Another OpenSUSE 10.2 Beta 1 Review

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Introduction
This review is not meant to contradict or supplant Susan Linton's typically excellent write-up of OpenSUSE 10.2 Beta 1. Indeed, I've read and watched with pleasure as Susan in particular, and Tuxmachines in general, have become must-reads when it comes to reviews of Linux Distros (as well Tuxmachines becoming a great all-around Linux/OSS news site). Susan has a great deal of expertise with distro installations/evaluations, and I particularly admire her balance and fairness?qualities that I often fail to apply. For example, I despise Microsoft so much as a company, I am utterly incapable of writing a fair and balanced review, of say, (a piece of crap like) MS Windows Vista.

I'm evaluating OpenSUSE as both a candidate for a high school classroom server role, as well as for a student computer classroom workstation role.

At the high school where I teach Web Page Design, Computer Programming, and Computer Literacy, it is Novell Netware Servers that provide our primary network services. This is also true in our school district's two middle schools, 6 elementary schools, the alternative school, as well as at the district office administration building. So, a Linux distribution that operates well as a Novell Netware client is essential.

However, the large majority of our workstations are Windows XP, so good MS Windows/Samba networking is also required.

Finally, I'm a confirmed KDE user. So, a distribution with strong, up-to-date KDE support is also helpful.

A system that dual-boots easily with Windows XP for student workstations is also necessary as the school district won't yet let me completely abandon using MS Windows in the classroom. [1]

For computer programming, I teach Ruby, Java, and C++. Under Linux, We'll use the KDE Kate editor for editing Ruby and Java programs. We'll use Kdevelop for C++ development. I also plan on my programmers using qtruby for GUI work in Ruby. I will teach the OpenOffice.org suite of programs in my Computer Literacy Class under both Linux and MS Windows environments.

With Novell now owning SUSE, and the importance of good Novell clients workstations at my high school, the choice of OpenSUSE should be a no-brainer. And, with Jeremy Allison (who works for SUSE) being one of the core Samba developers from the beginning, OpenSUSE should have very good up to date MS Windows networking support.

My background as a Linux user over the years has primarily been with Mandrake/Mandriva and PCLinuxOS. Like many Linux users, I have dallied briefly with other distros along the way: Sabayon Linux, Red Hat/Fedora Linux,

Kubuntu Linux, Mepis Linux, OpenSUSE Linux, and others I can't specifically remember.

Yes, I tried OpenSUSE 10.1. My issue with 10.1 was that DNS lookups would take an extraordinary long time (15 to 20 seconds versus the usual 1 to 3 seconds). I tried everything to solve this, but couldn't.(Yes, I tried disabling IPV6 as per many tips on the Internet, as well as many other things?none of them resolved the agonizingly slow DNS lookups.) I had installed OpenSUSE 10.1 on two of my machines at home, and both had this same issue, while other Linux distros on other machines were working fine. Disappointed I struck OpenSUSE 10.1 off my list and decided to look at OpenSUSE 10.2, when it came out.

So, with these preliminaries out of the way, let's begin Part 1 of the review.

Installation.
I downloaded the DVD X86_64 version via bittorrent, and burned it to a DVD. Installation went smoothly. I typically do custom partitioning, which I did do here. For this trial, this is the only OS on this particular machine. After installation, like Susan, I had no sound. However, I fired up YAST, and configured the sound from there. My Sound device was properly detected, but not configured. While we probably all prefer both auto-detection and *auto-configuration* during the install process, it was easy to do, and worked fine. I then added a few packages from the install DVD that OpenSUSE didn't install (there weren't many?kdeedu for example, since I'm an educator).

During the install process, networking setup was flawless. I typically set up a static IP address, and the gateway address of my router, along with my ISP's DNS address. OpenSUSE connected immediately after I entered these values.

Multimedia.
Insert a music CD. Up pops Amarok, which proceeds to play the music just fine. However, SUSE won't play mp3's. I had to install Lame, Kaffeine, and Xine from other sources to be able to encode and play mp3's. I also installed libdcss2 so I can play DVD movies.

Come on SUSE?get with the program! Arrange for an agency that will configure and build non-free multimedia RPMs for your distributions?give them early access to development Alphas, Betas, and Release Candidates. Sort of like the PLF (Penguin Liberation Front) does for K/Ubuntu and Mandriva.

I did successfully install Nvidia's latest driver (which I downloaded from Nvidia), for the GeForce 6600 video card. Fonts are very good, and images render quickly.

Best of all, this system shows no sign of the show-stopper issue I had with OpenSUSE 10.1?extremely slow DNS resolution. Thus far, I'm relatively happy with OpenSUSE 10.2 Beta 1.

Will it Work and Play Well with Others?
I will take this OpenSUSE machine with me to school on Monday (tomorrow) and connect it to our large school network. Then I'll try to install Novell's SUSE Netware client for Linux, and I'll test and evaluate OpenSUSE as a Netware Client. I'll also test out both the Samba client and Samba server capabilities of OpenSUSE.

Stay tuned for the results in Part 2 of this review.

[1] Note.
The computers in my school lab have Asus motherboards with onboard Marvell Yukon network interface functionality. In dual-booting with MS-Windows XP and Linux, there are problems, as each OS does something to the NIC so that it won't work with the other OS. I had to unplug the computer or shut off the power supply to clear the NIC, before starting up the other OS. This was not satisfactory. But the School District Information Services department had a classroom set of Intel 10/100 NICS laying around, which work perfectly. Problem resolved.
