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Wim Coekaerts, Director of Linux Engineering, Oracle



Oracle's head Linux developer opens up about Oracle's OSDL absence, what's 'revolting' and what's wrong and right with Linux.

June 20, 2006

By Sean Michael Kerner: More stories by this author:



Linux is an important platform for Oracle. It represents a respectable chunk of its business and it's also a critical part of its development infrastructure.

Oracle's lucrative Linux business spans its product line including database and middleware.

Almost half of Oracle Application Server 10g Release 3 shipments were on Linux in the first three months of 2006.

Recent data from Gartner reported that, on an industry basis, Linux grew the fastest of all the RDBMS platforms at 84 percent.

Earlier this week, Oracle moved to further its Linux efforts with the release of its Validated Configurations, a program that helps to define optimal hardware and software stack configurations for running Oracle on Linux.

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Wim Coekaerts, Director of Linux Engineering at Oracle, is the company's head Linux developer. He is also an active member of the Linux community sitting as a representative on the recently formed OSDL (Open Source Development Labs) Technical Board.

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For more stories on this topic: Surprisingly though Oracle is not a member of the OSDL, which describes itself as the center of gravity for Linux and whose membership

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includes almost all the major technology vendors involved in the Linux ecosystem.

He recently spoke with *internetnews.com* about Oracle's involvement in the Linux community, its continuing Linux efforts and what he found revolting.

Q: Why isn't Oracle a member of the OSDL?

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Let's just say that one part of the OSDL is trying to represent businesses to the Linux community. I know the members aren't heavily involved in Linux but still are me

We basically know where to go. We have a good relation people in the Linux community. We have all our partners immediate advantage to being a member for us.

Not to sound arrogant, but we know how to deal with the

Q: OSDL's new Technical Advisory Board on which you facilitate communication between the kernel development OSDL. What do you see as some of the challenges that y participation on TAB will address? What is it all really a

The thing that was really kind of revolting is that OSDL goes out and basically says that the Linux community while there is no direct feedback line back to the community.

Linus Torvalds works there, but Linus is basically employed by the OSDL and he does his certain company or member wants to come up with a proposal or a Standard, there needs to be communication between the two sides.

Carrier Grade Linux has always been a very sore point in this whole OSDL thing. There are a lot of members that came up with a proposal without feedback from the community, and then they released distributions and the community and said this is what we need. So there was a lot of people angry about that.

The kernel community said, 'Don't come tell us what to do; work with us.' That never really worked well.

Part of the Technical Advisory Board's role is to have better communication with the OSDL. For kernel development for a device driver, these are things you have to be careful of; these are things you expect and not expect.

It's really a matter of having two-way communication rather than one-way.

It's a very good initiative and I hope it will clarify some of the OSDL's goals and have a better relationship with the community.

Q: What's your view of the new GPL version 3? Is it something you or Oracle are concerned another?

To be really honest at least from our side we haven't really looked at it. Obviously the legal side. But I really don't know what our view is on GPL version 3. We're just going to keep doing our best and not paying much attention to it.

Q: What's missing in Linux today?

When running our product on Linux we're in pretty good shape. There are two parts that I can focus on. One is diagnostics.

When something goes wrong in the kernel, you don't want to end up with a scenario where a customer says, 'Ok let's reproduce that.'

Initial failure should show enough information so that we can help customers figure out what they need to do quite a bit more work on the Linux side to make that happen. It's not easy to do on a case-by-case basis.

Linus in the early days didn't really care about that kind of thing. But in the last year or so he's become more aware and more interested and this has become more important to him.

The other thing is virtualization. Whether it is hypervisor-based or container-based like Solaris. That is heavily debated right now, and I think that will be very important moving forward.

Q: What's next for Oracle and Linux?

Nothing specific, but the one advantage with Linux is that we can prototype things much quicker.

The database or the next feature release -- whatever needs work -- my team talks to the database team and they can quickly prototype stuff and determine whether it is feasible or not.

I think in that sense that's an important part of us using Linux as a development platform.



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