

## Linux & Open Source

### Novell's OES Server May Draw Business Customers

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March 22, 2005

Jack Messman, CEO of Novell, is cautious about forecasting the future of the Open Enterprise Server, which combines NetWare services on top of either the Netware or SuSE Linux Enterprise Edition kernel.

"We believe in Linux," said Messman. "We're migrating all 6,000 of our desktops from Windows to Linux. But with an enterprise operating system like OES [Open Enterprise Server] it's going to take several quarters before customers decide if they're comfortable with it."

That being said, "Some customers have been waiting for it even before it went into beta," Messman added.

When asked about the Microsoft report that the Yankee Group had found that **NetWare users were moving from NetWare to Windows Server 2003** or, if they were considering Linux, moving to Red Hat Enterprise Linux, Messman said, "That's not what we're seeing."

It's not that he expects an immediate upturn in revenue from OES. "It takes an enterprise time to consider switching its main operating system," Messman said, "but we do see a lot of interest in OES both from our old customers and new ones."

Michael Zepernick, president of **Computer Integrated Services Co. of New York LLC**, a **Novell Inc.** platinum reseller and a Microsoft Solutions Provider, said, "A year and a half or two years ago, people were moving to Server 2003 from NetWare, but now I see people going to SLES [SuSE Linux Enterprise Server.] That tide has stopped, and people are now giving strong consideration to moving to OES."

In part this is because of "old NetWare users who went to Microsoft and are now looking at OES because of Linux. The jury is still out on its adoption, but it is encouraging to see interest again in Novell," Zepernick said.

It's not just dyed-in-the-wool Novell customers thinking about switching to OES.



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"We're seeing a lot of interest in OES in NYC. No one is widely adopting it yet, naturally, but we're getting more people asking about it," said Zepernick. "We already have had some customers for it."

This includes some shops that have been Windows only, too. "We put in our share of Windows 2003 servers," said Zepernick. "We offer people real professional choices. We lay out the options so they can make the best choice, and OES is becoming one of those choices."

As for Red Hat, "Our SMB [small and midsize business] customers want to know who will maintain their systems that will support the software ecosystem. They know Novell can deliver, while Red Hat doesn't have the service infrastructure they need to feel comfortable," Zepernick said.

Ed Anderson, Novell's vice president of Linux services, said that Microsoft's claims simply show that "Microsoft is making a statement of their concern about Novell and Linux coming up in the world."



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If anything, Anderson said, "We're seeing customers who have stuck with Netware 5.1, customers who are moving to OES because of the Linux kernel. If they had really wanted to leave, now would be the time, but we don't see that."

"Older NetWare customers, the ones running systems that just kept working and stopped getting support, are also now showing up for OES," Messman said. He doesn't know exactly how many of these there are. "For years, we relied almost entirely on our reseller channel and we didn't do a good job of tracking end-user customers." However, Messman adds, "There does appear to be a significant number of them."

One of the reasons why they're coming out of the woodwork, according to Anderson, is, "With OES, partners and customers can see things that are familiar to them. They'll see that OES is not a totally alien experience. OES is about taking the best of NetWare services and adding the richness of Linux, and they're finding that an attractive package."

Software developer and integrator **Lumen Software Inc.** finds OES attractive because it makes an ideal platform for its **LTSP (Linux Terminal Server Platform)** S2D thin-client product. With S2D, users get a server-based thin client that can be used to turn older 486 and Pentium systems into useful workstations.

Lumen turned to OES because "OES gives us the directory and management services we needed but couldn't get from another Linux," said Ted Lymer II, cofounder and chief sales officer.

It wasn't because of Linux per se that Lumen turned to OES, Lymer explained. "We don't do Linux for Linux, we do it because it does the best job," he said. "With OES, we can support enterprise-level thin clients."

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Customers like **Comair**, a Delta Airlines subsidiary, also have reason to like OES.

Comair has long been a NetWare customer, but Comair infrastructure services manager Roger Fenner was quick to point out that **the IT meltdown the company suffered during the last holiday system** had nothing to do with NetWare.

Indeed, Fenner's experience has been quite the opposite. "We'd go around and say, 'Huh, that server has been up for a year and a half, should we reboot it? Nah!'" Fenner said.

With that kind of reliability, why is Comair moving to OES? Because, Fenner explained, it will give them the same services but with a path for the future.

"Prior to Novell's purchase of SuSE, we didn't know what Novell would do with 64-bit computing. Since 64-bit SLES already existed we knew we'd have an upgrade path," Fenner said. "In the airline business efficiency is all, and we needed to be sure our services would be reliable today and tomorrow."

And, for Comair, that's exactly what the SLES-powered version of OES will be delivering.

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