

# CHANGING TIMES

Dear Linux Magazine Reader,



Joe Casad, Editor in Chief

Pollsters, pundits, economists, taxonomists, hackers, trackers, analysts, and panelists have all suggested that maybe the economy isn't doing so well. No one is really sure how long it will last, but many of us have the feeling we've seen this before. Just when you think you've figured it all out, the business cycle swings around again.

The fact of a surge or a downturn is only part of the story – actually, it is a very small part.

The real story is, what does everybody do now? How will businesses react, and how will this reaction affect other businesses? The tendency is always to assume catastrophe, but in every crisis is opportunity. Our curious corner of the IT field will be especially interesting to watch in the coming year.

One might suppose that, in uncertain times, we stay with what we know, but the truth is, in the good times we stay with what we know – why rock the boat? In uncertain times, we gravitate to what helps us *save money*.

Open source software is known for adaptability, innovation, and low cost. These qualities would seem ideal for business needs. But, although the concept of open source is certainly gaining acceptance, some big commercial companies still don't like to take chances with tools that aren't big and commercial. If you told an official of one of these squeamish conglomerates, "A guild of volunteers around the world is giving away this software for free," he would quickly hand you a towelette to wash off his fingerprints. At least, that's what he would do in steady economic times when he is making money with the software he already has. However, if he is losing money – and the very act of remaining in the status quo makes him lose even more money – he is much more likely to sip meaningfully on his cup of morning coffee and say, "Tell me more about this guild of volunteers..."

This situation plays itself out in endless scenarios in software development companies, hosting companies, IT management companies, and even companies that are end users of desktop software. When money gets tight, we try to do more with less, and open source has always excelled at doing more with less.

Speaking of which, "more with less" is the theme for this month as we look at some web development tricks for saving time and increasing efficiency. I won't recap

the precap, which you'll find on page 21, but I would like to point out a couple of other exciting new developments in this month's issue. We've rolled out a new summary page to tell readers what's happening at our website. Check out page 14 for a look at what's happening this month at Linux Magazine Online. We're continuing to grow online, so pay a visit to <http://www.linux-magazine.com> and peruse the latest news and features.

We're also excited to announce the arrival of Jon 'maddog' Hall. You'll find a new column by maddog in our community section, and he also wrote the Red Hat Summit report for this month's issue. Many know maddog as an open source icon who has been with Linux almost since the beginning and was a firsthand witness to the history of the remarkable OS as it moved from from Linus Torvald's apartment into the world. I know him as a true Linux activist with boundless energy, a strong interest in green computing, and an infectious respect for the power of community. Welcome maddog.

Joe

Linux Magazine is proud to be part of an international group of Linux publications founded in the early days of the Open Source movement.

Our team includes authors, editors, and Linux specialists producing nine magazines in six languages. Our goal is to provide our readers with useful, hands-on information on working with Linux.

As a reader of Linux Magazine, you are joining an information network that is dedicated to distributing knowledge and technical expertise to Linux users around the world.

