

**454**

# Telly

The home site of Evan Leibovitch

[Home](#)

## The 86open Project

*Unix-on-Intel players agree on a common binary (It's the Linux ELF format)*

### ***FINAL UPDATE: July 25, 1999***

*(reformatted Nov 2, 2005)*

*Dead effort or declaration of victory?  
You decide.*

On October 1997, a group informally calling itself *the 86open project* issued a communiqué, discussing the need for a standard binary executable for the various Unix and Unix derivatives which run on Intel 80X86 "PC"-architecture systems.

The group, which had met earlier that year at the headquarters of SCO, eventually included representatives or developers involved with the most popular such operating system suppliers:

- BeOS
- BSDI
- FreeBSD
- Linux
- NetBSD
- SCO
- Sunsoft

The aim of this effort was to encourage software developers to port to the Unix-Intel platform by reducing the effort needed to support the diverse mix of operating systems of this kind currently available.

The original target was a binary format specification which would be supportable by each OS, without emulation, in addition to (but not to replace) each OS's native format. The early discussions centered around Linus Torvalds' scheme involving a standardized programmers' function libraries, and agreement on numbering schemes for signals and other interfaces.

The group was making reasonable, if slow, progress into mid 1998. At that time, SCO was involved in the development of *lxcrun*, software which ran Linux-format binaries under the two SCO operating systems (OpenServer and UnixWare).

The possibility that SCO could run Linux binaries made the need for 86open less important. Most of the BSD programs already have solid capabilities for running Linux binaries.

The *lxcrun* package is now stable and runs well. It was officially announced by SCO at LinuxWorld in March 1999, and was later ported by Sun to allow Linux binaries to run under SolarisX86.

With these announcements, the need for a distinct common binary standard is gone. The operating system vendors, one way or another, have chosen a common binary format -- the Linux ELF format, which is now supported on the systems of all the developers which originally joined *86open*.

It is therefore only logical that the 86open project declare itself dissolved. Our goal -- the development of a single binary that software vendors can trust will run on most Unix and Unix-derivatives on PC platforms -- has been realized. It didn't come about the original way we had planned, but we achieved what we set out to do.

Thanks to everyone for your participation and interest.

Evan Leibovitch  
Chair, *86open* project

Related links:

- [The original communiqué \(October 10, 1997\)](#)
- [A Frequently-asked-questions \(FAQ\) file, created December 23, 1997](#)
- [The lxr run home page](#)

Copyright © 1999 by [Evan Leibovitch](#). This document may be freely copied as long as its source is properly attributed.

Posted in Projects [login](#) or [register](#) to post comments

All content here except for external links, guest comments and material identified otherwise, is Copyright © 2005, 2006 by Evan Leibovitch. All Rights Reserved. All trademarks are property of their owners (you know who you are).