

is not a common concept in India and that's what has made it a big success. We do not charge anything for Linux support over the phone or e-mail," he claims.

For mid-sized migration specialists, the main target audience is SMBs and end users, who want cheaper solutions with less maintenance costs. Linsoft anticipates further increase in demand for its migration services, and plans to expand its Linux support services.

Business virtues in Linux redistributions

Applications and software packages that run on Linux are very popular. Entrepreneurs in countries like India can leverage on this by redistributing Linux-based industry packages. Worldwide, the latest IDC report also suggests that market demands for applications running on Linux would increase by a whopping 44 per cent annually and the revenues from this could be as high as \$14 billion by 2008. Some of the promising verticals that are becoming ready users of such applications are healthcare, e-governance, BFSI and telecom.

In India, companies like the Chennai-based Altosys Software Technologies Limited are successfully redistributing Linux-based products of Turbolinux Inc, Japan and FSM Labs, USA. Altosys provides after sales support, design, development and training services for



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these products in India. The company, with an annual turnover of Rs 25 million, also offers other enterprise IT solutions, which include software product development services, Linux solutions and migration, e-publishing and BPO services. Some of its clients include HP, HCL Comnet, the Apollo Hospitals Group, and Lucas TVS.

But its primary focus is redistribution of Linux software packages from Turbolinux Inc and FSM Labs. Says L. Ramesh, GM & Head—Linux Business, Altosys Software Technologies Limited, "Turbolinux is the leading Linux distributor in the whole of the Asia Pacific region. It has over 76 per cent market share in the server space and over 24 per cent in the desktop space. FSM Labs, on the other hand, are the inventors of RTLinux, which is used in the development of complex real-time and deeply embedded systems. The latest reports about Linux devices have predicted that their market share worldwide would grow by over 400 per cent from current levels, by 2007." Altosys also identifies OSS-based applications and solutions that might suit its customers and customises them for their requirements. "We also undertake the migration of applications that are based on proprietary OS, to the Linux-based platform," says Ramesh.

Altosys is in an advanced stage of discussions with Turbolinux, Japan to set up their Indian operations. "We hope to have this seeing the light of the day by the end of the second quarter of this financial year. Turbolinux, as I said, is the clear leader in the entire Asia Pacific region and has very good relations with the major IHVs, ISVs and OEMs, which would be extended to the Indian region too, once the operations are in place. This itself would give us a big head start in the market," claims Ramesh.

The company plans to market RTLinuxPro, as the technology is unique and offers many benefits to the real-time and embedded community.

Tapping the enterprise

While SMBs are a viable target for mid-sized Linux-based companies, organisations with larger resources and manpower skills can tap the enterprises that are adopting Linux. A good example of this is the Noida-based Tetra Information Services Pvt Ltd, which has been providing Linux implementation in enterprises since 1996. The company's client list spans a wide range of verticals, ranging from NGOs like Katha and PRIA; industrial associations like PHDCCI and ELCINA; and industries like Bry Air Asia, Delair and Interarch Building Products Pvt Ltd. The list also includes stores like Arcus Stores; corporations like Bharti, Sahara and Godfrey Phillips; multinational companies like PROGIA; and publications like BI Publications.. Tetra has done all types of software implementations on open source platforms, from PERL/CGI/PHP/JAVA to database technologies like MySQL and Oracle on Linux.

With an annual turnover of Rs 10 million, the company has planned to expand to Chandigarh, Jammu and Mumbai. "We have plans for other cities also in the next financial year," says Deepa Mahajan, director, Tetra.

One attribute that can make Linux a gold mine for vendors is its ability to be customised according to the client's need and within affordable costs. However, there are certain challenges that vendors might have to face while backing Linux. More often than not, vendors complain that customers are still vague about the 'free' content in open source operating systems like Linux. The customers assume that because Linux is 'free', support around it is also free. Convincing customers to accept open source technology as a long-term proposition is another challenge. Fortunately, it is a challenge that both customers and vendors are increasingly ready to overcome in India. **LFY**



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director, Tetra

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