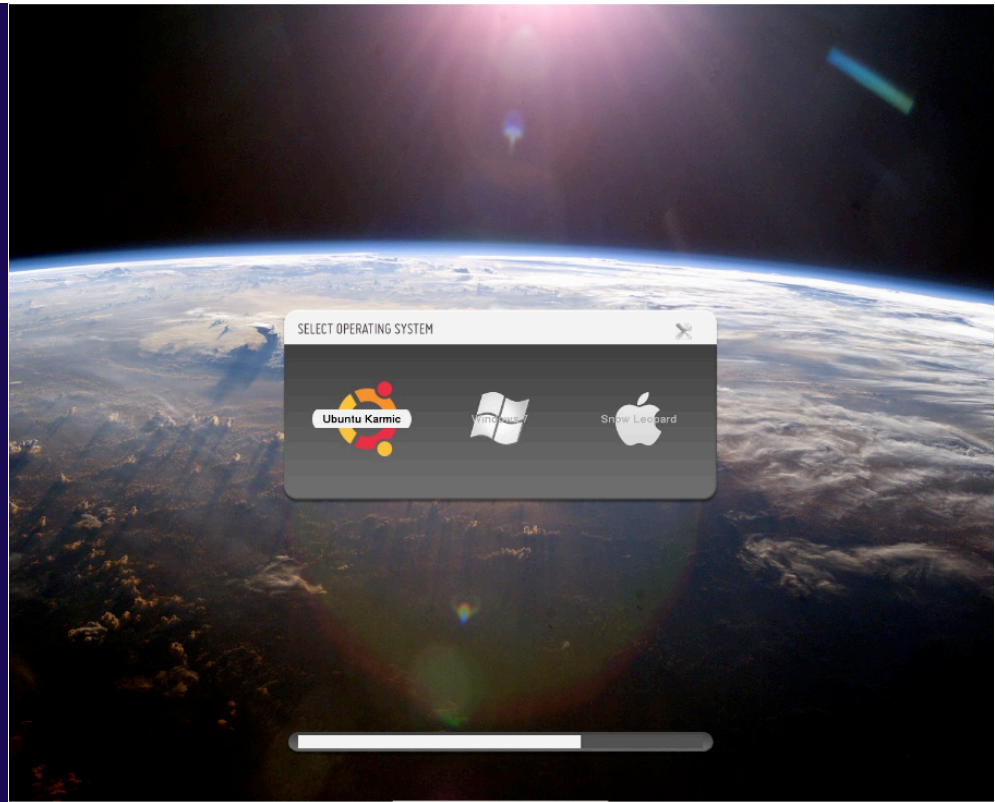


31 Jul 2011

Critical Mass.

What happens if a slider finds out that his "preferred OS" has suddenly switched sides and starts to wonder "Do operating systems still matter anyway?"



## “Critical Mass” The change of a preferred OS.

By Knightwise

**Geeks and new technology aficionado's have the attention span of a flea on speed,** that fact is known. When they come by your office waving their arms about this 'latest new thing' they have discovered ( some incomprehensible new social network or cool gizmo), they might as well have forgotten about it by the time you catch up with them to ask them what they were on about.

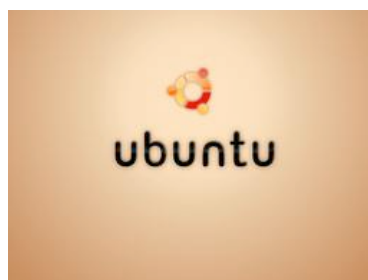
In a sense, its natural. Technology and the virtual world are moving so fast that the "craze and hype" geeks have around a product or service, has died down by the time the average user reaches it. The early adopters have moved on to "another" thing. And the cycle goes ever faster.

Take operating systems for example. If we look at the rate new operating systems emerge

( With Windows and OSX its not THAT frequent, but with linux its a 6 monthly cycle) its hard to "get to know" a system, before the next one comes out. There is always something new on the horizon. The next release , another distro and so forth. Most of the time the novelty of 'chasing the bleeding edge' can be a full-time job on its own. The question we must pose ourselves is ... do we really USE that technology, or is it just a stepping stone until the next big thing hits the show floor ?

**Being a geek myself, i'm not immune to this.** There is always the "next big thing" to install , always a new project on the horizon, always that "one thing i still need to test and try" But how many times do we go beyond "testing and playing" with a certain piece of technology.. How many times does it stick ?

**Well, to my surprise, some things DO stick.** Take for example my latest project where I started to dual-boot Linux distributions on my Macs. "Why ?" you say ? Well , because I COULD. The challenge of getting a Mac to run a geeky OS like Linux is a for-filling exercise on its own. So I set out and dual booted the latest version of Ubuntu on my IMac, spent a couple of day tinkering and tweaking until I had a system that worked according to my personal requirements. This very



# "Critical Mass"

## The change of a preferred OS

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process is of course one that is riddled with troubles , crashes, not working hardware, weird errors, hours of googling and tons of frustration... But the very process of getting to your GOAL (a working linux distro on a mac) is a goal all by itself. It gives you experience, chances to learn things, solve problems etc.

***Now mostly, by the time he has achieved this goal , the geek will enjoy using the system for a few weeks and then wipe the hard drive to move on to the NEXT project.***

The novelty wears off pretty fast. But to my surprise, with this project .. That didn't happen to me. Sure I threw Ubuntu on a Mac, Dual booting it with the existing OSX install , to make sure I had a failsafe to fall back on. I completely expected to grow tired of the Linux install and move back to OSX after a while. However .. that didn't happen. Its been a few weeks now and I haven't booted back into OSX ONCE. To be honest i'm a little annoyed with it just SITTING there eating up hard drive space I would like to use. I've come to a critical point in my usage of Linux where it has started to become my "preferred" operating system of choice.



Although sliders might say otherwise , EVERY slider has his MAIN operating system he prefers to use , and he slides "left and right" to other Operating systems for specific tasks. For me, my main OS used to be Windows ( while using Linux to experiment and OSX for multimedia). Then the focus changed to OSX, using windows for "compatibility" with other windows users and Linux for my other things (mostly tinkering). But THAT has started to change ...

***These days I spend the majority of my computer time in Linux.*** Having figured out how to do 'all the things i need to do' on Linux combined with a good "cross platform" - cloud based email-calendar and communication strategy AND having all my hardware working, I enjoy Linux even more the OSX these days.

Having the flexibility of Linux at my fingertips ( with killer apps like terminator, X-forwarding apps from remote servers and so forth) I am starting to "miss" these things in other operating systems. To be honest, I boot into Windows 7 when I need to work from home via a Citrix Session, and I use OSX when I need to produce a podcast / screen cast. And even for those functionalities , i'm starting to look for alternatives on Linux.

I think it must be a sign of the times that Linux has grown from a "server and deep - nerd based OS " past a "Pit of things that nearly work" to a mature operating systems that stands (almost) shoulder to

shoulder to the rest. In some instances ( with effects like compiz etc) it even goes beyond what the others have to offer. Where I would "miss" functionalities from the more "common" OS's in Linux, I find that lately , its the other way around.

So i think that , at least for me , Linux has reached a tipping point in my 'OS-distribution scale'. The reasons are partly because of how Linux has developed , but also to the fact a lot of our



interactions with our information are becoming "cloud based", and it doesn't matter what OS you are using.

***So .. are operating systems becoming irrelevant then ?*** Does it no longer matter what you use ? I don't think so. The operating system is still your 'main source of interaction' with your computer. Wether apps and data lie "beyond" OS specific parameters (cross platform or cloud based) the OS will largely define HOW you work with your computer. So I think we are back to personal preferences, since MOST os's offer the same functionality (or are at least heading towards that apex). If we see that OSX Lion is taking over certain functionalities from IOS , even the "mobile" and "desktop" versions of Operating systems are coming closer and closer together. So where does the goal of an OS lie ? In compatibility and "similarity" with other systems (so users feel 'at home') or in differentiation, the fact that you stand out because of what is DIFFERENT ?

Time will tell , but until then (or until the next big thing will spike my interest) i'm going back to my 24 inch IMac , with its "portrait slanted" second screen running terminator. There I can X-forward 4 applications from 3 different linux servers in 2 different locations while using SSH to chat via IRC and connect straight to my Jail broken Ipad. Meanwhile Google Chrome is taking care of all my browsing needs and by pressing ctrl-alt-arrow I can swish over to one of my 7 spare virtual desktops running remote (or virtual) instances of OTHER computers .. and so forth. I just hope the slider doesn't become the fanboy.