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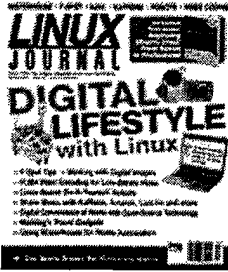


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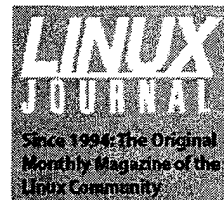
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Caldera and Corsair

By [LJ Staff](#) on Thu, 1995-06-01 01:00.
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Who is Caldera, and what is Corsair, really?

Many conflicting rumors about Novell's "Corsair" project have been floating about the Internet. Recently, there have been sensationalized stories that Ray Noorda, formerly the President and Chief Executive of Novell, is backing a company called Caldera to use the "Corsair" technology to take Microsoft on head-to-head. While that makes for an interesting story, at *Linux Journal* we prefer facts to hype. Here is Caldera's story.

Who is Caldera, and what is Corsair, really? Corsair was--and still is--a project at Novell to create a "desktop metaphor" for the network. A year or so ago at Novell, an advanced technology group was doing research on how to better and more easily integrate and manage network access for users, and they decided to focus on the desktop. While they liked Unix, they wanted something smaller and faster to put their "Internet desktop" on, (not to mention something requiring a smaller royalty stream than Unix--yes, Novell pays royalties to other companies that developed parts of Unix).

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Several members of the group became convinced that Linux was the best answer to their search. They started to work with Linux, contributing code back to the Linux development team and to other projects related to Linux, including the Linux DOS emulator. Their work included work on the IPX networking layer of Linux, support for the Wine project, and several other smaller parts.

When Robert Frankenberg took over the CEO position at Novell in 1994, he cut out many of the exploratory projects that were then underway in an attempt to focus Novell on "core competencies". While many in the industry lauded this, it did end all of the work on Linux-related features of Corsair, and Corsair now is an "Internet desktop" for MS Windows.

Several of the members of the group were not satisfied with this, and quit to form their own company, with financial and strategic backing from Ray Noorda, to continue working on this desktop--under Linux. This new company is Caldera.

Myths Debunked

Caldera's product is not an MS Windows clone, as some have reported. It *will* include an MS-Windows-like API, licensed from Willows Software, which is another Noorda-backed company. This will allow companies with MS Windows applications to port those applications easily to Linux. Caldera does *not* intend to have an "ABI" (application *binary* interface) that is guaranteed to run existing Windows applications. Because they have worked for a high level of compatibility at the "API" (application *programming* interface) level, there is a high probability that some MS Windows binaries will run, but they say that is not what they are attempting to accomplish.



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Caldera says their product is not intended to be an MS Windows killer: they are not trying to put Bill Gates out of business. They instead wish to provide an alternative: a commercially supported distribution of Linux bundled with commercial components.

Commercial Components

The commercial components, which will require separate licensing, will include the Windows-like API, the Corsair-like desktop, a network client, and OpenDoc support. Truetype font support is also planned. So-called personal productivity applications will be bundled or sold separately. Caldera-developed documentation will be included as a part of the product.

While Caldera will be providing many commercial components, they have publicly promised to fully honor the GNU Public License, including providing full source code for all the GPL-licensed software they ship. The GPL is what has made Linux useful to them, and they say that it lowers and removes barriers for many small companies who want to compete in the software marketplace. They suggest that Linux will increase innovation in the software marketplace, and they want to push this along. They quote Ray Noorda as saying, "That's exactly what we are out to do--to grow [the whole Linux] industry." Promoting Linux is good for everyone.

Caldera has instructed their public relations firm to promote Linux, as well as Caldera, believing that by giving Linux added exposure, the entire market will grow, benefiting everyone in it, including themselves. In addition, they will continue to contribute work on free software, doing their part to help keep Linux innovative and open. When they chose a business partner to build

their distribution, they chose another company that licenses its software under the GPL, Red Hat Software.

Caldera is not the only company to provide supported, shrink-wrapped distributions of Linux, nor is it the only company to sell commercial applications for Linux. Caldera suggests that they have two distinguishing characteristics: first, they have Ray Noorda behind the company, which gives them credibility and financial flexibility when they are negotiating with large software companies; and second, Caldera will focus on helping and encouraging existing independent software vendors and manufacturers to port their programs to the Caldera desktop in an attempt to provide types of software that have been unavailable for Linux in the past.

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