

# Sysadministrivia

## Linux, Lagers, and Late Nights

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# S5E5: "User? I've Never Met 'Er pt. 1"

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### Log

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Quicklisten:

In this episode we talk about complaints a user has about their IT department.

We also talk about desk/office equipment and the Raspberry Pi 4B far too much (despite not being sponsored for either).

- Just the Tip
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## Just the Tip

- Paden talks about grep.

## Notes

Starts at **26m13s**.

I was drinking ice water. Paden was drinking water. Jthan was drinking Grolsch Premium Pilsner.

- User issues with their IT departments
  - "Users don't have admin rights on their work laptop."
    - The real issue is users need access to maintain, manage, and foster **their own workflow**. This user needed admin authorization to delete shortcuts/icons from their desktop. Yes, this extends to maintaining a "zen" desktop - organization should be left to the user.
    - This may be due to an over-restrictive GPO without proper exclusion rules (or due to a draconian corporate policy).
    - (See Errata - turns out there was a likely possibility for this cause!)
  - "I have to add my own network shares."
    - The user's IT department seems to have **no** automation in their workstation machine onboarding, and instead give a poorly-written document of steps for the user themselves to do. **Do not make your users do your job for you**. Making that machine **intranet-ready** is not the user's responsibility, it is yours.
  - "The IT department's knowledgebase is terrible."
    - Documentation is **very important** for users. Hire or contract out a technical writer if you need to.
    - This documentation also needs to be **accessible**. If a user can't find documentation easily, it's pointless to have it in the first place. If a user needs to be technically proficient to **use** your knowledgebase, they don't **need** the knowledgebase.
  - "Tier 1 support is trash."
    - A bad Tier 1 will cause more work than it alleviates. They may not need to know everything, but they need to be able to help 80-90% of users (the most common problems). They're there to filter out common issues and triage escalations so higher escalations can focus on more time-consuming tasks, research, debugging, etc.
    - Two things can fix this:
      - Better Tier 1 staff
      - Tier 1 should be "people persons" - they should be well-suited to calming down users so a good coherent triage can be made if the ticket needs to be escalated.

- Opposite of an earlier issue is **overly-complex** documentation.
  - How do you gauge the competency of the user?
    - If we go too basic/simple, the user feels offended like we're over-explaining.
    - If we go too complex, we risk losing the user's attention and/or alienating them.
- Both deter the user from contacting the helpdesk in future cases...
  - Which leads them to try to fix the problem themselves. This is **not their responsibility**, it takes time away from their actual role, **and** can cause damage to your ecosystem.
- If you use acronyms, give the full term with a link to more information about that term.
- If you use technical jargon, explain the process/procedure **and purpose** with linked or footnoted information.
- Again, this comes down to methodology of good technical writing/documentation. We may do an episode on this because it is **so** important for our industry. A good way to avoid needing to make assumptions about a user's technical competency level is to approach as if they're competent, but provide very accessible resources and references they can follow to "bring them up to speed" in case they aren't.
- I was part of a good mini-thread on this on Twitter recently.
- "Frequent intrusive updates."
  - Updates are good! They're important! "Patch your shit." **But...**
  - It should **not** interrupt a user's work.
  - This can be alleviated by off-use scheduled reboots.
  - This can be an issue for people who shut off their machines when they go home...
    - But there's WoL for that.
    - This gets especially tricky, however, with work laptops off-site (especially now with the COVID-19 quarantines). We recommend encouraging users to leave their laptops turned on (and auto-suspend disabled), and **explain why** this benefits them (e.g. "You will no longer need to reboot your laptop in the middle of your work since we can reboot it for you overnight after updates").
  - Edit a let me know while editing that: "I am no admin obviously but to answer, the update options are a newer feature; in the update settings you can tell it your active hours for it to not do a restart with an extra option to let it automatically adjust said hours based on tracking the computers average times of usage." That feature is documented here (with screenshots here).
- "(For those in accounting/billing/etc.) No numpad on keyboard."
  - For users in departments that deal almost **exclusively** with numbers, it is *painful* to use a keyboard with only the number row.
  - External numpad peripherals are pretty affordable and should be easily budgeted for.
  - Ask your users a very specific question: "What will help you do your job better?" We have no idea what our users need unless we ask because our workload, tasks, and roles are **entirely** different than theirs.

## 15 Clams

In this segment, Jthan shares with you a little slice of life. The title is a reference to this video. (2m16s in)

Starts at **1h04m16s**.

Jthan talks about building a desk (lol). He didn't say on the recording (because he didn't know yet), but he ordered the wrong height for his desk's legs and his chair doesn't reach (**lol**). So he's going to have some desk space.

As a result, he's thinking of using an RPi4B as his daily driver desktop for work.

He also said he was going to use FreeBSD on his Raspberry Pi 4 just to see how long he lasts (spoiler alert: the image wouldn't even boot for him so the challenge/experiment was a failure before it even started). He went with Arch Linux ARM (which is what I run on mine).

He also wants to know why people use/like BSD.

## Errata

- For those dying to know, like Jthan and Paden apparently were, this is my chair.
- I was **way** off. At the time of writing these notes, the world population is **7.8 billion**, not 7.3 billion.
- Jthan makes really stupid tweets.
- The ethernet authentication I was thinking of is 802.1X. You can find the IEEE standard here, with an update published in February of this year here that extends it to cover both LANs and MANs.
- We talked about technical debt in S5E1.
- Thanks to a listener, `_mikhailbot`, turns out there's a likely cause of the desktop icons thing: a shared system-wide desktop folder ("Public Desktop")! It certainly makes sense users wouldn't have access to modify that. It is recommended to keep this folder empty or only place icons/shortcuts in it that are guaranteed to not have duplicates created by users.

## Music

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**Categories** Season Five

## Comments

There are currently no comments on this article.

