

A report from Red Hat Summit

SEEING RED

We sum up this year's Red Hat Summit, which was held in June in Boston, Massachusetts. **BY JON "MADDOG" HALL**



Figure 1: Red Hat executives answer questions at the Red Hat Summit in Boston.

Some conferences feel like going home because you see lots of people you know but have not seen for a long time. The Red Hat Summit [1], held in Boston, Massachusetts, in June felt like this because a lot of the people I worked with at Digital Equipment Corporation's Unix group now work for Red Hat Software, including Brian Stevens, Red Hat's Chief Technology Officer.

Keynotes

Jim Whitehurst, President and CEO of Red Hat, kicked off the event and talked about a patent settlement that he said is "truly consistent with GPL, protecting all upstream and downstream developers." In addition, he spoke about a Red Hat initiative to create "Liberation fonts," a set of free and open fonts to allow for truly open documents, that would render the same as their non-free counterparts because the fonts could be digitally equivalent. He also touched on the economics of free software, pointing out that if we could "capture" the software written in-house and make it available to other programmers, we could obtain the advantages of software re-use.

John Halamka, CIO of Harvard Medical School and Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center talked about open record formats and standards so that medical communities can share patients' records

in a safe and secure manner. He also advocated e-prescribing, although only 13 percent of Massachusetts prescriptions are sent electronically. As a diabetic who travels a lot, I can vouch for the need for prescriptions that can be transferred easily between pharmacies.

Jim Stallings from IBM spoke next and stressed that the global enterprise is changing to meet new demands – billions of systems are now talking to each other. He estimated that by 2010, medical images will make up 30 percent of the world's storage, and 74 percent of the world's mobile subscribers will live in emerging economies. To meet this challenge, Jim estimated that 70 percent of the world's global 1,000 Organizations must revamp their computer centers because of energy costs in the next five years. According to Jim, companies can typically save 40 percent of their energy costs, and the return on investment is typically less than two years.

Finally, Joel Cohen, the co-creator of The Simpsons, talked about collaboration, originality, and how even bad ideas could spark good ones.

Getting Technical

The event was not all keynotes, and many of Red Hat's engineering staff were on hand to give technical talks. Rik van Riel, creator of the "Kernel Newbies" site [2], discussed why the hardware is get-

ting faster but seems to be getting slower. According to Rik, the tasks that we ask the CPUs to do are getting larger faster than the hardware is getting faster. With these issues are trade-offs around power management for saving electricity and cooling and issues around single-thread versus multi-thread performance. A follow-on conversation disclosed that a lot of programmers today are not learning the techniques necessary in multi-thread programming to keep up with the software needs on multi-core systems.

Another talk I liked was on the oVirt project [3], cross-platform virtualization management software utilizing open interfaces to manage any number of nodes. oVirt was designed as a framework with a set of APIs to manage various hypervisors with an integrated policy, security, and audit framework.

FudCon

My only criticism of the event was the high price to attend. Granted, it was worth the money, but a lot of people just don't have it to spend right now. For these people, the free FudCon was held in the same building on Thursday and Friday, and moved to a university on Saturday. At FudCon, members of the Fedora and Red Hat communities could come together to work on projects, ask questions, and otherwise find answers. Also, they got a chance to talk to Jim Whitehurst, who gave much the same talk as he did in his keynote, in addition to joking with the participants and telling them his experiences with downloading and installing Fedora.

In his talks, Jim noted several times that Red Hat could not possibly survive without the efforts of the Fedora and FOSS communities, which was good for the FudCon attendees to hear. Furthermore, Jim did not run out of the meeting after giving his talk, as I have seen other CEOs do; instead, he stayed and talked with the participants, which bodes well for Red Hat's future.

Overall, the Red Hat Summit was a great event. ■

INFO

- [1] Red Hat Summit: <http://www.redhat.com/promo/summit/2008/>
- [2] Kernel Newbies: <http://www.kernelnewbies.org>
- [3] oVirt: <http://ovirt.org/>