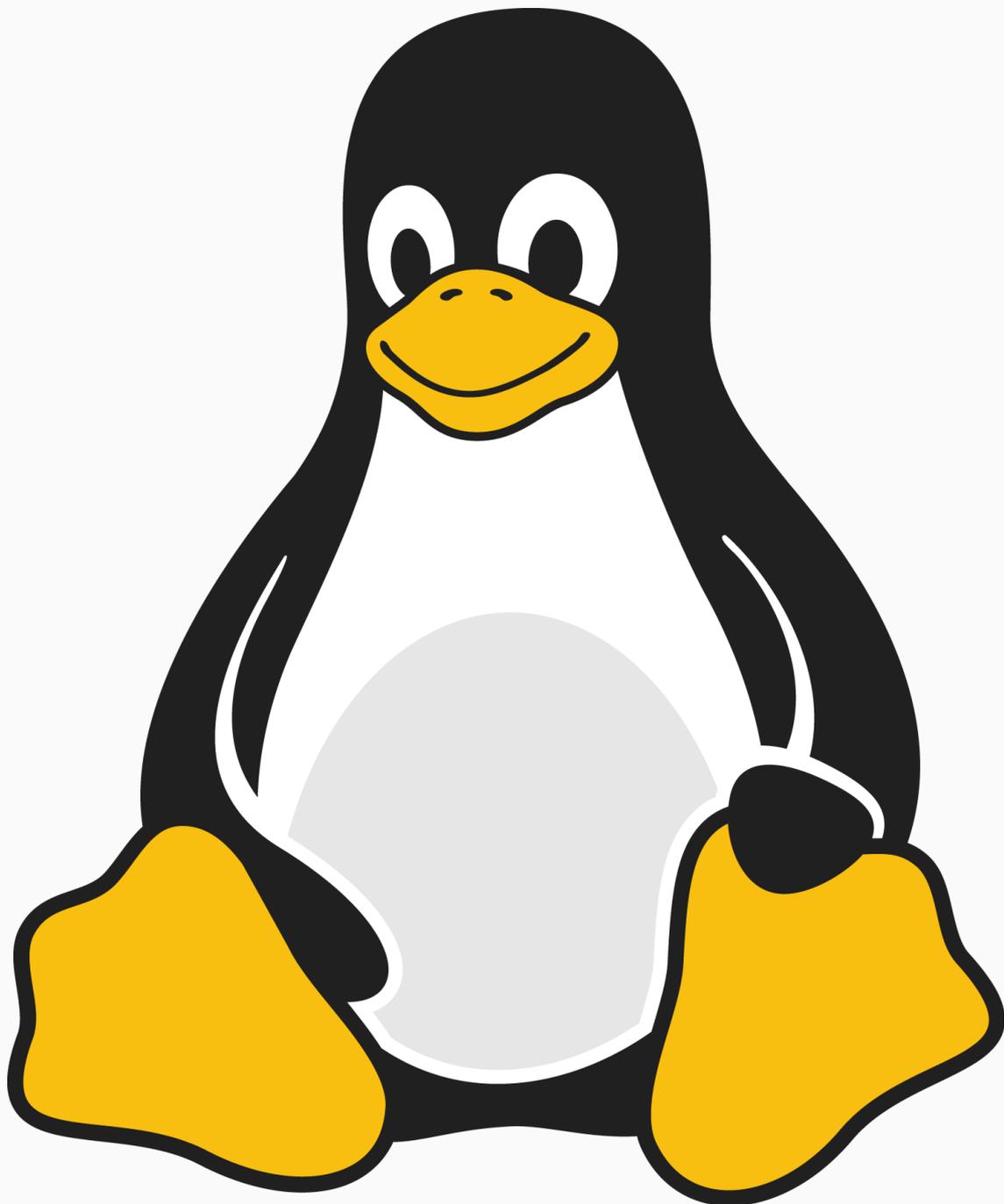A periodic newsletter with links to blogs and industry news for subscribers to the Architecting IT blog.

This is newsletter #27, published on 29 August 2016.

Linux Turns 25

It's a little over 25 years to the day (in fact 25th August 1991) since Linus Torvalds first announced he was working on a new operating system and needed a little help. That O/S was Linux, which today powers most of our IT infrastructure and is the basis for Android (Google's smartphone O/S) and even the humble Raspberry Pi.

Origins

When Linux was first released I was just about to start a new job working in France. I was still focused on the mainframe (IBM's MVS operating system), with some of the applications running on TPF, the mainframe variant still used to run the majority of the world's airline reservation systems. Remember also that just prior to Linus' announcement, we had only just seen the start of the World Wide Web.

Within three years I was working back in the UK, still on mainframe software development (a TCP/IP to SNA/VTAM conversion tool) and Linux was an evening hobby. I remember building PCs and spending hours trying to get graphics cards to work correctly, with things like manual specification for display interlace modes.

Roll forward to today and Linux is a mature, stable and well managed O/S with Torvalds remaining as a benevolent dictator, continuing to run the project. Linux runs the world's websites, mobile phones, IoT devices, and wide range of other devices like wireless access points and routers. It even runs storage arrays.

Top Dog

The way in which Linux has taken arguably the top position in operating systems is remarkable. The proprietary competition (AIX, HP-UX, Solaris), has slowly faded away towards becoming niche products sold by their respective vendors for specific purposes. Of course we should remember that part of the success of Linux is that the core (kernel) of the operating system is the only piece developed by Torvalds. Other companies like Red Hat and Canonical put together the other components like configuration and package management. After that, it's back to the community again for more software packages.

Linux has effectively become an ecosystem, with the most critical component being directed by one person with a clear vision and set of rigorous principles and standards.

Windows Open Source

What does this say for the rest of the industry? Oracle didn't seem that keen on maintaining Open Solaris after the Sun acquisition. IBM continues to keep AIX proprietary and anyway already supports Linux on their hardware. HP-UX remains proprietary. What about Windows?

With Microsoft's move to the cloud and support for Linux in Azure, could it be time to open source Windows? Perhaps it's worth separating the "free" from "open source" discussion. Microsoft could consider moving to a free non-commercial distribution and even eventually distributing the O/S totally free of charge. I think though that moving to open source might be a step too far.

Making Windows an open source platform would expose all of the undocumented and back-door hooks that Microsoft uses to keep ahead with products like Exchange, SQL Server and the Office suite. I suspect releasing the source code would highlights dozens if not hundreds of new bugs and vulnerabilities, all of which would need swift patching, based on the Windows install base.

With that in mind, the Linux model could push Microsoft to be as niche as HP-UX, AIX and Solaris.

What do you think?

Chris Evans

New Architecting IT Blog Posts...

- [Seagate Ups The Ante with 60TB SSD](#) (17 August 2016)

News Worth Reading...

Click on the links to read the full story.

[The Register: Toshiba flashes 100TB QLC flash drive](#)

The Flash Memory Summit saw Toshiba deliver a presentation about [quad-level cell (QLC)](#) technology – adding substantially to the prospect of a product

being delivered in the "near future"...

[Ars Technica: Linux Turns 25, is bigger and more professional than ever](#)

The Linux operating system kernel is 25 years old this month. It was August 25, 1991 when Linus Torvalds posted his [famous message](#) announcing the project, claiming that Linux was "just a hobby, won't be big and professional like gnu."...

[The Register: Microsoft has open-sourced PowerShell for Linux, Macs. Repeat Microsoft has open-sourced PowerShell](#)

Microsoft [has published PowerShell](#), its scripting and automation platform, as open source under the permissive MIT licence, as well as porting it to Linux and Mac, with an alpha build now available on GitHub...

[The Register: Google broke its own cloud by doing two updates at once](#)

Google has explained an August 11th brownout on its cloud as, yet again, a self-inflicted wound.At the time of the incident Google said App Engine APIs were unavailable for a time...

[Reuters: Nutanix acquires two startups amid IPO delay](#)

High-tech computing company Nutanix has acquired two startups to enhance its data and storage services, as the firm continues to grow its business despite a protracted delay in its initial public offering...

[Ars Technica: Microsoft goes after VMware with free(ish) Windows licenses for Hyper-V converts](#)

With the imminent release of Windows Server 2016, due to be launched [some time in September](#)with its new [per-core licensing](#), Microsoft is making a concerted effort to win over VMware users and get them to switch to Hyper-V...

[Data Center Knowledge: Linus Torvalds on Early Linux History, GPL License and Money](#)

What drove Linus Torvalds to create Linux, the open source kernel that turns twenty-five this week? Here are some answers from Torvalds himself about Linux's early history...

[TechCrunch: Dropbox is resetting passwords for accounts that haven't changed them since mid-2012](#)

Dropbox is requiring users who have not changed their passwords since mid-2012 to reset their passwords this afternoon. The action appears to be related to continued fallout over [the massive hack on LinkedIn in 2012](#) where credentials for 117 million accounts were posted online...

Startup Spotlight...

Hedvig Inc is a storage company that focuses on Software Defined Storage and delivering a distributed storage platform. In fact their product is called the "Hedvig Distributed Storage Platform" (we'll call it HDSP for now). HDSP allows customers to take commodity resources and build a virtual storage layer that can be used to build out a hyperscale solution, hyper-converged solution or as a replacement for traditional data centre resources.

The HDSP also offers features expected in today's modern storage arrays, including multi-protocol support (block, file and object), hypervisor support, API automation and data reduction technologies.

Hedvig is one of a number of companies looking to upset traditional storage usage and move organisations with large volumes of data to commodity hardware and intelligent software. Hedvig is worth a look and will feature in our upcoming ebook on software defined storage, due out in January 2017.

In case you're wondering about the name, it derives from the founder's child's mispronounciation of Harry Potter's owl - hence the logo, which is actually an abstract owls head (if you look carefully).

- [Hedvig website](#)

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