

OnebaseGo 3.0 Review

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Introduction

I am an avid Linux user but tired of the growing number of repetitive distributions. There are too many deja-vu distros based on RedHat, Knoppix and Debian with very little difference between them apart from their name and website.

I came across Onebase Linux recently, an independent distribution that consists of an impressive list of features. It offers two kinds of Installers, a Net-Installer CD and OnebaseGo Live CD with its Variants that focuses on different interests. While the Net-Installer is free, all other ISOs can be downloaded by purchasing a Download Account which costs \$10. I decided to pay and try OnebaseGo LiveCD. I am writing my experience with it so far.



[3]OnebaseGo default look

Before going on to details, here is some background information about this Project as given in its Website:

Onebase Linux is a multi-purpose operating system based on the linux kernel for PC (x86). It has its own package management tool called OLM and all its binary packages are exclusive to the Project.

Unlike many other distributions out there, it takes its own approach for producing Linux that includes File Hierarchy, Booting, Packages etc... This gave me almost a totally new experience with Linux.

What impressed me is its large list of interesting features and a well organized website.

First Impressions

I tried OnebaseGo on two machines that includes a Laptop and Desktop PC.

My Laptop Specifications:

- Intel Centrino 1.5 ghz
- Video: Intel Graphics Card
- Audio: Integrated Sound Card
- Input: Keyboard. Mouse and Touchpad
- Memory: 256 MB RAM
- Network: Intel ethernet card, Wireless card
- USB Controllers

My Desktop PC Specifications:

- Intel Pentium 4 2.0 GHz
- Video: ATI 9600 Graphics card
- Audio: Intergrated ATI Sound Card
- Input: Keyboard and USB Mouse
- Network: Realtek Ethernet card
- Memory: 512 MB RAM
- USB Controllers and other ports



[4]Some Applications

The booting process was smooth and much faster than Ubuntu. Most of my hardware like network card, sound etc. were automatically detected and also the video settings was setup without a hitch. However my Parallel Port Printer did not work but successfully tested an USB printer.

It loaded into a pre-configured KDE desktop with some icons linking to Onebase specific software like HardDisk Installer, Save settings to USB disk, "Docking" to remaster OnebaseGo itself and Onebase Portal.

I felt that the system generally ran faster than Redhat and Debian distributions like application loading time. This may be due to i686 optimized binaries.

Features

I would like to describe certain features that are confined to this Live CD.

Saving Live CD session settings to a USB disk has become a common functionality now. And OnebaseGo does this with more viability like automatic restoration of session data while booting without any commands and your USB disk need not be formatted and your existing data in the drive is not overwritten.



[5]Onebase Re-Mastering Tool

The feature that most amused me in OnebaseGo is "Docking". Do not be confused by that name. It is actually "remastering" the LiveCD in an easy way. The "docking" gives the ability to remaster the OnebaseGo Live CD with your own settings and software without requiring a hard-disk installation. It makes use of free space in a Linux partition without disturbing the existing data.

I launched the "docking" icon in the desktop and it involved three steps. The first step asked me to enter the partition with free space to dump all the OnebaseGo data into it. The second step involved installation or un-installation of applications. A browser based interface guided the entire process. Though I would prefer a true GUI interface, it was easy to use and had no problems with it.

Then I added a few applications like kyim, barrage etc. and performed the third step. This is an automated step called "un-docking" which will cleanup and generate a new remastered OnebaseGo ISO based on the settings that I provided. This third step took a long time to complete as much as 38 mins.

The remastered OnebaseGo worked exactly as I expected it to function.

OnebaseGo also comes with the latest LiveCD techniques that includes unionfs which allows the user to perform "write" operations anywhere when running LiveCD.

Installation

The "Hard Disk Installer" in OnebaseGo provides a quick way to install and setup Onebase Linux compared to the Net-Installer. It had a few steps that included accepting the License, partitioning, bootloader setup, locale and time settings. The Partitioning is actually done by another software called QTParted. Which allows the user to resize existing partitions.

The installation took around "20 mins" to complete and I rebooted to the installed Onebase Linux which greeted with a blue bootplash. The speed of the installed Onebase was obviously faster than OnebaseGo.

There was a icon called "Onebase Portal" on the desktop which I thought it was a link to the website but it was a "system management software". And it has a lot of tools to explore.

My first step was to install more applications. So I clicked the "Software" and went to "Software Tree" which lists all the available Onebase Applications in a categorized way or you can search the application database.

Clicking the install button of a particular software launches a console window and performs automated operations without any user-intervention. It felt more like the "Click-n-Run" feature of Linspire.

The user can tweak the behavior of the package management very much to his own needs. Another good part is that the user can make his system optimized like Gentoo with well integrated support for Source package installations.

There was other features like package caching, system update and "beta" repository.

The bad part is that since Onebase uses its own package manager, a system administrator needs to learn new things inorder to maintain a Onebase system.

Software

OnebaseGo came with a good selection of software and also mostly updated. The only application that I missed was OpenOffice which was substituted with Koffice. Firefox worked without problems and came with realplayer, mplayer and flash plug ins. The addition of Amarok was a treat for managing songs.

All important Internet based applications were present including bittorrent, gaim.

GIMP, Scribus and Sodipodi were good enough for a graphic artist. There were Multimedia software like Kmpayer, xine.



[6]Application File-Hierarchy

There were certain problems with software like certain missing plug ins in GIMP, a non-working icon for Lphoto. But besides these, there were enough applications to satisfy overall needs.

Moreover once installed, the user gets free access to all the applications present in Onebase Software Gallery.

The most interesting software was "Onebase Portal" itself. Which makes feel Onebase different from other distros.

Onebase provides an improved file-hierarchy by installing software into their own folder under /OL-apps directory. Then symlinks of these files are populated at / to be UNIX compatible. This makes package management easier and the contents of a software becomes more visible to end-users.

Onebase Portal

"Onebase Portal" is a "System Management Center" for Onebase Linux. It is browser based and consists of different modules that includes desktop, hardware, system, packadmin, autotsetup, autotask, multimedia, network and software.

It performs a wide variety of tasks such as desktop searching, photo album creation, download and setup of Desktop karamba themes, desktop setups and create personal backup.



[7]System Management Center

Certain Hardware, Network and Multimedia based configurations can be performed using this software.

There are a huge number of configuration options available for tuning and setting up the Package Manager. As Onebase can perform Source package installation or Binary package installation in an integrated manner.

Other tools included are firewall-setup, System restore points and also the bootsplash themes can be changed using Onebase Portal.

There was a module called AutoTask, that consists of a number of small tasks like file copying, archiving, format

conversion etc... grouped into various categories. The main purpose of this tool is to create bigger and repetitive taskflows with these small tasks. I found this new and useful.

Another feature of Onebase Portal is a module named "OL Transfer". This is meant for users who have slow Internet bandwidth to download Onebase applications using other computers including Windows. I tried this module and downloaded some Onebase applications using a Windows PC at an Internet Cafe and transferred them to my Onebase system using a USB disk.

There is so much more to explore that this software alone would need an separate article to mention all its functions.

Except a few software glitches, I am overall very happy with the performance and features of Onebase Linux. With a huge crowd of Live CD distributions makers, Onebase feels fresh and different in many ways.

It was worth the time and money spent on this Linux distribution. Compared to commercial distros like Xandros, Linspire and opensource projects like Debian, Knoppix. Onebase Linux fits the crowd in between these two and aims to bring a new Linux community who would look for interesting features rather than same re-packaged software that is available.

Onebase Website: www.onebaselinux.com [8]

Ratings

Installation: 9/10

Installation is easy and fast

Hardware Support: 8/10

Most of my hardware were detected except Printer

Software: 8/10

Enough software included but there were certain issues

Features: 10/10

It was Great and had a lot of fun exploring its features

Maintenance: 9/10

With Onebase Portal and OLM, system maintenance is perfect

Overall score: 8.8/10

(Not an average of other scores)

Extremely useful and different except a few bogging issues

About the author: [DJ Jackson](#), Software Developer and Linux user. Beta-Tested and Tried a number of Linux distributions. Now my PC runs Gentoo, Onebase and Xandros.

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