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The Official Ubuntu Book by: Kyle Rankin, Benjamin Mako Hill. Published August 18, 2010 by Prentice Hall 590pgs.

The Official Ubuntu Server Book (OUSB) is a comprehensive guide to that aims not just to induct the newbie but to also have something to offer the battle-hardened senior sysadmin within its near 600 pages. I first became interested in reading this book from my reading and review of the Official Ubuntu Book (OUB). I have been interested in setting up my own web and mail server for some time, and reading the OUB really put into perspective how adept I had become with linux in general; leading me to take the plunge with this book. The book is the collaborative effort of not just the principle authors, Kyle Rankin and Benjamin Mako Hill but also the Ubuntu server team themselves. Both the principal authors have ample linux server and writing experience. Kyle Rankin is the author of some four other linux books as well as a regular contributor to Linux Journal, PC Magazine, and TechTarget. Benjamin Mako Hill was one of Ubuntu's supporting company, Canonical's first employees, and the main author of the OUB. The book itself takes a pragmatic approach to servers and anywhere that Ubuntu offers software to make administration easier and less time consuming it is included with ample explanation. The OUSB is also organized in a fairly pragmatic way. The first few chapters lay a foundation to install the Ubuntu server and navigate the system even for first timers but after that chapters are organized by specific server topics such as security and monitoring. These subsequent chapters include dedicated chapters to elements common to Ubuntu servers, highlighting web and mail server's

functions, software, and configuration. Other chapters focus on Security with a focus on sudo, firewall, forensics, and Ubuntu's own AppArmor software. Included also are chapters on virtualization, fault tolerance, troubleshooting, recovery, and my favorite cool tips and tricks. The chapters themselves are written in a tutorial style leading readers through practical steps to install and configure a working and personalized system. In all though the command line can be somewhat daunting to newcomers the book does a good job of breaking it down into easy steps and thoroughly explaining the task. The book is somewhat lacking in illustrations, one finds them few and far between, however, there is good reason for this. There is no GUI for the Ubuntu server by default. The book does include copious well formatted command line instructions and steps that clearly delineate processes for beginning sysadmins. A physical copy of the book includes two versions of Ubuntu Server 10.04 for both 32 and 64-bit systems as well as pointing users towards locations to obtain newer versions of Ubuntu.

In describing this book I would like to make an analogy. The book includes an introduction that is so comprehensive it nearly becomes laborious. It includes a short biography of Mark Shuttleworth the South African founder of Ubuntu, it includes an extensive description of Ubuntu's founding meetings, it includes a somewhat lengthy and descriptive section on the linguistic meaning of the word Ubuntu and its origins, it includes an in depth account of the formation of Canonical, the company Shuttleworth founded to support Ubuntu, it includes a description of the Ubuntu Community, its philosophical goals and promises, it includes Ubuntu's code of conduct describing not just the why of Ubuntu, but the how, it includes a deep listing and explanation of the technical goals of Ubuntu, it includes explanations on the sundrie differences between

Canonical and the Ubuntu Foundation, it includes a detailed history of the Ubuntu server, and it does so over the course of twenty eight pages, engaging in such detailed and minute description as to top all other descriptions to date, even by far the OUB itself, filling the reader to the brim, literally with information so clear and voluminous as to defy description, almost, nearly as long winded and self indulgent as this run on sentence. And thats just the intro. The step by step commandline interactions of setting up and working with the Ubuntu server are equally clear and well researched. There could not be a better resource for someone beginning to engage with the Ubuntu server.

There were really quite a few things I found in the book that were interest that I did not know being a beginner and a bit of a noob about servers. Firstly, Ubuntu offers a dynamic message of the day that allows sysadmins to broadcast important messages to system user. This dynamic setup allows the messages to be displayed upon login to users. Having never seen such a message before in my own use of Ubuntu I had no idea this was possible. Ubuntu also offers a schedule policy for deploying new virtual machines (VMs) to cluster nodes. The default policy is roundrobin, which means that the cluster master selects one node after the other until the it finds a node that can run a new VM. The other option is greedy: Place and run the VM on the first node that can run it. Another option is powersave. In powersave mode, the cluster nodes not running VMs are put to sleep to save power and VMs will be placed onto awake nodes first followed by sleeping nodes; awesome. Very interesting also about VM's is over provisioning. The default policy in deploying VMs to cluster nodes is one VM per CPU core. This might prove limiting to those who have lower CPU requirements for the virtual machine-bound applications. Nodes with Quad-Core CPUs can, by default, run 8

VMs but boosting certain parameters will increase that density to 16 or more. Having some hefty hardware myself that I would be interested in leveraging as a server this gets my blood pumping. PowerNap is something that interested me because of its energy conservation ability. PowerNap is a configurable daemon that runs at a specified interval that executes an action or actions when a list of monitored processes in the process table is missing for a contiguous period. It's described as "sort of a screensaver for servers." PowerNap has two configuration files, action and config. The action file instructs the pownap daemon on how to handle a situation according to the config file settings. Possible actions are: suspend, hibernate, power off, send a message via email or SMS or execute some other script or executable that you designate. Keeping an eye on the server and knowing what kind of traffic and power I am looking at would be pretty keen. Finally something simple, learning how to create find and exec commands. Often one needs to locate all the files within a directory and all its subdirectories with a certain attribute and run some command on them. Just a bit of Bash, but something I didn't know. In general as to how any of this intensive jargon is useful to me, I personally see that much as I dislike it, public education is under constant attack, apparently people would rather the next generation did not have knowledge. I can easily see in the span of my educational career that a secure job as an educator will be a thing of the past. Being able to take my own infrastructure and tools with me in the "free market" education system will be quite an asset. Being my own sysadmin gives me mobility and negotiability.

The OVSF is a warm and clear learning environment that is suitable to a wide array of readers, but clearly only those interested in the actual creation and maintenance of a server system. It is beyond my ability to give constructive criticism of

most of the technical aspects of this tomb, but of it's writing and organization I could not give it higher marks for turning something so complex and dense into something so accomplishable. Anyone willing and interested in learning about this sort technical adventure would be well off to start with the Official Ubuntu Server Book.