

TECH TOOLS

Professional users are always searching for an edge. Whether you work with Linux as a webmaster, programmer, system administrator, or security consultant, you know the best solution depends on finding the right tool for the job. We thought you might be interested in the following new products and updates.

Build Your CSS with Construct

Construct is a visual layout editor based on Blueprint and jQuery. Version 1.0 was recently finalized and released to the public under the FreeBSD license. The editor is a handy utility for CSS designers who need a visual layout editor that can achieve clean CSS and semantic HTML. Construct seems to be in the early stages of development but could well become an exciting tool as it matures. To keep an eye on how Construct progresses and give it a try, go to <http://www.constructyourcss.com/>.

Banshee 1.5.6 Media Player is Here!

The fine folks at Banshee have been updating versions of their media player so quickly that it's like watching popcorn pop. Many of the changes are bug fixes, but you can also enjoy new features, such as a YouTube extension, gapless playback, and a grid album browser. Also, you can sync your Android and iPod device against Banshee.

Downloading is easy and free, and you can install v1.5.6 on a number of Linux distros, including Debian, Fedora, openSUSE, Mandriva, and Ubuntu. Banshee also supports Mac OS X.

Keep up with the Banshee project and use the latest and greatest version by going to <http://banshee-project.org/>.

Secure Data on diskGenie Portable Hard Drive

diskGenie looks more like a keypad with a USB connector than a hard drive, but the keyboard is what lets you into your data and what keeps others out. Whether you store portable data on a thumb drive, a laptop, or anything in between, you know that anyone can potentially get access to your sensitive information by physically making off with your device. diskGenie claims to protect such data with the use of AES 256-bit real-time hardware encryption.

The only way to access data on the device is to input a PIN code on the keypad, in the same way you use an ATM machine. The device uses no software, so it's easy to use but hard to crack. Uploading and downloading data from other devices only requires that you plug in the diskGenie via the attached USB cable.

Storage availability for diskGenie comes in 250, 320, and 500GB, depending on price. Power is totally bus supplied, and data transfer rates over USB 2.0 are up to 480Mbps. You can connect diskGenie to any PC running Microsoft Windows XP and Windows Vista or Linux, as well as Mac OS 10.2 or higher.

The price ranges from UK£ 116.33 to 175.08, depending on the amount of storage you require. Visit <http://www.istorage-uk.com/diskgenie.htm> for more.

MSI Wind Box Intel Atom Nettop Runs Linux

The MSI Wind Box is yet another all-in-one mini-PC product that runs on either a Windows or Linux kernel. The Windows OS products were readily available on the MSI Global site, but I had to hunt a bit to find the Wind Nettop boxes that use Linux. The Wind Box barebones line, depending on series, uses Intel Atom processors from 230 to 510/410, supports between 1 and 4GB of DDR2 SDRAM, and includes either IDE or SATA drives. The SLED 10.1 Linux Wind Nettop series sported comparable hardware specifications.

The most noteworthy advantages to the Nettops include a relatively low noise level, power-conserving Atom processors, and an "ultra-small" chassis. The key selling point for the environmentally aware customer is the minimal power usage of these boxes, which boast a low carbon footprint. The economically sensitive customer will also appreciate that less power usage means smaller power bills.

Depending on exactly which product you desire, pricing is around US\$ 250. To see if any of MSI Global's wares are right for you, go to <http://www.msi.com/index.php>.

Use eBox for Server Infrastructure Administration

The eBox Platform is a Linux small business server (SMS) designed to act as a gateway, infrastructure manager, threat manager, office server, and unified communication server.

That's quite a lot to take onboard, but that's only the beginning. Version 1.4, the latest incarnation of eBox, supports Active Directory synchronization, dynamic DNS updates, and RADIUS mobile, just to name a few of the current features.

You can download and install eBox on your hardware for free, and basic support via a discussion forum is readily available. Professional support must be purchased. Pricing wasn't available on the eBox site, and potential customers are directed to contact the sales department.

Learn more about the eBox Platform and give it a try at <http://www.ebox-platform.com/>.

Open-Xchange Groupware with Integrated VoIP

Open-Xchange provides integrated, scalable, open source email and collaboration solutions for the enterprise environment. Its latest offering, the Open-Xchange 4PSA VoipNow Bundle, is available on both Open-Xchange Server and Open-Xchange Hosting Edition and provides an integrated VoIP solution, as well as calendar subscription for Google calendar, optimized calendar invitation and confirmation, and other usability improvements.

The partnership between Open-Xchange and 4PSA, which makes the VoIP integration feature possible, will likely result in further innovations to this product in the near future, so you'll want to keep an eye on Open-Xchange for new developments.

Product pricing starts at US\$ 675 per server for the Appliance Edition and US\$ 1,312.50 for the Server Edition.

You are encouraged by Open-Xchange to contact their sales department to discuss how to acquire their Hosting Edition. To find out more about Open-Xchange, go to <http://www.open-xchange.com/>.

Reinvent JavaScript with RequireJS

Once a coding project gets past a certain size, managing the code and script modules can become a little difficult. At that stage, you need to make sure the scripts are sequenced correctly, and you might even want to start combining your scripts together into a bundle for deployment.

RequireJS is designed to use its module system to define well-scoped modules. Also, the RequireJS module format makes it easy to write encapsulated code that you can then load on the fly. Additionally, RequireJS is scalable, growing with your project requirements, particularly if you need to add internationalization string bundles.

RequireJS also integrates with jQuery for added value. Downloading, adding, and optimizing RequireJS is easy and comes at no cost. Get started with RequireJS by visiting <http://requirejs.org/>.

MonoDevelop 2.2.1 Released with Improved UI

MonoDevelop is an IDE mainly designed for C# and other .NET languages and has the goal of making it easy for developers to write desktop and ASP.NET web applications quickly on Linux, Windows, and Mac OS X platforms. Among the recent updates to MonoDevelop are changes to the GUI to improve its functionality and ease of use. Specific changes include the status bar, output pads, and zoomable tree views.

Other improvements to version v2.2.1 include bug fixes for Mac users, such as a new help browser and an improved updater. An iPad app template and other fixes are now available for iPhone.

You can download MonoDevelop for free and supported Linux distros, including Debian, openSUSE, SLED, and Ubuntu. Find out more by going to <http://monodevelop.com/>.

Adding Spring to the Tomcat Server

SpringSource, a division of VMware, has added tools and procedures to their Apache Tomcat server that let application developers build, deploy, and monitor software on a lightweight run-time platform. The new SpringSource tc Server Spring Edition includes a dashboard that offers data on the code-level performance of applications. Management tools are also available that let you analyze an application's real-world performance. The current tc Server Standard Edition starts at US\$ 500 per CPU. An updated version, available in April 2010, is expected to price at US\$ 750. A 90-day free trial version is available at <http://www.springsource.com/>.

Amarok 2.3.0 "Clear Light" Has Been Released

If KDE is your Linux desktop of choice or you just like to run some really cool KDE apps on Gnome, you'll want to pay attention to Amarok 2.3.0. Podcast support is now available, as are improved saved playlists and generic MP3 player support. Other new features include a revised main toolbar and an easier to use file browser. With the new features and numerous bugfixes in this release, Amarok is maturing as an application, so if you tried Amarok early in its development, take another look now. To find out more and download Amarok onto your Linux, Mac, or Windows free, go to <http://amarok.kde.org/en/>.

Zend Server 5.0 PHP Web Adds Code Tracing

Zend Technologies announced Zend Server 5.0 PHP web application server, now with code-tracing technology that allows users to "see into" code in production environments and potentially locate the cause of issues occurring in an application. Also available in this version are PHP caching, acceleration, and Job Queue abilities, all designed to improve application performance. Version 5.0 includes code tracing in its base annual subscription price of US\$ 1,195, which comes with web-based support. For 24/7 support for mission-critical applications, the subscription fee jumps to US\$ 3,195. To learn more, go to <http://www.zend.com/en/>.