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Open-source leader: SCO suits a boon to Linux

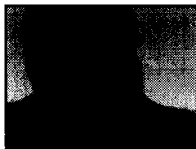
By Matt Loney, Special to ZDNet Asia
Friday, March 11 2005 09:27 AM

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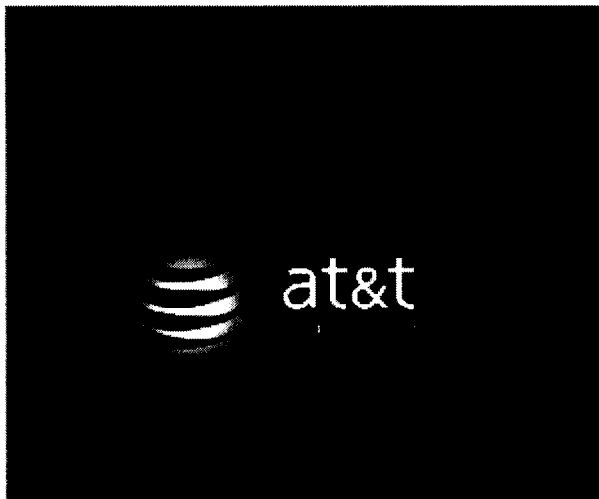
SCO's litigation over Linux was hugely unpopular, but there was a big upside, according to the chief executive of the Open Source Development Labs.



Stuart Cohen, chief executive, OSDL

The legacy of SCO's lawsuits is the scrutiny that Linux code base received, said Stuart Cohen, who, as chief executive of the OSDL, leads one of the most influential organizations in the Linux world. He spoke Monday night at Queen Mary University of London.

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"There was a lot of due diligence around the world with people looking at the code and looking at software stacks, and all this work validated that there was nothing there--no risk, no issue," Cohen said.

"The SCO court case ended up on every Web site, in every newspaper and every

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magazine. Everybody had to do due diligence. You could not be a CTO or CIO and not do due diligence in 2003-2004 when SCO was suing end users.

"And look at what happened with the market share: People did not say, 'Let's wait until this thing is over.' If anything it accelerated the use of Linux, so it is one of the best things that ever happened to the operating system."

Cohen, whose organization employs Linus Torvalds and lead kernel maintainer Andrew Morton, also said that the SCO litigation is "nearly dead now."

SCO filed suit against IBM in 2003, alleging that the computing giant had misappropriated SCO trade secrets and code copyrights in its work dealing with Linux and with IBM's flavor of Unix, AIX. SCO is seeking US\$5 billion from Big Blue.


SCO followed up with suits against Red Hat and Novell and later began threatening to take its own customers to court unless they agreed to pay licence fees for the Linux intellectual property that SCO claims to own.


The federal judge overseeing the SCO Group's suit against IBM recently thwarted an IBM attempt to defang SCO's claims. Still, the judge said that he found SCO's argument "puzzling."

SCO faces mounting financial woes, with falling revenue falling and a possible Nasdaq delisting in the cards.

Dan Ilett of ZDNet UK reported from London.

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