

LinuxChix: A New Kind of Linux User Group

Val Henson

IBM, Inc.

vhenson@us.ibm.com

Outline

- Background
- What makes LinuxChix different
- Problems specific to LinuxChix
- How you can help

What is LinuxChix?

- <http://www.linuxchix.org>
- Volunteer international Linux community since 1999
- Focus on friendly, female-dominated Linux community
- 100% volunteer (no corporate sponsorship of any sort)
- Web site, mailing lists, local chapter

What makes LinuxChix different?

- A sense of community is an explicit goal
- Focus on being woman-friendly
- One rule: “Be polite, be helpful”
- Members love being part of LinuxChix
- Somehow, full of competent smart people...

Building a sense of community

- Easier for LinuxChix: the community is the goal
- Women excited to find other women with common interests
- Being friendly and nice does **not** attract incompetents

Building a sense of community

- Wide variety of mailings lists, from tech-only to off-topic
- Members post only cuts down on spam, increases sense of community
- Various levels of archiving
- Semi-private IRC channel

Be part of LinuxChix, get publicity

- Say thank you and give credit
- LinuxChix web site includes several cheerleading web pages
 - LinuxChix in the news
 - LinuxChix publications

How we get the best volunteers

- Open mailing list for volunteers
- Several volunteers for each job
- Frequent volunteer vacations
- If a volunteer can't take a vacation, what about the bus?

Keep the community friendly

- LinuxChix rules: “Be polite, be helpful”
- More rules drive off good people
- Rules don't work for trolls anyway
- Use technological means to exile persons of ill will

How LinuxChix gives back to the community

- Write lots and lots of documentation
- Produce many free on-line courses
- Job postings, networking, meet new friends...

Problems specific to LinuxChix

- Girls! Attack!
- Many people believe we shouldn't exist
- Men flood lists with questions and answers
- Difficulty keeping focus: “good cops” and “bad cops”

Ongoing problems

- LinuxChix hosting system single point of failure
- Male-to-female ratio rising
- Hostility causes faster volunteer burn-out
- Lacking critical mass for LinuxChix kernel development community

Want to learn more?

- Unlocking the Clubhouse, by Jane Margolis and Allan Fisher
- HOWTO Encourage Women in Linux (Google it)
- Why are there so few women in computer science?, by Dr. Ellen Spertus (Google this too)
- Listen to women (!)

Tips for women

- Join LinuxChix immediately! <http://www.linuxchix.org>
- Apply for Val Henson Women in Computing Book Scholarship for “Women Don’t Ask,” by Linda Babcock and Sara Laschever (Google it)
- LinuxChix Kernel Hacking Lessons (Google it)

Funny quote from an Advogato diary:

He asked me which kernel guide I recommended reading just for starters. I mentioned Val’s “LinuxChix Kernel Hacking Lessons”. He answered with “but that’s for girls!”

Summary

- LinuxChix is a friendly, supportive, and successful LUG
- Requires some effort to maintain, must kick out rude people
- Lots of resources available on women in computing
- Tell the women you know!

Q&A

vhenson@us.ibm.com