

# Le Figaro: Red Hat Linux Across the Publication

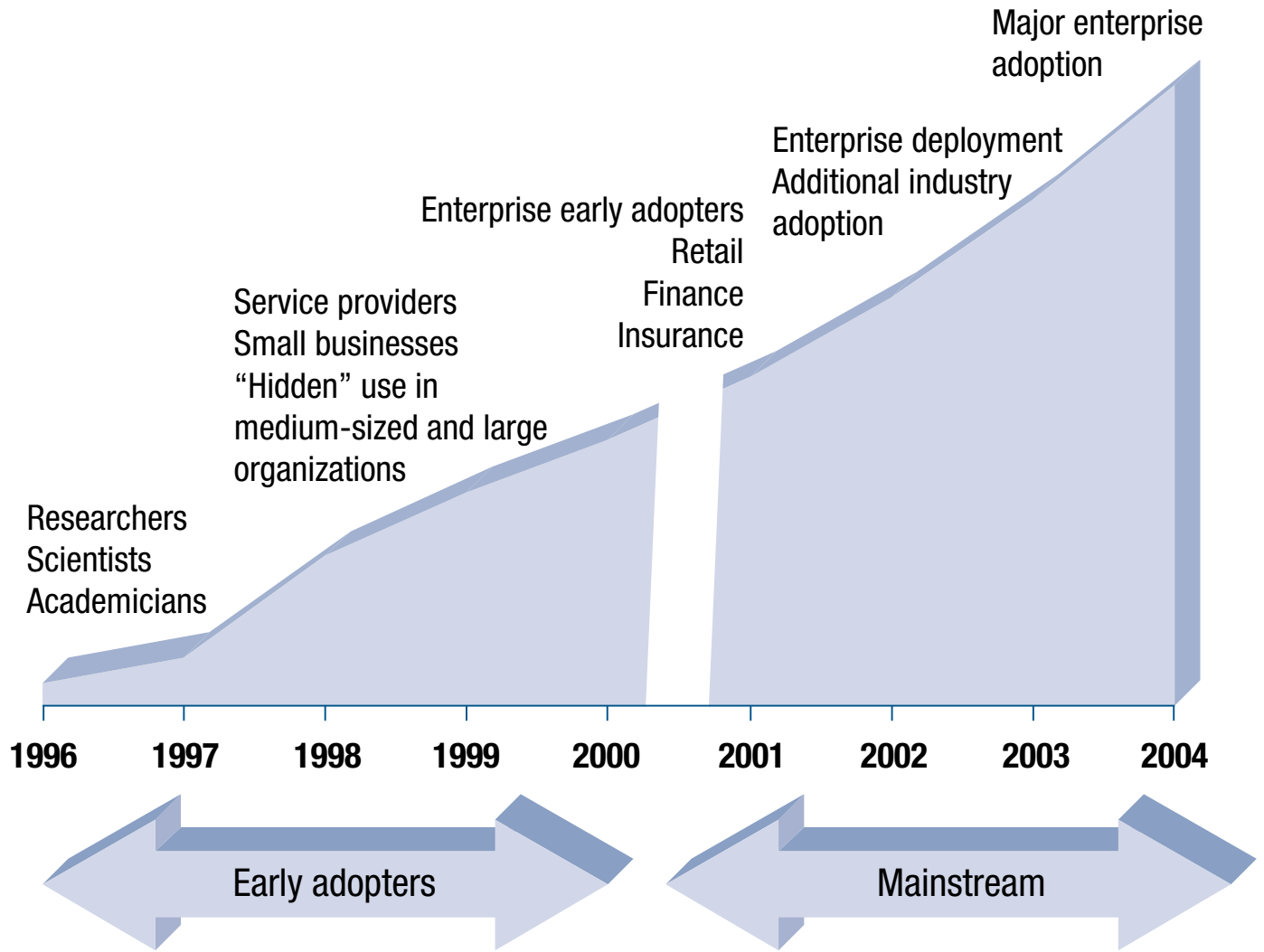
Vital Statistics	
Daily circulation	1,380,000 readers
Scope of implementation	Enhance communication and email system
Benefits of Red Hat Linux to Le Figaro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The operating system mirrors the company — it never stops</li><li>• Stability/reliability</li><li>• Scalability</li><li>• Ease of use and implementation</li><li>• Low cost at implementation and in support</li><li>• No need for technical support and maintenance</li></ul>

## Background

With a daily circulation approaching 1.4 million readers, *Le Figaro* has been one of France's leading newspapers since 1826. *Le Figaro* also publishes a host of magazines, such as *Le Figaro Economie*, *Madame Figaro*, and *TV Magazine*. *Le Figaro* coordinates its editorial content and subscriber bases with hundreds of reporters and a multitude of staff across a complex intranet, and it constantly faces crushing 24 x 7 deadlines. Given that the presses can never stop, the company has been a premier candidate and showcase for Red Hat Linux.

In 1996, *Le Figaro* installed Red Hat Linux 4.2 to create a stable, reliable, companywide system. "At the beginning there were two servers: one FTP server and one mail server," says Christian Paillé, *Le Figaro*'s director of information systems. "Today we've reinforced the equipment and have numerous servers running Red Hat Linux versions 6.2 and 7.0. I chose the Linux solution because I have a strong tendency to prefer and appreciate open systems."

## Linux Enters the Mainstream



Source: IDC, 2001

“Something else that I appreciate when I explore an operating system is to have the source code that goes with it. That’s invaluable. This is something you can’t find anywhere else. When something isn’t customized as we want it, it’s very nice to have the source code.”

## Implementation

Coherent Light, a Paris-based Internet service provider (ISP) with software engineering expertise, is assisting Le Figaro in its deployment of Red Hat Linux. The ISP uses its telecommunications background as the base of its work, deploying Red Hat Linux across Le Figaro’s intranet, and adds its engineering resources to develop applications such as a new mail system exploiting Red Hat Linux 7.0.

Coherent Light President Laurent Mahieux says of Le Figaro, “At first Mr. Paillé wanted to deploy what amounted to a small, private ISP. Since we are a small ISP, we offered to build their Internet and intranet system from the ground up. We handled the telecommunications, setting up seven Red Hat Linux servers: two redundant email servers, two redundant FTP and intranet Web servers, a remote access server with eight modems for dial-in access, and two Sparc5s acting as primary and secondary DNS.”

Le Figaro quickly evolved its system, upgrading other operating systems to Red Hat Linux. “We now run 15 Red Hat Linux systems, mostly on IBM Netfinity servers,” Mahieux says. Nearly 1,500 people use Le Figaro’s systems, which handle 700 onsite mailboxes, some remote with T1 access and some using remote dial-up through either 56K/ISDN modems, broadband, or GSM data links. Red Hat Linux worked effectively in an environment with different servers and operating systems and across servers of different classes.

The initial implementation was relatively easy. Overall, three people worked just two days a week for eight weeks to implement the servers. IDC believes this is an extremely fast deployment for a company of Le Figaro’s size.

## Use of Red Hat Linux 7.0 in the Email Systems

While most of Le Figaro uses Red Hat Linux 6.2, Coherent Light has upgraded the newspaper’s email systems to version 7.0. With nominal programming, Le Figaro’s email systems now offer an ideal combination of granular and global controls.

At the micro level, Le Figaro can set parameters for each employee’s email, for instance, to filter out attached JPEG and EXE files to minimize viruses. (Many viruses, including the infamous “I Love You” and “Melissa,” are transmitted within these types of files.) At the same time, on the global

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level, certain users, such as members of the production department who need and receive such files constantly, can input settings to remove the JPEG and EXE restrictions.

Le Figaro can set email parameters very quickly and flexibly and with or without user intervention, thanks to a PostgreSQL back end, an SQL database included in Red Hat Linux 7.0 that enables this development. As a critical resulting benefit, the entire system was implemented without any interruption of email service to any of its 1,500 users. Le Figaro did not have to program each PC individually and, most importantly, did not stop the presses.

Also, as the newspaper adds users, the system will scale easily and almost automatically. This scalability accommodates everything from new hires to melding additional divisions, such as one of Le Figaro's magazines, into the same mail system as the newspaper. In turn, this will foster greater collaboration between the publications.

## Benefits of Red Hat Linux

“Red Hat Linux servers are excellent. They don't crash, they are easy to install, and they don't require any support or maintenance. There is nothing more to ask of a server than what Red Hat has provided with its original Linux application,” says Mahieux.

One of the most obvious benefits of Red Hat Linux is its free licenses. More important than nominal start-up fees, however, is the fact that Linux's stability and reliability save Le Figaro the cost of having an IT department maintain these servers. The systems run virtually unattended. People are sometimes fixated on the nicety of no license fees, but the very low operating costs are more significant, and Red Hat Linux allows Le Figaro to avoid using extra IT-related staff and consultants that the implementation of other systems typically require.

**“We have gone over 300 days without a crash.”**

There are several reasons why both Paillé and Mahieux chose Red Hat Linux. “Red Hat is really very, very good,” Paillé says. Adds Mahieux, “At the time, we were using Red Hat Linux for our own systems for both the ease of installation and availability on the Sparc platform. Since we operate both x86 and Sparc systems, we definitely needed to have a consistent system set up. Red Hat Linux was a good choice for these two points.”

The product's ease of use is also a strong selling point. “The thing I appreciate most about Red Hat Linux is the simplicity of its installation and administration,” Paillé says. “The system immediately recognizes the configuration and — voila! — it's very easy for network administrators to remotely and directly configure Le Figaro's network and users with secure shell connections. This is not the case with many other systems. It greatly facilitates the growing numbers of roaming reporters, home-based telecommuters, and many other segments of remote users.”

Mahieux points out several other key Red Hat Linux benefits. “We enjoy the stability as well as the updates. Also, our need for tech support is nominal.” Le Figaro outsources all technical work to Coherent Light’s three-person engineer staff. IDC believes that the ability to completely outsource an implementation of this size to three people is remarkable. Foremost, however, is the Red Hat name. “Recognition is useful when trying to explain to nonspecialists why we chose the Linux platform,” says Mahieux. Indeed, IDC research shows that Red Hat holds the majority of Linux market share and is taking territory from all competitors in the Linux market.

Even more vital is reliability. “The high reliability of the Linux OS is of paramount importance for Le Figaro,” Mahieux says. “Internet services, and, most important of all, email services, are a mission-critical tool. Printing a newspaper every day is about being on time. System failure is not an option in this business.”

Thanks to Red Hat, Le Figaro is now able to do more with its Linux system than it could with any other operating system. “They [the servers] run unattended forever,” Mahieux says. “The only reboots we ever have are scheduled kernel updates. We have gone over 300 days without a crash. We also enjoy the quick security updates. This is quite important for a large company like Le Figaro.”

As a testament to the strength of Red Hat Linux, Coherent Light installed Red Hat Linux on its own servers as well as on Le Figaro’s. “They run unattended and cause us no trouble, allowing us to use our time in a more productive and cost-effective way,” Mahieux says. “I believe that every company would rather spend its IT budget on new services or products than on running existing services. Red Hat Linux allows us to keep the cost of running our servers extremely low and to keep our service availability extremely high.”

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## Lessons Learned and Future Plans

The power of Red Hat Linux will allow both Le Figaro and Coherent Light to continue to build upon their use of this operating system. The newspaper expects to upgrade all of its Linux servers to Red Hat Linux 7.0 within two to three months, affording them several advantages of Red Hat Linux, such as massive scalability and the tight integration of a heterogeneous legacy network.

While Coherent Light is focusing on Le Figaro, it also sees benefits beyond the publisher. For example, Mahieux is pitching a major French banking institution. Like Le Figaro, the bank has more than 1,000 users, 20 buildings across a wide area network, a need for better email as a starting critical application, and a demand for 100% uptime as a goal that seems merely hypothetical right now. Mahieux believes many other companies, vastly different in industry and structure from Le Figaro, can benefit from Red Hat Linux.

A case study sponsored by Red Hat



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