

Linux desktop driver woes: Laying blame, lobbying, coping

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Driver support is a sore spot, a very sore spot, for any organization using or considering a migration to Linux desktops. It's a pain for longtime Linux users too. In fact, many Linux desktop advocates, users and user wannabes say it is a rock-hard barrier to adoption.

Consider Dennis Bolay of Bolay Mobilecom, who successfully moved his business from Microsoft Office to open source OpenOffice 2.0 on Windows XP, but failed in his attempt to switch his business desktops to Linux. He tried a couple of distributions, and Ubuntu, in particular, worked well. But Ubuntu didn't work with his Linksys wireless cards. He's had to stick with XP.

Bolay and other IT pros and Linux advocates constantly tell us about the negative impact of driver shortages on Linux PC adoption. In this column, we join those separate voices into a chorus, first outlining the reasons why driver support is so abysmal and then sharing ways IT managers work around the problem. Check out the sidebar, too, for Linux evangelists' action list for promoting change.

Laying the blame

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