

# LINUX - IS IT RIGHT FOR ME OR MY BUSINESS

This question has been asked at every release of Linux for many years and for many years I personally have asked myself this question and for the most part I have to say yes it does.

Why do I say for the most part?

For me personally it does everything I need to do day to day, however as I tend to repair computers both with hardware and software I also have to keep my hand in with MS software so I tend to do most of my work with MS Windows. I don't want to fall into the I love Linux or I hate MS Windows argument. The operating system (OS) you choose must meet your needs for both today and tomorrow and with the idea in mind you are free to choose.

What is Linux?

It is an operating system much like MS Windows and Mac OS or even Unix. It was created by a man called Linus Torvalds who was a student at University of Helsinki in Finland. One of the problems people have is that the source code is freely available to anyone who wants to download it. If you would like to check this out then visit The Linux Kernel Archives at <http://www.kernel.org/> Please don't think you have to download or even look at the code, this is for explanation but you can if you want to.

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What is the kernel ?

The kernel is the source code and with this you can if you wanted to do so you could create your own version of Linux. This has led to many companies and even individuals to create their own operating systems based on Linux. These are called Linux distributions and if you do a search on Google you will find hundreds of versions out there and that is another problem deciding which version you should choose. A list of distributions can be found at <http://www.linux.org/>

Each version has its own features and functionality that makes it unique, and while Linux is usually considered free and people consider that this means no cost, this is not always the case. Certain companies such as Red Hat charge for a version of Linux. How can they do that? In the case of Red Hat they actually produce two versions of their OS. One is known as Red Hat Linux and the other as Fedora.

What is the difference?

Some companies tend to charge for the support they supply to the end user and are

usually aimed at the business market. Would that mean if I don't pay for a Linux distribution I won't get any support? No. Most versions of Linux have a very helpful community base. What that means is that if you search for your distribution, you will find a forum with a very helpful group of people and, in most cases, your problem will have been asked a few times in the forum and you will find your answer by a simple search. If not, someone will be able to point you in the right direction. Another charge that sometimes appears is when, instead of downloading the distribution and burning it to CD, you request a disk sent to you. The charge for this is usually for the disk and shipping costs.

The adaptability of Linux has a wide following and is supported by a great many businesses like IBM, Hewlett-Packard and many more. A version of Linux is on some mobile phones. A large part of the Internet is hosted on Linux machines. It has an ongoing development, so as time goes on it will just get better and better. Most distributions come with a complete office package at no extra cost, it will also read and write information that can be accessed by MS Office. The office package will also let you create a PDF file. (Portable Document Format) The US firm Wal-Mart also sells Linux based machines.

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### The Benefits of using Linux

A lot of new users fear that it is going to be difficult to work with and they will not be able to find the software they want to run on Linux. The software part of this argument is a valid one, depending on what your software requirements are. There are some users who require a specialised software that is only supported by MS Windows, however Linux also has a solution, as there are several packages that will let you run MS Windows OS or even software packages as though it was running on MS Windows. Some of these packages include WINE which can be found at <http://www.winehq.org/>. There is also Crossover which can be found at <http://www.codeweavers.com/>. There are others as well. A simple search on Google will help.

Linux also supports a vast selection of open source software, which makes it an economical operating system. A short list is web browsers, email programs, word processing programs, spreadsheets, graphics programs, and file managers.

It can also act as a central server for your business. It is also possible to host your own website and even an email server.

You don't need to go and buy a new high end machine to run Linux. A machine with

256MB RAM and a 10GB hard drive will run quite a few distributions.

Linux is very stable system and does not need a reboot periodically, or even after most updates, except if the kernel has been updated or to maintain performance levels. When was the last time you sat at your computer and it froze or after an update it nagged you to restart you computer? No fun at all. This does not happen with Linux if its correctly configured. Also another point is that it's not going to be replaced anytime soon. If a bug is found, developers are quickly on it, and sometimes it is fixed within a few hours, not months.

Linux is one of the most secure systems available today. Another point in its favour is that it's not generally a target for viruses, or even spyware.

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### Upgrades

There is no cost for upgrades due to its open source format.

You can also have both MS Windows and Linux on the same machine. For this you will need to partition your hard drive. All the information regarding this process can be found by searching Google.

### The Drawbacks of Linux

If you have a problem with Linux you don't have a 0800 number (UK call). Most distributions offer a support number or email address you can contact. As far as I know all Linux distributions come with install instructions. A point to remember is that you can not run MS Windows applications on Linux without one of the applications previously mentioned. You also may not be able to use certain file formats of financial applications due to their Terms of Service or to the fact you need to pay for there use.

### Advice

I would suggest you choose a newer version of Linux I would also suggest you choose one of the more popular versions. This will also reduce the amount of problems with hardware. You should also get the newest versions of the distribution. I use Ubuntu and it recognized my hardware the only thing I had to change was my graphics driver, which had a selection box supplied to choose nvidia drivers.

Source : <http://goinglinux.com/articles/IsLinuxRightForMe.html>