Executive speakout

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Whitepaper:

The new Linux supply chain

By Dan Cauchy, VP of Marketing, MontaVista Software

In the context of "community," what's your strategy on professional networking, information sharing, and developing solution partnerships addressing the needs of embedded software engineers?

A: Linux has become the OS of choice for new embedded development in a broader range of applications than ever before, ranging from Mobile Internet Devices (MIDs) to In-Vehicle-Infotainment (IVI), GPS systems, smartphones, and more. The approach to embedded Linux development is changing, and there are three popular paths.

Downloading source and building a Linux distribution ("Roll-Your-Own," or RYO) provides the most flexibility, but requires a tremendous amount of work to integrate all the required components. There is also a limited support infrastructure, primarily composed of mailing lists and discussion groups around the different open source projects.

Commercial Linux provides high-quality binary Linux distributions that have undergone extensive testing, and all the components are well integrated. Yet it doesn't always provide the latest features for new hardware. Because it is delivered as a binary distribution, modifying and rebuilding it from source could be challenging.

Now, semiconductor vendors are providing Linux technology for their hardware platforms and processors. Linux is the fastest way for them to enable new hardware and get it up and running and into the hands of developers. But the result is not of commercial quality, nor does it provide the full set of features and functions required to deliver a complete commercial product. So where does a developer turn? MontaVista has taken a new approach to embedded Linux development and realigned the Linux supply chain and the supporting community.

MontaVista Linux 6 (MVL6) provides source-based Market Specific Distributions (MSDs) designed specifically for target hardware and markets along with the new MontaVista Integration Platform (MVIP). Developers can begin hardware enablement and early prototyping using the Linux provided by their hardware vendor, and then easily move to MVL6 without losing or redoing previous work. They gain the advantage of a high-quality, fully integrated, fully supported Linux distribution that provides the same features as their semiconductor Linux and an extended feature set that provides all the functionality required for the market.

The MSDs and MVIP are only part of the MVL6 solution, however, and the right support is also needed. Finding the right piece of embedded Linux information or subject-matter expert can be like searching for a needle in multiple haystacks. Meld fills a void in the community today, and provides a place for the embedded developer to connect, share, and design. Within Meld, it's easy to find embedded Linux experts in specific subjects and to participate in discussion forums focusing on design challenges or specific hardware platforms.

About the Author

Dan Cauchy *is VP of Marketing at MontaVista Software and has more than 18 years of experience in the telecom, data networking, and mobile business arenas. Prior to joining MontaVista, Dan was the Director of Product Management at Atrica (acquired by Nokia-Siemens Networks). He is Chairman of the Carrier Grade Linux work group at Linux Foundation and represents MontaVista at the SCOPE Alliance and the GENIVI Alliance. He earned a Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Ottawa.*

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