Published on *Tux Machines* (http://www.tuxmachines.org)

Sun cools down Linux desktop plan

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Created *29/06/2005 - 3:08am*
Submitted by srlinuxx on Wednesday 29th of June 2005 03:08:25 AM Filed under Linux [1]

Sun Microsystems is stepping away from an effort to sell the Linux operating system for desktop computers, the server and software company's top software executive said Tuesday.

The Java Desktop System will continue to exist as a product, but now chiefly as software based on Sun's Solaris operating system and directed at programmers, John Loiacono, executive vice president of software, said at a meeting with reporters here at the JavaOne trade show.

"You're going to see less of an emphasis on JDS on Linux," Loiacono said. "The strategy has changed slightly."

That's a big change from three years ago, when Sun launched the project and Sun Chief Executive Scott McNealy touted JDS--then code-named Project Mad Hatter--as a combination of a server and Linux PCs that would be more cost-effective than Microsoft Windows. A server and 100 PCs would cost about $300,000 over five years, Sun said at the time. Later, the company revealed that JDS was based on Novell's Suse desktop Linux software.

"We think this is going to garner a lot of industry support," McNealy said of Mad Hatter in September 2002. "We believe we've got all the ducks lined up in the right direction."

But it didn't catch on, and Sun has plenty of fish to fry already, said Yankee Group analyst Dana Gardner. "Sun has got an awful lot on its plate right now," Gardner said. "It can't overspend on its research and development by one penny, because Wall Street will whack them."

It's possible the idea could resurface later, Gardner added.

Full Story [2].

Linux

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