# Linux Advocacy mini−HOWTO

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# Linux Advocacy mini−HOWTO


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v0.5, 7 May 1998


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*This document provides suggestions for how the Linux community can effectively advocate the use of Linux.*


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# 1.About this document

This is the Linux Advocacy mini−HOWTO and is intended to provide guidelines and ideas to assist with *your* Linux advocacy efforts.

This mini−HOWTO was inspired by Jon ``maddog'' Hall when he responded to a request for feedback on guidelines for advocating Linux during NetDay activities. He responded positively to the guidelines and observed that they were the basis of a list of ``canons of conduct'' that would benefit the Linux community.

This document is available in HTML form at http://www.datasync.com/~rogerspl/Advocacy−HOWTO.html.

Nat Makarevitch <nat@nataa.fr.eu.org> has translated this document into French.

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The author and maintainer of the Linux Advocacy mini−HOWTO is Paul L. Rogers <Paul.L.Rogers@li.org>.

Comments and proposed additions are welcome.

If you need to know more about the Linux Documentation Project or about Linux HOWTO's, feel free to contact the supervisor Tim Bynum <linux−howto@sunsite.unc.edu>. Tim Bynum will post this document to several national and international newsgroups on a monthly basis.

A personal note: Due to various circumstances, I have not been able to dedicate as much time to maintaining this mini−HOWTO and interacting with the Linux community as I would have desired. I apologize for this and if you have attempted to contact me and I was slow in responding, please forgive me being so inconsiderate. While I still have many other commitments, I am anticipating that they will start requiring less time to meet and allow me to catch up on other parts of my life. I appreciate your patience and would like to extend a special thanks to all who have taken the time to suggest additions and corrections.

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# 2.Copyright Information



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# 3.Introduction

The Linux community has known for some time that for many applications, Linux is a stable, reliable, robust (although not perfect) product. Unfortunately, there are still many people, including key decision−makers, that are not aware of the existence of Linux and its capabilities.

If Linux and the many other components that make up a Linux distribution are to reach their full potential, it is critical that we reach out to prospective ``customers'' and advocate (being careful not to promise too much) the use of Linux for appropriate applications. The reason that many company's products have done well in the marketplace is not so much due to the product's technical superiority but the company's marketing abilities.

If you enjoy using Linux and would like to contribute something to the Linux community, please consider acting on one or more of the ideas in this mini−HOWTO and help others learn more about Linux.

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# 4.Related Information

Lars Wirzenius, former comp.os.linux.announce moderator and long−time Linux activist, also has some thoughts about Linux advocacy.

Eric S. Raymond provides an analysis of why the development model used by the Linux community has been so successful.

The free software community has recognized that the terms "free software" and "freely available software" are not appropriate in all contexts. For more information about using the term "open−source software" when marketing "free software", please visit the Open Source site.

If you need to brush up on your Linux sales techniques, take a look at the Linuxmanship essay by Donald B. Marti, Jr.

The Linux PR site discusses the importance of press releases to the Linux community. Another way to gain valuable experience in this area is to organize a NetDay at a local school using the guidelines presented in the NetDay How−To Guide.

Linux International's goal is to promote the development and use of Linux.

The Linux Documentation Project is an invaluable resource for Linux advocates.

The Linux Center Project provides a thematical index of resources about Linux and free software.

The Linux Business Applications site provides a forum for organizations that depend on Linux for day−to−day business operations to share their experiences.

Linux Enterprise Computing and Freely Redistributable Software in Business cover resources and topics of interest to those deploying Linux in a business/commercial/enterprise setting.

The Linux Advocacy Project's goal is to encourage commercial application developers to provide native Linux versions of their software.

The Linux CD and Support Giveaway program is helping make Linux more widely available by encouraging the reuse of Linux CD−ROMs.

Specialized Systems Consultants, Inc. (SSC) hosts the Linux Resources site and publishes the *Linux Journal*.

The linux−biz mailing list is a forum created to discuss the use of Linux in a business environment.

The Linux Mission Critical Systems survey documents successful existing systems which have a large load and are up 24 hours per day.

A number of online publications are now devoted to covering Linux. These include:

- *LinuxFocus*
- *Linuxove noviny*
- *Linux Gazette*

- *PLUTO Journal*.

Additional links to online publications can be found at the Linux Documentation Project and the Linux Center Project.

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# 5.Advocating Linux

- Share your personal experiences (good and bad) with Linux. Everyone knows that software has bugs and limitations and if we only have glowing comments about Linux, we aren't being honest. I *love* to tell people about having to reboot four times (three scheduled) in three years.
- If someone has a problem that Linux may be able to solve, offer to provide pointers to appropriate information (Web pages, magazine articles, books, consultants, ...). If you haven't actually used the proposed solution, say so.
- If you are available for making presentations about Linux, register with the Linux Speakers Bureau.
- Offer to help someone start using Linux. Follow up to make sure that they are able to use their system effectively.
- Some people still believe that Linux and similar systems operate only in text−mode. Make sure that they are aware of the availability of graphical applications, such as the Gimp.
- Try to respond to one ``newbie'' posting each week. Seek out the tough questions, you may be the only one to respond and you may learn something in the process. However, if you aren't confident that you can respond with the correct answer, find someone that can.
- Seek out small software development firms and offer to make a presentation about Linux.
- If the opportunity arises, make a presentation to your employer's Information Technology group.
- Participate in community events such as NetDay. While your first priority must be to contribute to the success of the event, use the opportunity to let others know what Linux can do for them.
- Always consider the viewpoints of the person to whom you are ``selling'' Linux. Support, reliability, interoperability and cost are all factors that a decision−maker must consider. Of the above, cost is often the least important portion of the equation.
- Availability of support is often mentioned as a concern when considering the adoption of Linux. Companies such as Caldera, Cygnus Solutions, Red Hat, and S.u.S.E. offer support for some or all components of a typical Linux distribution. In addition, the Linux Consultants HOWTO provides a listing of companies providing commercial Linux related support. Of course, some of the best support is found in the *comp.os.linux* and *linux* newsgroup hierarchies.
- Point out that the production of open−source software takes place in an environment of open collaboration between system architects, programmers, writers, alpha/beta testers and end users which often results in well documented, robust products such as Apache, GNU Emacs, Perl and the Linux kernel.
- Stand up and be counted! Register with the Linux Counter.
- Report successful efforts of promoting Linux to Linux International ( li@li.org) and similar organizations.
- Find a new home for Linux CD−ROMs and books that you no longer need. Give them to someone interested in Linux, a public library or a school computer club. A book and its CD−ROM would be most appropriate for a library. However, please be sure that making the CD−ROM publicly available does not violate a licensing agreement or copyright. Also, inform the library staff that the material on the CD−ROM is freely distributable. Follow up to make sure it is available on the shelves.

* When purchasing books about software distributed with Linux, give preference to books written by the author of the software. The royalties that authors receive from book sales may be the only monetary compensation received for their efforts.
* Encourage Linux−based sites to submit their entry for the Powered by Linux page and suggest that banners promoting Linux, Apache, GNU, Perl ... be displayed on their site.
* Participate! If you have benefited from open−source software, please consider assisting the free software community by:

    * submitting detailed bug reports
    * writing documentation
    * creating artwork
    * supplying management skills
    * suggesting enhancements
    * providing technical support
    * contributing software
    * donating equipment
    * furnishing financial support.

  The Linux Documentation Project provides a list of Linux and Linux−related projects.
* Finally, keep in mind that we all have infinitely more important issues to deal with than the selection of a computing environment.

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# 6.Canons of Conduct

* As a representative of the Linux community, participate in mailing list and newsgroup discussions in a professional manner. Refrain from name−calling and use of vulgar language. Consider yourself a member of a virtual corporation with Mr. Torvalds as your Chief Executive Officer. Your words will either enhance or degrade the image the reader has of the Linux community.
* Avoid hyperbole and unsubstantiated claims at all costs. It's unprofessional and will result in unproductive discussions.
* A thoughtful, well−reasoned response to a posting will not only provide insight for your readers, but will also increase their respect for your knowledge and abilities.
* Don't bite if offered flame−bait. Too many threads degenerate into a ``My O/S is better than your O/S'' argument. Let's accurately describe the capabilities of Linux and leave it at that.
* Always remember that if you insult or are disrespectful to someone, their negative experience may be shared with many others. If you do offend someone, please try to make amends.
* Focus on what Linux has to offer. There is no need to bash the competition. Linux is a good, solid product that stands on its own.
* Respect the use of other operating systems. While Linux is a wonderful platform, it does not meet everyone's needs.
* Refer to another product by its proper name. There's nothing to be gained by attempting to ridicule a company or its products by using ``creative spelling''. If we expect respect for Linux, we must respect other products.
* Give credit where credit is due. Linux is just the kernel. Without the efforts of people involved with the GNU project, MIT, Berkeley and others too numerous to mention, the Linux kernel would not be

very useful to most people.

- Don't insist that Linux is the only answer for a particular application. Just as the Linux community cherishes the freedom that Linux provides them, Linux only solutions would deprive others of their freedom.
- There will be cases where Linux is not the answer. Be the first to recognize this and offer another solution.

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# 7.User Groups

- Participate in a local user group. An index of Linux User Group registries is part of the Linux Documentation Project. If a user group does not exist in your area, start one.
- The Linux User Group HOWTO covers many of the issues involved with starting an user group and discusses the importance of Linux advocacy as one of the goals of a user group.
- Make speakers available to organizations interested in Linux.
- Issue press releases about your activities to your local media.
- Volunteer to configure a Linux system to meet the needs of local community organizations. Of course, the installation process must include training the user community to use the system and adequate documentation for ongoing maintenance.
- Discus the Linux Advocacy mini−HOWTO at a meeting. Brainstorm and submit new ideas.

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# 8.Vendor Relations

- When contemplating a hardware purchase, ask the vendor about Linux support and other user's experiences with the product in a Linux environment.
- Consider supporting vendors that sell Linux based products and services. Encourage them to have their product listed in the Linux Commercial HOWTO.
- Support vendors that donate a portion of their income to organizations such as the Free Software Foundation, the Linux Development Grant Fund, the XFree86 Project or Software in the Public Interest. If possible, make a personal donation to these or other organizations that support open−source software. Don't forget that some employers offer a matching gift program program.
- If you need an application that is not supported on Linux, contact the vendor and request a native Linux version.

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# 9.Media Relations

- Linux International is collecting press clippings that mention Linux, GNU and other freely redistributable software. When you see such an article, please send the following information to clippings@li.org:
    - Name of publication
    - Publisher's contact address
    - Name of author
    - Author's contact address
    - Title of article
    - Page number where the article starts
    - The URL if available online
    - A summary of the article, including your opinion
- If you believe that Linux was not given fair treatment in an article, review or news story, send the details, including the above information, to li@li.org so that an appropriate response can be sent to the publisher. If you contact the publisher directly, be professional and sure of your facts.
- If you involved with a Linux related project, issue press releases to appropriate news services on a regular basis.

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# 10.Acknowledgements

Grateful acknowledgement is made to all contributors, including:

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