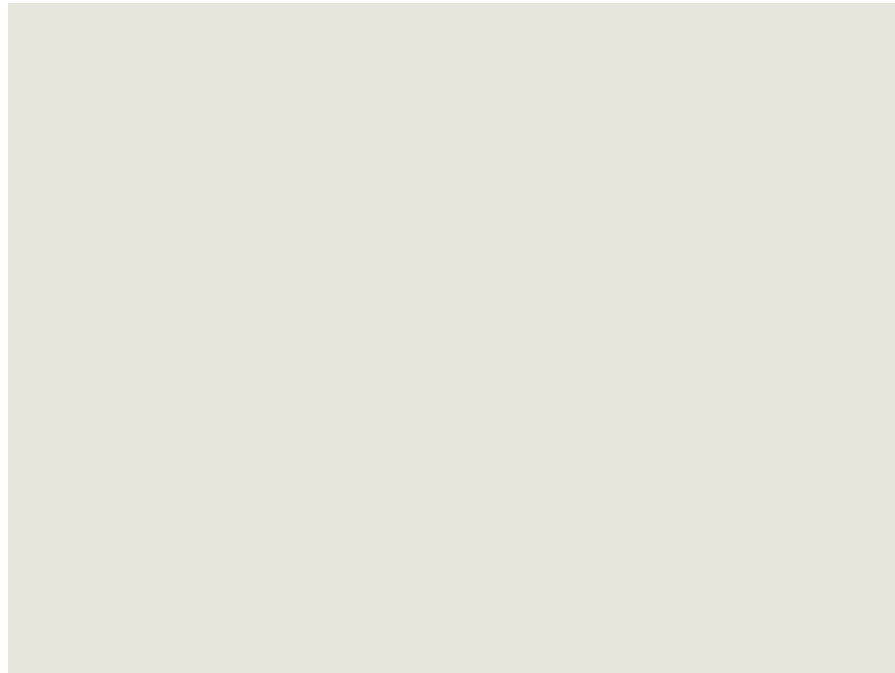


Q&A Red Hat Subscriptions



Walli Datto
Senior Product Manager
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We talk to Walli Datto, Senior product manager for open source software at Interactive Ideas about the benefits of the Red Hat subscription model to a reseller and how it will also benefit your customers



A simple example of the benefit of the Open Source model of software development is how the software responds to security holes. A likely scenario is a user identifies a security breach in the software, they then have two options on how to handle their new found information: In the first, they go to the vendor and tell them about what they have found. In this scenario the vendor then gets working on trying to patch the issue and asks the user to keep the information to themselves until a fix is found. The second scenario is the user posts the security hole on a forum on the internet and malicious activity spreads across every implementation of the system. The second scenario is more likely. In an open source environment, the model really thrives in the second scenario as people collaborate and communicate with each other on how to change the code so that the security breach can be plugged (as everyone has visibility on the source code and can respond in a timely fashion). The shortest time it has taken the Open Source Community to respond to produce a security update is nine hours from the time it was reported.

Why is a subscription based approach for support and updates the best?

Red Hat Enterprise Linux products are provided on a per-system annual subscription basis. Subscriptions take the pain out of purchasing software because they provide everything needed in one all-inclusive price. There are no Client Access Licenses. No support incident limits. No unbudgeted upgrade costs. No hidden charges. A subscription-based service also allows your infrastructure to be agile and dynamic and grow and shrink with your estate. As Red Hat (and generally most Enterprise Open Source) is not a licence it isn't tied down to your hardware. When hardware is decommissioned subscriptions can be migrated to new hardware or supplementary hardware.

Keeping up to date is all very well, but how often will the service be used and what is the typical time period between updates?

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It is important to understand that updates and security patches are deployed when they are identified. This is where the whole Open Source development model really shines. Since the source code is available for viewing to anybody most security holes are found before any software is actually released due to the sheer number of people able to access the code and their ability to contribute any changes they feel should be made. Once these are proposed and integrated within the software, Red Hat 'hardens' and certifies it so that the update will run smoothly once applied.

Could the update process itself cause problems on equipment? If so, what level of support can be expected?

One of the benefits of investing in Enterprise Open Source is that all updates and patches are fully tested to work on all hardware and software certified to run on Red Hat. Part of the subscription benefit is access to unlimited support through the web and telephone. If any issues arise due to updates, Red Hat are available to solve your issues immediately through their support centres worldwide. Since Red Hat is the largest contributor to Linux, you will be supported by engineers that actually develop the software in the open source community, this minimises the time to solve your issues.

If a different version of Red Hat Enterprise Linux is installed, can the subscription be migrated? How long is each version of the OS going to be supported?

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Since Red Hat is a subscription rather than a licence, you have access to all future versions and all previous supported versions as long as you renew your subscription. When you buy Red Hat, you are purchasing a support contract for all versions that Red Hat classify as supported under their support life cycle. For instance the current version of Red Hat is 5.4 but versions 4.x and some versions of 3.x are still supported under the subscription. Red Hat has the longest support lifecycle in the industry of seven years. More information on the current supported versions and the support lifecycle is available at: <http://www.redhat.com/security/updates/errata/>.

How many subscriptions are required? Are additional subscriptions required for virtualised servers?

Red Hat is sold on a per physical server basis. So, you will require a Red Hat subscription for every physical piece of hardware that you want to run Red Hat on. As part of the subscription you gain access to Red Hat's virtualisation technology in XEN and more recently KVM, this way you can run a variety of operating systems as virtual guests including Microsoft Windows, using Red Hat as the host operating system. A subscription for a two physical socket system includes support for four virtual guests of any operating system certified on Red Hat. For larger servers i.e. greater than two sockets, Red Hat will support an unlimited number of guests!

How can users check all their systems are covered?

All Red Hat subscriptions are tied into a Red Hat Network (RHN) Login. Red Hat Network is a complete systems management platform for Linux. It's built on open standards and uses a simple, Internet-based graphical interface. It also features a modular design – as networks grow, administrators can add enhanced capabilities for system updates, management, and monitoring of their entire infrastructure. When you order a Red Hat subscription your subscription is placed in the RHN Login that you can create yourself. You download Red Hat software after logging into your Red Hat Network account. The best way for a user to verify that all their systems are covered, is to make sure they have an adequate amount of subscriptions in their Red Hat Network account to cover all their physical servers running Red Hat. Each subscription has a unique contract number and installation number. When you tie a subscription to a server your Red Hat Network account will associate your servers unique hostname (that you set when installing) with an available subscription so that you can easily



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“Creates an ongoing relationship where the reseller can engage with their customer on an annual basis about the renewal”

manage and have visibility on all your servers in a central location. As your Red Hat estate grows, you can purchase additional modules that allow you to provision, manage and monitor your subscriptions from your RHN account.

Finally, briefly tell us how a reseller can benefit from the Red Hat/Open Source subscription model?

The subscription model creates a relationship where the vendor has to consistently provide a high-level of service, this is why Red Hat has been number one for value in the CIO report for the last four years. It also creates an ongoing relationship where the reseller can engage with their customer on an annual basis about the subscription renewal, which unlike many

other vendors is a 100% of the original year after year and presents further opportunities for discussion with the resellers clients around management and other areas of the customers infrastructure.

Meet Walli

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