

# American Steel Realizes Benefits from Linux Infrastructure

By *srlinuxx*

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The advantages of running Linux are well known - lower costs, better adherence to open standards, no domineering corporate power, better security, etc. However, there's one area where Linux users are subject to all the same challenges and pitfalls as other systems: corporate e-mail. E-mail remains the single biggest source of security breaches and IT headaches simply because most Linux-based IT departments still rely on Microsoft Exchange Server for their e-mail. And, because Microsoft Exchange Server has such a large installed user base, it remains a favorite target of hackers and spammers.

Steve Francis of American Steel has found what he believes to be a better alternative; one that runs native to Linux and yet offers a full-featured, transparent solution for users accustomed to using Microsoft Outlook to process their e-mail.

American Steel is a full-line supplier of steel products and services to customers in Washington, Oregon and, through its American Metals affiliate, Northern California. The IT department, run by Steve Francis, uses Linux exclusively on its five servers, three IT department workstations, and seven network storage devices. However, most of the company's 120 employees use Windows workstations and the Microsoft Office suite, including Microsoft Outlook.

Up until 2004, American Steel used a Windows NT server running an older version of Microsoft Exchange Server (version 5.5). When Microsoft ended support for its NT Server, the company decided to upgrade its e-mail system. However, it found that the estimated \$13,579 cost of doing so was too pricey, especially for a company of its size. And the estimate didn't include the potentially significant anti-virus upgrade costs that would have been required.

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