The Desktop Linux Working Group

The OSDL Desktop Linux Working Group is focused on accelerating the use of Linux on the enterprise desktop. The DTL initiatives' goal is to make the Linux Desktop in the enterprise commonplace. To achieve this goal, the DTL initiative has established three primary objectives:

- Identify a set of usage models which cover a large proportion of actual use within the enterprise; create a document specifying what capabilities are required of the Linux Desktop to successfully address each of those usage models.

- Identify mismatches and gaps between existing desktop implementations and the usage models, then work with the open source community to address those problems.

- Identify and remove barriers that ISVs face in porting to and developing on Linux, enabling a more robust market for Linux-based desktop applications.

Linux is already a technically capable operating system environment today. Like any OS, feature/function enhancements occur regularly as users ask for them and developers incorporate them. However to achieve more widespread adoption and reach its true potential for desktop productivity, Linux must attract a critical mass of client application developers. Therefore, the first two objectives above lead directly to the third. Without an expanding and successful base of ISVs developing for it, the Linux desktop market's growth will be limited.
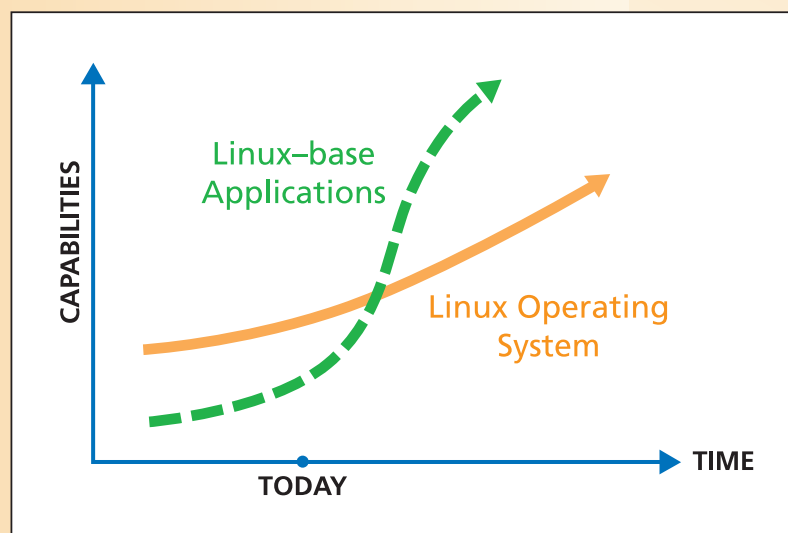
OSDL and the DTL Working Group

OSDL is a non-profit organization founded in 2000 with the principal objective of accelerating the growth and adoption of Linux in the enterprise. OSDL is sponsored and sustained by a range of IT vendor and communications industry vendors, along with a growing number of Linux end users. OSDL supports and drives the business-hardening of Linux and promotes the use of Linux and open source software around the world. The DTL working group was established in February, 2003, to enhance Linux for use on the enterprise desktop and promote its use.

DTL Working Group

This group consists of a cross-section of OSDL members including IT vendors, Linux distributors, ISVs and end users. There are two distinct components to the group:

- Marketing sub-committee which identifies analyses and documents the market requirements for success on the enterprise desktop.

- Technical sub-committee which works with the open source community, ISVs and other interested parties to develop technical solutions which will meet the identified success requirements.

Currently, Linux-based application capabilities lag that of the operating system.

Accelerating the Use of Linux on the Enterprise Desktop

The Desktop Linux (DTL) Work Group strategy is to produce a specification for a desktop system which stands on its own merits and exploits its own strengths. It is not intended to replicate existing desktop systems neither in the level of integration with existing deployments, nor as a development/application environment.

The Critical Element: ISV Applications

Successful deployment of Linux desktops in the Enterprise is currently slowed by the relatively limited availability of third party (ISV) applications. A major part of the OSDL Linux Desktop Working Groups' activities is focused on the identifying and eliminating inhibitors ISVs encounter when trying to port and write new applications for the Linux Desktops.

Enterprise Desktop User Segments

In line with the DTL strategy of developing a specification that stands on its own merits and exploits the strengths inherent in Linux, the DTL marketing sub-committee has identified four user segments as the focus:

Basic Office

Employees in the business world use desktop computers to drive company processes and productivity with word processing, presentation and spreadsheet applications, to name a few. Generally these users require only basic compatibility (including basic import and export compatibility) with other document formats, such as Microsoft Office. They require basic connectivity and browser functionality. Typically, these users include loan officers and insurance agents who work in connected environments.

Transactional Worker

This type of user typically runs multiple customized business applications, most of which are structured or forms-based. They also browse the Web and collaborate through basic email. Their web browsing is generally limited to information gathering. Email usage is limited to within the company. Typically, users of these desktops include travel agents, bank administration personnel and front office personnel.

Technical Workstation

These users run engineering or specialized industry-specific desktop applications such as computer animation. Their choices of hardware and operating systems are secondary to their choices of applications. These users collaborate through basic email and instant messaging, and they browse intranet and internet sites. This segment includes movie animation studios and engineers using CAD/CAM.

Fixed Function

Fixed function machines run a single designated application that is customized for specific purpose. These machines do not have a desktop: when the system boots, the application is invoked and its first screen is presented. By definition, these machines do not run productivity applications. A few examples of fixed function machines include point of sale terminals, airline boarding pass kiosks and ATM machines.

Contact Information
www.osdl.org/lab_activities/desktop_linux

DTL Participation

The strength of this working group lies in both the number and diversity of its members. Participation in the OSDL DTL working group is open to any interested party, either as a representative of a member company or as an individual. To participate, contribute, or just learn more, visit: **http://www.osdl.org**