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Don't ask if Linux and open source are ready for your business -- ask yourself if your business is ready for them.

Over a year ago, I wrote a column about the small and midsize market and Linux. Large enterprises were shifting many server functions to Linux and imploring their developers to understand and embrace open source development practices. I argued that there was never a better time for smaller companies to consider Linux and open source software.

The market didn't seem to move as quickly as I thought it should. Despite the fact that Linux had matured considerably, that all the major hardware vendors were promoting Linux and Red Hat, and that Novell had hundreds of ISVs lined up and supporting its distributions, the market didn't react. A number of factors have made the switch to Linux a challenge many were not ready to conquer, and I'll explore what I believe to be the top three:

1. Expertise: It doesn't matter how bright your IT staff is, if they have spent their careers installing and managing Microsoft-based systems, their experiences don't translate well to Linux.

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Linux

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