

Linux News



Burgers And (Open) Sauce

Linux users often boast about the versatility of their operating system, but this heart-warming tale of Linux riding to the rescue of a burger vendor's Windows machines shows just how versatile it can be

On 22nd April security 'expert' McAfee sent thousands of users a seriously flawed software update that misclassified a critical Windows XP system file, svchost.exe, as a malicious

program. McAfee's AV software obediently detected and removed the threat, sending affected PCs into fits of rebooting that made the machines useless. McAfee duly grovelled and sent out a patch to

fix it, but for some companies that didn't really help.

Blogger Edwin Garcia works in the test lab of a company that maintains the 'Point of Sale' (PoS) machines for a well-known chain of US burger outlets. The machines run Windows XP and were duly updated automatically via a private network link from the burger chain's HQ. Whereupon they all failed. Worse still because they wouldn't boot they couldn't connect to the network and couldn't be fixed online. 700 machines were affected at sites spread right across America, and it looked like someone was going to have to visit them all, connect a keyboard

(their touch-screen's don't work until Windows loads the driver) and install the fix manually.

One of Ed's colleagues worked out manual solution with a restaurant manager on the phone following instructions; it worked but would take about 20 minutes for each machine. Over 230 hours for 700 of them. Then Ed had a better idea and began searching for small Linux distros that can boot via PXE (i.e. across a network).

His brainwave was to create a small, self-extracting, PXE-bootable Linux system, mount an existing shared folder on the server in the restaurant, mount the workstation's Windows

Amiga Mart



Heralds View: Part Three

Sven Harvey concludes his interview with Trevor of A-Eon

Due to a technical gremlin, this third part of Sven's interview with Trevor Dickinson is appearing later than planned. Many apologies for any confusion or inconvenience caused...

Trevor Dickinson reveals a little more behind the coming of the AmigaOne X1000, in the last part of the interview conducted in March.

MM:

Do you have any ideas when you'll be able to reveal the CPU on the Nemo motherboard?

RTD:

We hope to reveal the CPU in the very near future. To date we've used CPU test samples to build all the A1-X1000 prototypes. We have now negotiated a purchase and supply contract with the CPU vendor and, once we have tested the first batch of CPUs we will release all the details. Suffice to say we think it's quite special.

MM:

It has been suggested that the A1-X1000 will have 'proper' retail packaging rather than being made up of a selection of OEM parts as we've grown accustomed to. This

is nice to see after over a decade of not having a shelf-ready retail product. Is an OEM amalgam product a particular bug-bear for you guys or was it the intention from the beginning to have a product that would look right on the shelves of your local Comet?

RTD:

It's something we decided from the outset that, despite the economy of scale, we would try to supply the A1-X1000 as pre-configured, branded hardware in suitable retail packaging. Of course, it would be easier and cheaper not to do this, but we want the A1-X1000 to be viewed as a premium product.

MM:

In my personal view the combination of the technologies



partition with read/write access, delete the broken svchost.exe and the virus definition, copy over a working svchost.exe, and finally reboot the machine.

Damn Small Linux was his first choice, but it doesn't include video drivers for the PoS systems in question. Then he stumbled on PLoP Linux with instructions on how to script it to work via PXE. Having tested it, cleaned up the process and used 7zip to the create a 62MB self extracting zip file he just needed some means of distributing it.

Fortunately Ed's company employs a VB script expert. He created a script that would automatically distribute the self-

extracting zip file across the company network, open it, boot into PLoP running Ed's script, then reboot into XP killing the PXE server and check that the bad DAT file from McAfee really had gone. After that it would report a successful fix back to HQ. All this in one night so that next morning the restaurants could open as normal.

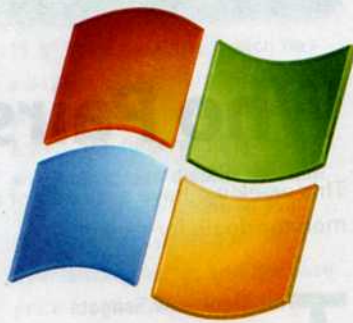
Of course, if the burger company had been running a Linux PoS system like ViewTouch none of this would have happened...

Ed's Blog here: therealedwin.com
PloP Linux: www.plop.at
ViewTouch PoS: www.viewtouch.com

Open-source Social Networking?

People are starting to wake up to the danger posed by social network sites, in particular the cheerful way in which they change the security settings and make public that which their users would rather have kept private. Wired's Ryan Singel has called for an open-source alternative to Facebook:

"Facebook has gone rogue, drunk on founder Mark Zuckerberg's dreams of world domination. It's time the rest of the web ecosystem recognises this and works to replace it with something open and distributed." And just such a thing is being created - it's called Diaspora. More here: joindiaspora.com



As ever, if you have any Linux news you want publicised, let me know: phil@pthane.co.uk.

that ally themselves with the AmigaOS and the OS itself in combination would make one hell of a netbook/sub-notebook/notebook laptop. That's assuming that the browser technology was fully up to speed with the mainstream supporting sites such as Facebook, You Tube, Twitter and streaming services such as BBC iPlayer. Is this something you would like to see and possibly something A-Eon might strive for?

RTD:

I believe there would be a market for an "Amiga netbook" but agree it would have to come with software to support mainstream social networking applications that people have come to expect. We are trying to address this by assisting software

developers wherever possible. The Amiga developer community is also very active and programs like Timberwolf (Firefox) and OpenOffice are currently being ported to AmigaOS4. The other main problem for any Amiga hardware development is economy of scale. It's very difficult to compete with the sheer volume of cheap x86 netbooks that have flooded onto the market. However, I have always believed no problem is insurmountable but first of all we need to make sure the A1-X1000 computer is a success. One step at a time.....

Many thanks to Trevor for the interview and we wish him and A-Eon all possible success with the new AmigaOne X1000 computer system.

New Acube Sam

Coming up in a Flex-ATX form factor, Acube Systems has announced that the new Sam 460ex motherboard is on its way. Featuring the AMCC 460ex SoC processor, which is supported up to 1.066GHz, the board also features PCI-Express, and a single SATA II port, which apparently can't be used at the same time as the single speed PCI-Express slot. Also the board features a 64MB MoC (media on a chip?), which looks after basic audio and video output. One things for sure - this is certainly not something that has been developed with AmigaOS primarily in mind, though it is anticipated that AmigaOS 4.1 will be ported to the board in short order to accompany the obvious Linux distribution for it.

More at www.sam4x0.com/sam460ex.html

ZorRam

AmigaKit has commissioned a new RAM board for Zorro III Amiga machines, which has been developed by Individual Computers and E3B. The low-profile Zorro card will feature 128MB of SDRAM as standard and is fully autoconfig compliant.

The full announcement from Amiga Kit is at tinyurl.com/yzo3zxr.