

# BOOK REVIEWS

BY JAMES MOHR

## Don't Make Me Think

This book, which is subtitled "A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability," is a literal treasure chest of useful information. I do take exception with the claim that a lot of it is "common sense," however. Much of the information presented is based on years of both experience and research into the usability of websites.

Since it is unlikely that you or I have even read these studies, it is hard to consider knowledge of this information "common." Also, many (if not most) websites make the same kinds of mistakes, so knowing about and correcting the problems discussed is anything but "common." On the other hand, when you read through this book, it does make perfect sense.

One might be put off by the fact that this book is fairly thin. To me, the brev-

ity is one of the most useful aspects. The book jumps right to the core issues, pointing out mistakes and misconceptions. This aspect of the book truly is about "common sense," and I found myself often thinking how logical some of the remedies were, but at the same time shaking my head because I was not doing this on my own site.

What this book is **not** about is graphic design. It does not tell you what color combinations to use or how to integrate complex images into your site. The author does talk a great deal about sizes and even fonts, but it is always from the perspective of usability.

One of the things I really liked about the book is that it even comes with a number of exercises for you to "test" the



things you learned. The author discusses a few key concepts and then presents a few real-world websites for you to analyze. You not only get to practice, but you also see that even "big name" websites

suffer from the same kinds of problems.

Regardless of whether you are creating a website for a multinational corporation or just your own personal use, this is definitely one book to have on your shelf.

**Steve Krug**

**201 Pages**

**New Riders Publishing, 0-321-34475-8**

**£ 24.99, US\$ 35.00, EUR 32.90**

## Expanding Choice

*Expanding Choice* is a "must read" for managers, particularly those who shy from open source software and rely on propaganda from Redmond. The book is subtitled "Moving to Linux and Open Source with Novell Open Enterprise Server," so you can bet a lot of it is geared toward Novell products.

Before I got the book, I was fearful that it would be nothing more than a marketing vehicle for Novell. It was nice to be surprised. Obviously Novell products are discussed, but I felt that the discussion was, for the most part, limited to the extras provided by Novell Open Enterprise Server. As a result, the book is an excellent introduction



to what Linux and Open Source are all about.

The first few chapters cover the history of Linux and Open Source software. There is also a detailed discussion of all the components of Linux, and this discussion goes into details about the implementation of Open Source software. For example, the authors discuss scalability, security, and licensing. This is followed by the chapter "Open Source in the Real World," where the authors discuss (among other things) implementation and integration of Linux and Open Source software.

I was bothered a little by the chapter on "Installing and Upgrading to Open Enterprise Server." Here you are given step-by-step instructions (including a

section called "Walking Through a New Installation"). This whole chapter was definitely out of place. The rest of the book is more or less conceptual and just in this one place do you have the steps to perform a specific task. If the authors had just described the various installation options, instead going through step-by-step installation instructions, I think readers would have gotten more out of it.

Although the seasoned Linux user may not learn a lot from this book, you should definitely consider getting it for your boss as a Christmas present.

**Jason Williams, Peter Clegg, and Emmett Dulaney**

**247 Pages**

**Novell Press, 0-672-32722-8**

**£ 21.99, US\$ 29.99, EUR 36.00**