

Creating appealing video software demos in Linux

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A software product description is nothing without screenshots. They are the most-clicked links on almost every free software page -- much more than "Download." Screenshots carry information about the software's appearance, maturity, user interface, user friendliness, and feature set in a much more immediate way than paragraphs of text description. You can't show some software characteristics with still images, however. That's why, in recent months, the screencast has seen growing popularity. And when you need to creating screencasts, Istanbul and Wink make the process easy for Linux users.

Just as a screenshot is a picture of a user's screen, a screencast is essentially a movie of what a user sees on his monitor. And if a picture is worth a thousand words, a movie is worth a thousand pictures.

Screencasts have a number of different uses. Mainly, the FLOSS community has adopted them to preview UI-related software features and to create short demos.

Screencasts are useful for demonstrating features of both simple and complicated software. In the open source community, projects have used screencasts to show improvements to the popular Blender 3D modeling tool, to present the Beagle search system to impatient users, and on a number of other occasions where demonstrating the interaction patterns or complex features of software was the primary goal.

Creating a screencast helps software developers show off their work. It is a useful skill for ordinary software users as well, to help report bugs (the movie takes the place of potentially unclear written explanations) or to show others how a given task is accomplished in a specific software environment.

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[1] <http://www.tuxmachines.org/taxonomy/term/98>

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