



IBM Expands Linux Support

By Darryl K. Taft

July 27, 1999

IBM on Tuesday announced worldwide support for enterprise customers running Linux, including free support during a 90-day start-up period for Red Hat Software and Caldera Systems Linux running on IBM Netfinity servers.

"For the Netfinity brand, this [announcement] is a biggie because we've gone from talking about Linux to doing it," said Tom Figgatt, IBM's e-business segment executive for Netfinity servers. "It means that now a customer can buy a Netfinity system, and with the two distributions we'll be launching — both Caldera and Red Hat — they'll be able to install it on Linux-certified models and have it work," Figgatt said.

"And if they've got a problem, [they can] call us up and we'll work with them to get it fixed," he said. "We'll take ownership of problems, both hardware and software, during the first 90 days of what we call our server start-up period, and we'll take it to resolution all the way."

Dataquest estimates that by 2003, Linux server appliances will account for nearly 24 percent of the \$3.8 billion server appliance market. That opportunity is what spurred IBM to increase its commitment to Linux, Figgatt said. IBM's customers have demanded Linux, he said. "We got assaulted starting last fall by people in our field sales organization saying, 'My customer wants to do Linux here, there, and other places'," Figgatt said. "Those requests came in literally from all over the world at a growing pace."

IBM is not only putting Linux on its servers, but has also committed to supporting Linux in its middleware products, including DB2, its Websphere application server, the MQSeries; and Lotus Domino.

For its services customers, IBM will offer ongoing fee-based support for customers installing Linux on their systems. "So when you get beyond that 90-day period, you can contract with IBM to get support," Figgatt said.

The company will also provide fee-based services through its global services consulting practice to design and install systems and implementations using Linux-based systems, he said.

Marco Scibora, president of Advanced Communications Design, an IBM Linux VAR in Bloomington, Minn., said IBM's push into Linux comes as good news. "We were very happy to hear IBM was entering the market because we were looking for a substantial partner," Scibora said.