

Foundation report looks at the who-and-what behind Linux

4 February 2014, by Nancy Owano



(Phys.org) —"Who writes Linux? Corporations, more than [ever](#)," said *InfoWorld's* story headline on Monday. Out of all the highlights of the Linux Foundation's latest Linux Kernel Development report, the corporate angle sang out as noteworthy, dispelling an old notion that Linux, the historic shining star of open source endeavor, is brought to you courtesy of impoverished programmers in post-midnight dens cranking out development work for free, and for the mere spirit of it all. The report, fully titled "Linux Kernel Development: How Fast It is Going, Who is Doing It, What They are Doing, and Who is Sponsoring It," is the fifth update of this ongoing development story, which has been published since 2008. An increasing number of companies are working toward the improvement of the kernel.

"Over 80 percent of all kernel development is demonstrably done by developers who are being paid for their work." As interesting, the report said the volume of contributions from unpaid developers has been in slow decline for many years. Active players from the corporate pack include, among others, Red Hat, Intel, Google, SUSE, Samsung, Texas Instruments and IBM.

ExtremeTech said big companies have a commercial interest in the continued good [health](#) of Linux. "Ten years ago, Linux was the plaything of hobbyists and supercomputer makers—today, it powers everything from smartphones (Android) to wireless routers to set-top boxes."

Contributions from the mobile and embedded industries, meanwhile, continue to increase. According to the report, "Linaro, Samsung, and TI, for example, together contributed 4.4 percent of the changes in the previous version of this paper; for the period up to 3.10, they contributed almost 11 percent of all changes."

Linaro is an engineering organization focused on Linux software and tools for the ARM architecture. (Last year, [Shawn Powers](#), associate editor, *Linux Journal* wrote: "Much like 'cloud' computing, 'embedded' computing has a fairly flexible definition. One thing is certain, however, and that is that Linux is perfect for the embedded world, however you define it. With its breathtaking variety of hardware support and unassuming happiness living behind the scenes, the embedded market may be the vehicle Linux finally uses to take over the world.")

The Linux Foundation report noted that "Almost 92,000 changesets have been merged from 3,738 individual developers representing 536 corporations (that we know about)," .

New features merged into the mainline, said the report, have included full tickless operation, user namespaces, Xen virtualization for ARM, 64-bit ARM architecture support, and two independent subsystems for fast caching for block storage devices.

The report is authored by Jonathan Corbet, editor, LWN.net, a news and information source, Greg Kroah-Hartman, and Amanda McPherson, both from The Linux Foundation. LWN, initially, was

"Linux Weekly News." "That name has been deemphasized over time," said the site, "as we have moved beyond just the weekly coverage, and as we have looked at the free software community as a whole." Kroah-Hartman, Linux Foundation fellow, is among a group of developers that maintain Linux at the kernel level. McPherson is vice president, marketing and developer programs.

More information: Linux Kernel Development:

www.linuxfoundation.org/sites/...s/whowriteslinux.pdf

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