins

Microsoft is unhappy enough about Linux's newly acquired respectability to have produced a poster attacking it.

It shows the Linux mascot,

Search BBC News Online

GO

Advanced search options

[Launch console for latest audio/video](#)
[BBC RADIO NEWS](#)
[BBC ONE TV NEWS](#)
[WORLD NEWS SUMMARY](#)
[BBC NEWS 24 BULLETIN](#)
[PROGRAMMES GUIDE](#)


CeBIT tech show

Tech future

Tech gadget heaven
Bluetooth Blip
Industry's mobile hopes
Plug and go internet?
Linux gets serious
CeBIT fashion show
Wierd and wonderful

Analysis

e-Business as usual?
Europe's growth fears

See also:

21 Mar 01 | Business
Tech firms gather in gadget heaven

Internet links:

CeBIT 2001
Linux.com
Linux.org
Caldera
Beowulf project
Magdeburg University
Beowulf cluster
Microsoft

The BBC is not responsible for the content of external internet sites

BBC SPORT>>

It shows the Linux mascot, Tux the Penguin, mutated into several outlandish creatures; an illustration, it says, of the dangers of relying on a system built by an often fractious community of independent programmers.

"If Microsoft is targeting Linux, that only validates it," Ransom Love commented. Love said Linux would expand the IT market in less-developed countries.

"It offers massive computing power at a fraction of the traditional cost. Linux will enable the rest of the world to get online" he said.

Hand-held to supercomputer

Linux used to seem like a threat to traditional computer companies because it was available for free.

But companies like Caldera and rivals Red Hat make money by packaging the system and making it easier to install and use.

And Caldera used CeBIT to launch OpenUNIX, a system designed to run Linux programs on the kind of large-scale hardware and networks owned by big companies.

Other Linux converts include Ericsson, which has developed a hand-held "web pad" internet terminal based on Linux, and Sharp, which is showing a Linux-based all-singing, all-dancing personal organiser due to go on sale by the end of the year.

Beowulf from Nasa

Evidence of the cult status of the rebel operating system is everywhere at CeBIT.

Cuddly Tux the Penguin toys sit on top of monitors and computers all over the show and a giant version takes pride of place in the window of CeBIT's souvenir shop.

One fan of Linux putting



Linux's mascot penguin at CeBIT

Top Business stories now:

IMF calls for euro rate cut
IR35 tax challenge fails
Manchester United's profits soar
BA windfall from Iberia sale
Japan slump fears rise
Gloom hits UK manufacturers
Losses drive Swissair restructuring
Gearing up for stakeholders

Links to more Business stories are at the foot of the page.

One fan of Linux putting the system to serious use is Dr Stephan Mertens, of Magdeburg University's Institute of Theoretical Physics.

He needs a supercomputer to speed up his work simulating the behaviour of granular particles like sand. He uses an idea which began in the United States at the space agency Nasa.



A Beowulf cluster in Chemnitz, Germany

Rather than spend millions of dollars on a commercial supercomputer, Nasa engineers decided to build one by linking together cheap, ordinary PCs and getting Linux-based software to distribute the work between them.

Such PC clusters are called Beowulf systems. They provide cheap computing power, but need some looking after.

Next move for Windows

"Instead of spending millions on a Cray T3E, we spent 230,000 Euros (£144,000) on something which does the same job," Dr Mertens explained.

"People tend to want to buy a supercomputer, take it out of the box, and phone someone up the minute it goes wrong. That has to change. Building your own means you understand more about your own system."

Linux has hit the mainstream, but it is still far from displacing Windows just yet.

The next version of Microsoft's operating system - Windows XP - is due out later in the year and at CeBIT, Microsoft is putting its weight behind .NET, a product designed to extend its influence in networked computing.

Links to more Business stories

In This Section
GO

[News Front Page](#) | [World](#) | [UK](#) | [UK Politics](#) | [Business](#) | [Sci/Tech](#) |
[Health](#) | [Education](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Talking Point](#) | [In Depth](#) |
[AudioVideo](#)

[To BBC Sport>>](#)

[News Sources](#)