

trends

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How To Land a Linux Job

By Evan Schuman

IT staffers and management applying for open source jobs need to approach the problem differently than they would applying for jobs working on proprietary platforms, recruiters say.

Just as open source is different from proprietary development, open source IT staffers and management need to accentuate their experience and skills differently to attract hiring managers.

Because Linux and open source are relatively new, hiring managers will find it hard to find applications with five years or more of related corporate IT experience. Applicants will need to be prepared to show IT managers non-job experience with Linux and open source to beef up their resumes. Applicants should also be prepared to show potential employers the code for open source projects they've contributed to. And, because few shops are run exclusively on Linux and open source, job-seekers will have to show proficiency in other platforms as well.

Tips for Job-Seekers

- Accentuate outside-the-workplace experience.
- Show code for open source projects you've worked on.
- Know the business of the company you're applying to.
- Know other platforms.

See Sidebar: [Linux Salaries on the Rise](#)

Experience Outside the Job

Linux job applicants should focus on all relevant experience and not necessarily limit their resumes to salaried positions. Linux is a different environment from other platforms; not many IT helpdesk managers go home and hack Windows printer drivers on their own time.

"Some candidates haven't been doing Linux in their day job, but they've been doing open source work in their free time," said Rob Jones, president of Glacier Technology Services, which owns HotLinuxJobs.com. "Maybe they don't have three years of Linux kernel development experience at Intel, but they certainly have open source project experience. They just didn't have 'getting paid for' experience."

Brian Gabrielson, branch manager of consulting services for Robert Half Technology, a major technology recruiting firm, agreed that typical enterprise IT hiring mentalities need changing when it comes to Linux hiring.

"Some of our applicants do a lot of non-profit work. It's real work," Gabrielson said. "I can translate that into my client's needs. It's the nature of Linux and how it's being used."

Show the Code

Linux developers should be able to show their publicly posted code, reviewed by the open source community -- warts and all -- to prospective employers.

That's something that not all Linux programmers have been doing, said Joshua C. Lerner, who has held IT management positions using open source in several companies, most recently director of technology for the Wesley Clark For President campaign. He asks for -- and doesn't always receive -- links to source code that has already been reviewed by the community.

"If you list Perl experience, I want you to then list the modules that you know and then show me projects you have worked on," Lerner said. "Give me projects that are well-known and show me where your code has survived. That's the beauty of the open source movement. It amounts to a free market of software code. If you're comfortable enough with your code to post it and have people rip it apart," then Lerner said he's much more interested.

Multi-Platform Skills

Even if an employer is looking for a pure Linux position, corporate IT hiring managers want to see multi-platform experience and knowledge, Gabrielson said.

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- Yes.
- No.
- Not sure.

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IT managers and staff need to integrate Linux code with the rest of the network.

"We want people who know how to play nice with a multiple-OS system. We'll find those folk and tap into their other skill sets," Gabrielson said.

The reverse is also true: companies need IT managers and staff who can make proprietary apps work well with open source software, Gabrielson said.

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