

A (Very) Happy Desktop

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Checking Out SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop 11—The Most Interoperable Linux Desktop

If you want to introduce a Linux desktop into your existing Windows environment, the upcoming release of SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop 11 just might be your answer. Billed as the most interoperable desktop and the market's only enterprise-quality Linux desktop, SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop 11 offers seamless interoperability with existing enterprise systems and dozens of essential productivity applications. It works with Novell GroupWise and Microsoft Exchange collaboration servers and is also fully compatible with Novell eDirectory, Microsoft Active Directory and other networking and directory standards.

As the most interoperable desktop and the market's only enterprise-quality Linux desktop, SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop 11 offers seamless interoperability with existing enterprise systems and dozens of essential productivity applications.

To allow you to see ahead of time what the latest iteration of this Linux desktop has to offer, you can get a sneak preview download of the OS. (See www.novell.com/promo/home/sneakpreview.html) I'll highlight some of the key aspects below to look for as you test drive the desktop's sneak preview version.

> Interoperability Enhancements

As expected, SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop 11 includes all the latest updates to the Linux kernel, and refreshed versions of its packages and applications. It contains the latest versions of Firefox, the Novell Edition of OpenOffice.org, Novell Evolution, and more. See Figure 1 for a summary of the key packages and versions that make up SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop 11.

If you're not already familiar with it, the Novell Edition of OpenOffice.org is a complete office productivity suite that comes with word processing, spreadsheet, presentation, drawing and database

capabilities. The nice thing about the Novell Edition of the suite is that it features enhancements not found in the upstream version of OpenOffice.org. For example, the version of the suite that ships in SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop 11 includes richer file import capabilities (e.g., WordPerfect, Microsoft Works, Lotus WordPro, and scalable vector graphics files), stronger VBA and PivotTable support in Calc, anti-aliasing capabilities in Impress, WebDAV locking capabilities and GroupWise integration.

OpenOffice.org Novell Edition offers improved interoperability of files being passed between the OpenOffice.org suite and the Microsoft Office suite. For example, in the past you could import Word documents into OpenOffice.org, but when you exported them back out to Word, the formatting wasn't always quite right. Now with the enhancements in the Novell Edition of OpenOffice.org 3.0, you can seamlessly open and save those Word documents in OpenOffice.org and the formatting will remain the same regardless of what suite you use to view and edit it. Novell refers to this new capability as "roundtrip fidelity." In addition, OpenOffice.org supports the import of Office Open XML, Microsoft's default file format with the release of Microsoft Office 2007.

As another interoperability enhancement, integration of the Mono open source class libraries and runtime environment has been introduced to SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop 11. This provides Linux support for .NET applications, enabling them in most cases to run natively on the Linux desktop. A tool called MoMA (Mono Migration Analyzer) is provided to help identify issues when porting your .NET applications to Linux. While the libraries needed to run these applications can automatically be installed with the desktop, you can also download the Mono framework for development purposes if desired. In fact, Novell used this framework

Figure 1: *SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop 11 contains the latest versions of Firefox, the Novell Edition of OpenOffice.org, Novell Evolution, and more.*

	SLED10 SP2	SLED11		SLED10 SP2	SLED11
Firefox	2.0.0	3.0.5	Linux Kernel	2.6.16	2.6.27+
OpenOffice.org NE	2.0	3.0*	Gnome	2.12	2.24
Evolution	2.6	2.24	Mono	1.2.2	2.0
Banshee	0.13	1.4	YaST	2.13	2.17
Pidgin	2.3	2.5	X.org	6.9	7.4
Moonlight	n/a	1.0	Gstreamer	0.10.4	0.10.21
Compiz	0.4.0	0.7.8	wpa_supplicant	0.4.8	0.6.4
Gimp	2.2	2.6	Python	2.4.2	2.6.0
Inkscape	0.43	0.46	GTK2	2.4.3	2.14
Beagle	0.2	0.3	QT	3.3.5	4.4.3
Tomboy	0.6	0.12	DBus	0.6.4	1.2
Gnome-do	n/a	0.6	Network Manager	0.6.6	0.7.0
rdesktop	1.4.1	1.6			

* OpenOffice.org Novell Edition 3.1 will be available in the Novell update channel by the time SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop 11 ships

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to develop a Firefox plug-in included with the desktop distribution called Moonlight. Moonlight enables support for Windows media formats (i.e., WMA and WMV), and allows users to browse Microsoft Silverlight-enabled Web sites.

Greater Microsoft Exchange interoperability has also been added to this release. The Novell Evolution mail client in SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop 11 has been updated to support backend integration with Exchange 2007 and all other versions of Exchange, as well as support for Novell GroupWise 8. As the most widely used Linux collaboration client in the world, Evolution seamlessly integrates e-mail, calendars, contact management and task lists into a single easy-to-use application designed for the needs of enterprise users.

The final key interoperability aspect of the SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop 11 release is an inclusion of Likewise Enterprise, an enterprise software solution that improves the level of integration between the desktop and Active Directory. For IT managers in Active Directory (AD)

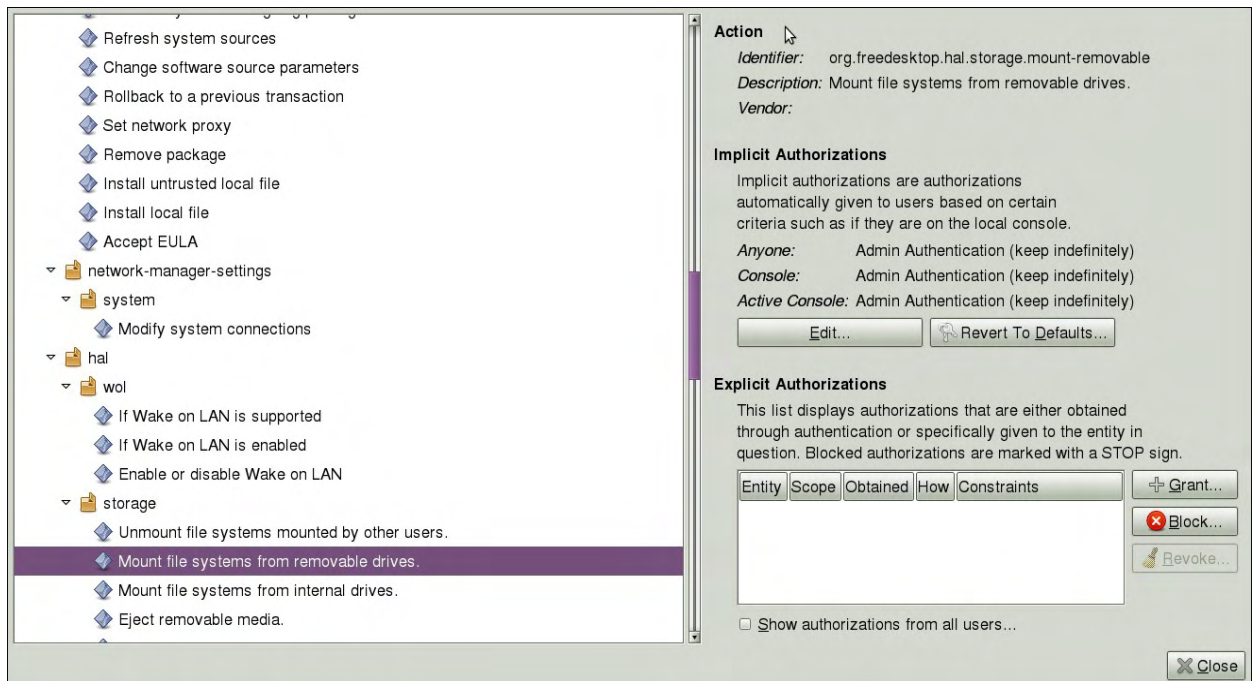
environments, this means that your Windows and Linux desktops can authenticate with AD and that you can also leverage AD to centrally manage both groups of devices through the use of group policy objects. Likewise, Enterprise enables you to define group- and role-based access to your corporate assets for your Linux desktops, just as you do for your Windows desktops. (Note: Likewise Enterprise is not part of the SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop 11 sneak preview.)

> More Granular Security

In addition to greater interoperability, they've also built in greater security to SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop 11. The prime example of this is the PolicyKit, a new feature that gives you increased flexibility in granting your users the ability to make some system changes without having to give them root access to the system. While the major use case for the PolicyKit will likely be in allowing users to install applications without them needing root privileges, it provides a number of other controls as well, such as controlling access to removable media, adding or removing printers, modifying the backup schedule, enabling or disabling Bluetooth, and more.

When a user attempts to carry out a privileged operation that is PolicyKit enabled, PolicyKit will be asked whether or not the user is entitled to perform that operation. Possible answers include "yes," "no," or "authentication needed." In the "authentication needed" scenario, you have the option to require users to authenticate as themselves or as root. Additionally, PolicyKit privileges can be either implicit or explicit.

Figure 2: You can set or modify PolicyKit privileges using the graphical Authorizations tool inherent to the GNOME graphical desktop interface.



SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop 11 features key green IT innovations without impacting productivity.

Implicit means that the policy applies to all your users and explicit applies to specific users or groups.

To set or modify PolicyKit privileges you can use either the graphical Authorizations tool inherent to the GNOME graphical desktop interface, the PolicyKit command line tool, or by directly modifying PolicyKit configuration files. (See Figure 2.) To manage the privileges on an enterprise-wide basis, it's probably best to make changes at the configuration file level. You can then push those policy settings out to your users' desktops through a variety of options. If your policies are fairly uniform, it can simply be part of an AutoYaST image that you use for all your Linux desktops. To give you more granular control, you can distribute the policies settings based on roles using group policy objects or the policy-driven automation of ZENworks Linux Management.

In regard to other aspects of security, SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop 11 continues to use AppArmor for application security. While the AppArmor functionality in

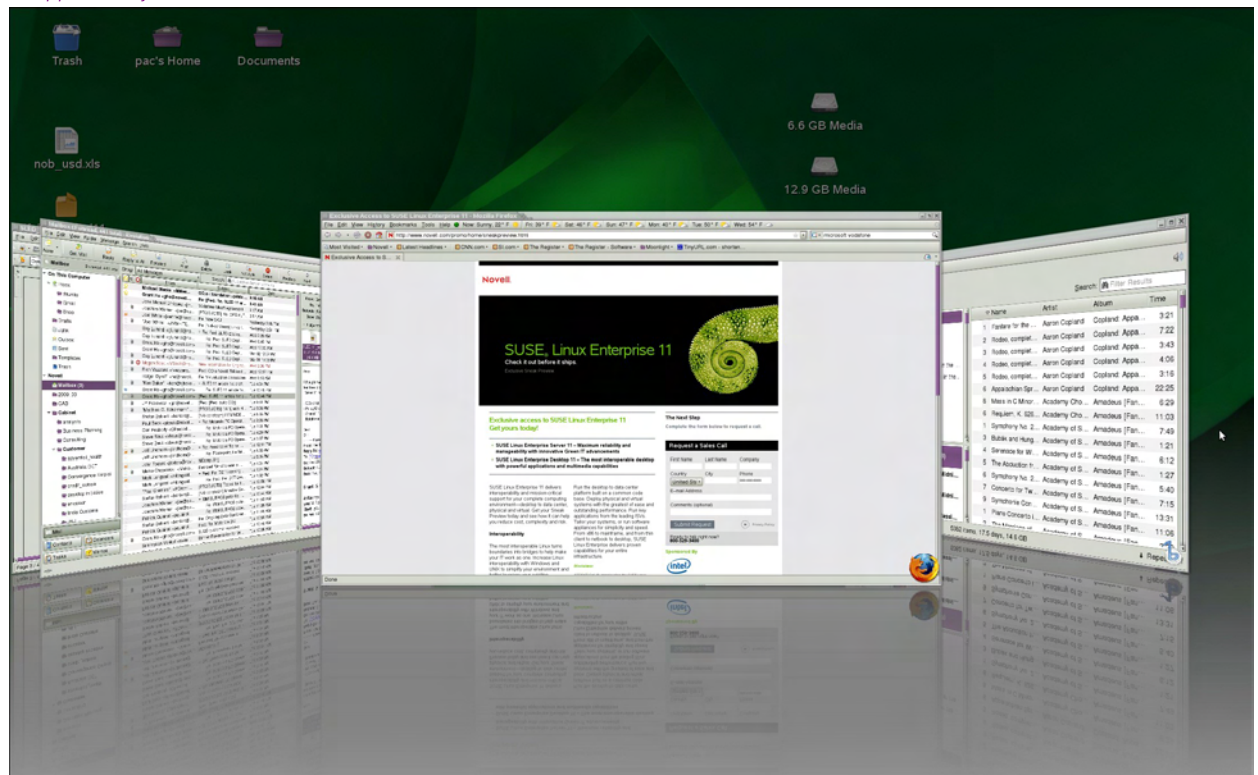
this release is essentially identical to that of the previous release, it has been updated to work with newer applications and software updates.

> Green IT Innovations

SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop 11 features key green IT innovations without impacting productivity. It includes new smart power management capabilities such as CPU throttling, switching off the hard drive when not needed and dimming the display when idle. It also includes improvements that put the desktop into hibernation and sleep modes. Finally, a new Power History interface makes your green IT experience very visual. You can see how your usage behavior is impacting battery life and how the operating system is adapting to this usage.

In addition, SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop 11 features Nomad. Nomad is a suite of remote desktop protocol tools that delivers near-native graphics performance when you access SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop remotely. This allows you to dramatically cut costs by configuring SUSE Linux Enterprise for green, server-based computing environments. For instance, you can now run SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop virtually in the data center or in the cloud without compromising the high quality and performance you would expect from a local desktop experience.

Figure 3: *The application switcher enables you to rotate through 3D thumbnail views of your applications, making it easier to see and find the application you want*



> Productive Usability and Deployment Flexibility

The overall look and feel of the GNOME desktop graphical interface is basically unchanged in this release. It still provides integrated search capabilities and real-time indexing of the desktop, new accessibility features for disabled users such as the Orca screen reader and 3D desktop effects that enable more effective organization of your desktop. In the area of 3D desktop effects, one visual enhancement, known as the application switcher, has been added to SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop 11. When you Alt+Tab through your open applications, the application switcher rotates through 3D thumbnail views of your applications, making it easier to see and find the application you want. (See Figure 3.)

SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop 11 also provides you flexible deployment options. You can use it as a general-

purpose desktop platform or tailored for use in thick- or thin-client configurations. To facilitate deployment, you can take advantage of the automated installation provided by AutoYaST, the central management capabilities of ZENwork Linux Management, or both of them together. Finally, Novell is continuing to work with its hardware platform partners to preload SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop on a wide range of form factors, including desktops, notebooks, netbooks, nettops, workstations and thin clients. But don't wait until then to check out the enhancements that make it the most interoperable desktop available and the market's only enterprise-quality Linux desktop. To see what SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop 11 can do for you, check out the sneak preview today. (See www.novell.com/promo/home/sneakpreview.html.) **N**