

# CEO Jim Whitehurst pilots Red Hat into future

By *srlinuxx*

Created 07/02/2008 - 10:08pm

Submitted by srlinuxx on Thursday 7th of February 2008 10:08:42 PM Filed under [Linux](#) [1] [Interviews](#) [2]

When Matthew Szulik left Red Hat abruptly for family health reasons in December, many people were scratching their heads over the company's new choice of CEO: a young executive from Delta Airlines, Jim Whitehurst. But Whitehurst's chief operating officer title at Delta and position outside of the technology industry are misleading; a peek into his past reveals a computer science degree and a passion for open source technology, not to mention a smooth operator who helped bring a struggling airline out of bankruptcy.

Still, Whitehurst, 40, has big shoes to fill in replacing Szulik, the man who took a small, unknown company and turned it into a savvy business competitor that made Linux a household name and struck fear in the hearts of much bigger rivals such as Microsoft. Today, Red Hat is the leading Linux vendor and is financially sound, but the company is in a pivotal phase of reinventing itself as a broader open source software provider and a multibillion-dollar technology leader that can compete long-term with much larger companies.

Whitehurst spoke with IDG News Service this week about the key findings of his first month on the job and where he thinks Red Hat should focus its attention to evolve at a sustainable pace. This is an edited version of that interview.

**IDGNS:** I was surprised to find out that you have a computer science background when I heard you came to Red Hat as COO from Delta Airlines. I didn't expect you to be such a techie.

*Whitehurst:* I do have geek cred. For some reason, your reputation is always based on your prior experience. When I was at the airline, people said, "Who is this strategy consultant running an airline?" Now I'm an airline guy running a technology company. I wish I was called an airline guy when I was at the airline!

[More Here](#) [3]

---

---

[Linux Interviews](#)

---

Source URL: <http://www.tuxmachines.org/node/23989>

**Links:**

[1] <http://www.tuxmachines.org/taxonomy/term/63>

[2] <http://www.tuxmachines.org/taxonomy/term/119>

[3] [http://www.infoworld.com/article/08/02/07/CEO-Whitehurst-Red-Hat-future\\_1.html](http://www.infoworld.com/article/08/02/07/CEO-Whitehurst-Red-Hat-future_1.html)