



Vigilant Articles

CHAT ROOM: ON THE SHOWROOM FLOOR - LINUX

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by Bob Thomas, Associate Editor

Don Shearing is vice president for POS-Pro Systems & Controls, Inc., the Pickering, Ontario-based retail system reseller that was launched in January 1999. A Vigilant Business Software partner, POS-Pro first installed the Multi-Site Real Time business software package for an Ontario furniture company. Shearing shares some of his thoughts on this installation, which operates on the Linux platform.

Q: What were the key needs for this installation?

A: Our first Linux client, Neoset Canada, Ltd., had six stores and a clearance center attached to their head office. Neoset needed the ability to enter their client orders online and have this information update files for inventory control.

They sell modular furniture that is customized for each room sold, from more than 3,000 individual components. Because most of the items sold by Neoset are manufactured in Greece, orders are placed once each week. There are an unlimited number of modular combinations possible, so updated information on what each store has sold is extremely important to closing each sale.

Q: What was the appeal of the Linux-based software system?

A: Linux offers a stable environment for multi-site communications that allows both the data and the programs to reside on the server. Only the messaging goes between sites, so the process is very fast. The online, dialup solution eliminated the cost of running high-speed lines between locations.

Q: What background in the Linux O/S do you have?

A: I attended a three-day course given by Vigilant on installing their Linux software solution and was able to train the rest of the POS-Pro staff. The company provides excellent support to their resellers, so we can provide excellent support to our end-users.

Otherwise, there was very little preparation necessary before the Neoset installation. You just go in like it's English, because it is written in English, not in Microsoft terms. It says, "set up local printer, enter user password" and so forth. It's easy to follow.

Q: How did the installation go?

A: Very smoothly. After one morning's work, all Neoset locations were up and running the Linux software. Most of the time was spent setting up printers and

passwords within Linux itself. The main server is an Acer model with 56-K external modems used for dialup communications. Since Linux was developed from the older Unix operating system, peripherals have not been difficult to hook up.

Q: Were there any problems training the Neoset staff on the new software?

A: Not much new training was required, since employees had already used the Vigilant accounting package in the stores. Training on the Linux version took no more than an hour.

Q: As your first Linux install, how would you rate the experience?

A: It could not have been better. At first, I was worried about how Linux and the Windows system on the store computers would react to each other, but there were no problems at all. It was easy to configure the system to client needs. It has the flexibility to print the same data at the same time over local printers and remote printers 25 miles away.

Q: Would you recommend Linux solutions to other VARs?

A: Any reseller who wishes to have an online point-of-sale solution that doesn't carry a large pricetag should look at Linux. The platform has been around long enough that many different utilities have been developed. You just go online and download new applications.

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