

RHL: Where to go?

Dealing with the end of RHL as we have known it.

David A. Cafaro – November 12th, 2003

1. Introduction

- 1.1. What's happening to RHL (Red Hat Linux).
 - a) As announced earlier this year by Red Hat, Red Hat Linux will not be continued after Red Hat 9s end of life April 30th. All code from the Red Hat Linux releases is being given to the community based project Fedora.
- 1.2. What is Fedora?
 - a) Instead of supporting further Red Hat Linux versions, Red Hat has decided to give technical and financial support to the Fedora Linux project. The idea of this project is for the community to have more say in how it is developed. Red Hat will use snapshots for the Fedora Project to help build their Red Hat Enterprise Linux releases.
- 1.3. And what is RHEL (Red Hat Enterprise Linux).
 - a) RHEL, is the focus of the future of all Red Hat based products. Red Hat is marketing their Enterprise line as stable development platforms for enterprises to build their Linux infrastructures on.

2. What are the RHEL options?

- 2.1. The different versions of RHEL.
 - a) **RHEL AS** – Supports x86, Itanium, AMD64, IBM iSeries/pSeries/zSeries and s/390.
 - Both Standard and Premium editions come with Tech Support and Errata and updates for 1 year.
 - Premium editions provide 24/7 phone support as well as quicker response times for issues.
 - Pricing for the Standard Edition starts at \$1499 for one x86 system up to \$15000 for one zSeries or s/390.
 - Pricing for the Standard Edition starts at \$2499 for one x86 system up to \$18000 for one zSeries or s/390.
 - b) **RHEL ES** – Supports x86 machines with no more than 2 CPUs and < 8GB memory.
 - Standard includes techsupport (business hours only), Media, manuals, and updates for 1 year. Basic only includes updates for 1 year, and downloaded ISOs.
 - Pricing for basic is \$349 per year, Standard is \$799 per year.
 - c) **RHEL WS** – Supports x86, Itanium, and AMD64, no more than 2 CPUs
 - Support is the same as RHEL ES
 - Pricing for Basic is \$179 per year, Standard is \$299 for x86 and \$792 for Itanium and AMD64 per year.

- d) **RHEL Academic Server** – Special edition for Academic environments
- Not many details of this have been released yet, but early statements say that it will the server version will parallel RHEL ES 3 and the workstation version will parallel the RHEL WS 3 product. Pricing has been mention at \$2500 for a campus wide site license for RHEL WS 3, and \$50 a machine for the RHEL ES 3 version.
 - No exact details have been made yet, and this was a late release due to academic complaints about RHEL new model.

2.2. How long does Red Hat provide support?

- a) RHEL products of a promised product life of 5 years from release.
- b) Full Support for 2.5 years, deployment Support for 3 years (including the 2.5 years of Full Support), and maintenance mode for 2 years more (for 5 years total)

2.3. What about getting updates past the first year?

- a) To get official binary Errata and Updates from Red Hat you must maintain a subscription to the given Product you are running. For example if you purchased RHEL ES basic for \$349, each year there after you are required to purchase RHEL ES basic for \$349 to maintain your subscription to updates.
- b) Currently Red Hat is offering a special for those with Red Hat Network subscriptions to purchase RHEL products for ½ and get the second year at ½ as well.

2.4. Negatives – Cost structure does not recognize self supporting organizations in no need of technical support or support guarantees. People just looking for an inexpensive (but not free) product that has a long errata support cycle may need to look elsewhere.

3. What are the Fedora options?

- 3.1. Fedora is the community supported branch of the old Red Hat Linux codebase. Red Hat is still planning on taking an active role in Fedora as they will be using snapshots of Fedora Core releases for use in their Enterprise Linux line of products.
- 3.2. Fedora Linux will be similar to feel as what Red Hat Linux was, the primary differences will be release cycles and the support length for each release.
- a) The Fedora project is hoping to be releasing 2-3 releases of Fedora Core per year.
- b) Each Fedora Core will be supported with errata and updates for a period of 2-3 months after the release of the next Fedora Core version.
- c) This creates an effective support life of 6-9 months for each Fedora Core release.
- d) Negatives – New project will no track record, unknown future.

4. What is the Fedora Legacy?

- 4.1. Recognizing that a support life of 6-9 months doesn't fit well with most server installations, and that many people do not need to upgrade servers that have run happily on RH7.x, 8, and 9 for years, Fedora Legacy was formed.
- 4.2. The goal of Fedora Legacy is to step in to the void left by the End-of-life of Red Hat products, and the short support cycles of Fedora Core and provide security and critical updates for old RHL products as well as Fedora Core releases.
- 4.3. This project was just recently started and is in the process of organizing volunteers, setting up guidelines and getting resources ready. The plan is to be up and running by the end of December so that support for RH 7.3 (and possible 7.2 as well as 8.0) can be provided.
- 4.4. The hope is to give each release at least a ~21 month support cycle, and possibly longer depending on interest and volunteers.
- 4.5. Negatives – New project with no track record. Will it organize? How sustainable is it in the long run?

5. How about other Distributions?

- 5.1. **cAos** – A stable modern community based distribution
 - a) cAos is a Linux community supported distribution, it's roots come from RHEL 2 and RHEL 3. Using source RPMS from Red Hats ES 2.1 and 3.0, cAos is building a distribution with out the limited licensed software and Red Hat trademarks within the RHEL line.
 - b) It is hoped that cAos will have a similar product support life as the RHES releases that they are based off of.
 - c) There should be both releases available by January of 2004.
 - d) Negatives? New project with out a track record. Will Red Hat SRPMS always be available?
- 5.2. **Mandrake** – Long time Linux distribution that is rpm based.
 - a) Mandrake Linux has been a stable and well supported distribution for man years.
 - Clean Installer
 - 24 Month support cycles between releases
 - High level tech support available
 - Free community version available
 - rpm based so similar software support as Red Hat.
 - Good server software support and an easy Linux desktop.
 - b) Negatives? Some concern about financial stability (just recently coming out of bankruptcy). Will they go the same path as Red Hat?

5.3. **Suse** – The European Red Hat

- a) Suse is competing in the same market as Red Hat aiming for the large enterprise installations. This includes high levels technical support contracts and big name software partners.
- b) Suse still offers a “consumer” version of Linux as well as their Enterprise Linux products.
- c) The free version of Suse release is usually one release behind paid version of Suse Linux, as well as not being available in ISOs for download.
- d) Pricing is similar to Red Hat Enterprise for Suse Enterprise and the home consumer version pricing is in line with the old RHL versions and Mandrake Linux versions
- e) Negatives? Recent purchase by Novell worries some about the future strategy of Suse.

5.4. **Debian** – Long standing community based distribution

- a) Debian can provide a very stable Linux distribution that is free with update life cycles of about 2 years. Also it is fairly easy to upgrade to the next stable release.
- b) There are three release of Debian:
 - Debian Stable (woody) : the present production quality version of Debian with available errata and bug fixes.
 - Debian Testing (sarge): this version is used to test out new software before being released to the Debian Stable branch. Can run from being very stable to unstable. Packages can break and loose dependencies. Not a good choice for production machines.
 - Debian Unstable (sid): This is the cutting edge version. If you are looking for the latest and greatest, it probably in here, but not for the general user. Unstable often requires a lot of technical knowledge to fix errors and resolve lost dependencies. Absolutely not recommended for production machines.
- c) Has a strong software installation tool called apt-get that is very efficient at getting software, resolving dependencies and installing.
- d) Negatives? Debian Stable tends to have older software packages, and is known for having a very difficult initial installer. Also configuration utilities tend to be behind some of the other commercial distributions.

5.5. And others...

- a) **Libranet** – Debian based with a good installer.
- b) **FreeBSD** – BSD based.
- c) **OpenBSD** – BSD based security minded.

6. Other notable projects:

6.1. **current** – the Red Hat Network emulator

- a) current allows you to setup your own local server change the host that your client machine goes to for it's up2date sessions and retrieve updates you provide via your own server.
- b) Using the Fedora Legacy Project of cAos updates you could automate and simplify large installations.

7. Links:

- 7.1. Red Hat Enterprise Linux: <http://www.redhat.com/software/rhel/>
- 7.2. Fedora Project: <http://fedora.redhat.com/>
- 7.3. Fedora Legacy Project: <http://www.fedora.us/wiki/FedoraLegacy>
- 7.4. cAos: <http://www.caosity.org/>
- 7.5. Mandrake Linux: <http://www.mandrakesoft.com/>
- 7.6. Suse Linux: <http://www.suse.com/us/index.html>
- 7.7. Debian Linux: <http://www.debian.org/>
- 7.8. Libranet Linux: <http://www.libranet.com/>
- 7.9. FreeBSD: <http://www.freebsd.org/>
- 7.10. OpenBSD: <http://www.openbsd.org/>
- 7.11. Current: <http://current.tigris.org/>