ubuntu case study

Legislators in Kerala, India work better with Ubuntu laptops

Tens of thousands of dollars saved on software licensing

Fast Facts

Organisation:	The Government of Kerala
Industry:	Local government
Country:	India
Challenge:	Enhance government through IT
	Control project costs
	Ensure easy user adoption
Solution:	Ubuntu Desktop Edition
Results:	Licensing savings of tens of thousands of dollars
	Increased security
	Excellent productivity tools
	Intuitive and easy to use

Summary

The Government of Kerala wanted to provide 141 members of its legislative assembly with new laptop computers to help increase productivity and collaboration. Working with Canonical partner Zyxware Technologies and the active support of the Free Software Community in Trivandrum, it equipped the new machines with Ubuntu Desktop Edition and the OpenOffice.org suite of office productivity tools. By choosing to deploy free and open-source Software (FOSS) over proprietary systems, the Government of Kerala has saved tens of thousands of dollars in licensing fees. End users are delighted with their new Ubuntu laptops, which are feature-rich, highly secure and easy to use.

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Challenge

Located on the southern tip of India, the state of Kerala boasts pretty towns and villages, lush forests and pristine, tropical beaches. What's more, it offers local people an excellent quality of life, with the best human development index scores, life expectancies and literacy rates in the entire Indian sub-continent.

With education a top priority, the Government of Kerala recently delivered its IT@ school initiative, which gives local students the opportunity to learn key computing skills. This project, which has been a great success, delivered new hardware and software to more than 8,100 schools across the state.

The IT@ school initiative had to be as cost-effective as possible so all PCs were equipped with free and open-source software (FOSS). A customised flavour of GNU/Linux, which was specially designed to meet the needs of local students, was used to power the venture.

With great feedback from IT@ school, the Government of Kerala began to investigate other positive applications of IT in government. "We wanted to harness the latest technologies to help us increase efficiency and deliver the best possible services to local citizens," says T. D. Kuriachan, Project Lead and Head of the Kerala Legislative Assembly IT team. "As a first step, we wanted to equip 141 members of the Legislative Assembly with new laptop computers to help them increase productivity and collaboration."

To deliver the project at the lowest possible cost, the Government of Kerala wanted to deploy open-source software on the new laptops. Key selection criteria for the open-source desktop software included excellent value for money, professional-grade productivity applications, and guaranteed compatibility with chosen hardware.

Solution

Zyxware Technologies, a Canonical partner and member of the Free Software Users Group Trivandrum, helped the IT team select the best open-source software for its new laptops. Zyxware recommended Ubuntu Desktop Edition running on Ubuntu certified hardware. "Ubuntu provides an intuitive, user-friendly desktop environment that includes the OpenOffice.org suite of office productivity applications," says Kuriachan. "It also has a built-in package manager, so we can install software quickly and easily with no risk of dependency issues," he adds.

Ubuntu's Certified Hardware programme helped the IT team select laptop computers that support Ubuntu out of the box. "We found that most hardware is fully compatible with Ubuntu," says Kuriachan. "All we had to do was decide on a manufacturer, define the specifications we wanted, and go to tender for the best price available," he adds.

The Kerala Legislative Assembly's IT team delivered three-hour training sessions over ten days to help members of the Legislative Assembly get the most from their new Ubuntu laptops. "After a single training session, end users were up and running on Ubuntu," says Kuriachan. "Using intuitive tools, they are increasing their productivity and communicating more effectively with colleagues and local people."

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> Project Lead and Head of IT
> Kerala Legislative Assembly

Results

Thousands of dollars saved on software licensing

Proprietary software requires per-user licences for the operating system, office tools and anti-virus protection. By contrast, Ubuntu and a wide range of open-source applications are free to download, providing much better value for stakeholders and members of the public.

"By eliminating proprietary licensing costs, Ubuntu has already saved us tens of thousands of dollars," says Kuriachan. "This saving means we have more funding available for value-added IT projects that directly benefit local people," he adds.

Enhanced IT security

Thousands of viruses are written to attack proprietary desktop operating systems each year, causing significant disruption and downtime. By contrast, Ubuntu offers a highly secure computing environment that is immune to the vast majority of viruses and malware.

"Ubuntu Desktop Edition is an extremely robust, highly secure operating system," says Kuriachan. "Using it, we can ensure that critical applications and data are protected at all times, while minimising service interruptions and downtime for end users."

Full-featured productivity tools

Organisations that choose proprietary desktop operating systems have to purchase and install office productivity tools separately. By contrast, Ubuntu comes bundled with the OpenOffice.org suite and provides access to a range of additional, value-added applications. "Ubuntu provides all the productivity and collaboration tools our end users need," says Kuriachan. "The software increases productivity across a range of tasks, from email and word processing to spreadsheets and presentations."

Positive feedback from end users

The IT team has received excellent feedback from members of the legislative assembly. One member, K. Kunhiraman, says: "Both the Ubuntu operating system and OpenOffice.org suite are very easy to use. Although I have always used proprietary operating systems in the past, I was able to make the change to Ubuntu quickly and easily."

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