

Interview with Linus about Git

By *srlinuxx*

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Linus Torvalds didn't want to change software configuration management tools; however, business and open-source philosophy problems left the Linux founder with no choice but to abandon BitKeeper and create his own system: Git.

SCM programs are used to control the flow of updates and track program changes. In a project as large as Linux-more than 17,000 files-this can be very difficult and very slow.

Because most SCMs-such as CVS (Concurrent Versions System)-are too slow for him, Torvalds built his own.

He describes Git as "a stupid (but extremely fast) directory content manager. It doesn't do a whole lot, but what it does do is track directory contents efficiently."

It also can't be used with BitMover Inc.'s BitKeeper, the controversial and proprietary SCM that Torvalds had used to manage Linux kernel development.

"Git has a totally different model of representing the source tree," said Torvalds.

The name itself really doesn't have a meaning. Torvalds joked that it can be a "random three-letter combination that is pronounceable, and not actually used by any common Unix command. The fact that it is a mispronunciation of 'get' may or may not be relevant." Or, "'stupid. contemptible and despicable. simple.' Take your pick from the dictionary of slang." Or, "global information tracker: [if] you're in a good mood, and it actually works for you. Angels sing, and a light suddenly fills the room."

Git has already been used for its first run of Linux: the beta of Linux 2.6.12-rc3. But Torvalds admits that Git is still a work in progress.

"The roughness really comes from two things," said Torvalds. "It's a young project, and it just takes time for things to mature. That will go on for years, assuming none of the other open-source SCMs just eventually show themselves to be capable enough that we just end up deciding that Git was a good temporary bridge."

Also, Git does some things very differently from traditional source management, Torvalds said.

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