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Oracle to finish Linux makeover this year

Last modified: May 26, 2004, 11:22 AM PDT

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NEW YORK--Oracle will finish switching its 9,000-person in-house programming staff to Linux by the end of 2004, the database powerhouse said Wednesday.

In October, the company finished the Linux transition for the 5,000 programmers of its Oracle Applications software. Now the transformation has begun for those who work on the database product, said [Wim Coekaerts](#), director of Linux engineering, in an interview at the CeBit trade show here.

"By the end of the year, (Linux) is our core platform," Coekaerts said. Oracle is switching because Linux systems are less expensive and faster, he added.

Oracle's Linux efforts have caught on with customers, according to Gartner market data released Tuesday. In 2002, IBM led the market for database software on Linux, with \$67 million in sales to Oracle's \$45 million. But in 2003, Oracle jumped into first place with \$207 million in sales to IBM's \$85 million.

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For its own development work, Oracle is switching from Sun Microsystems computers, he said. The new systems are provided by multiple computer makers and use several versions of Linux from the top two sellers of the open-source operating system, Red Hat and Novell.

It's not often that Oracle makes such a change. The last time it did so was in the early 1990s, moving from Digital Equipment's VMS to Sun's Solaris, he said.

Oracle isn't alone in embracing the open-source movement. [Dell is switching internal servers](#) to Linux, while Novell is dropping Windows in favor of its own [Linux desktop software](#) for PCs.

Windows is the most widely used server operating system; according to Gartner, 35.1 percent of the \$11.8 billion in servers sold in the first quarter of 2004 used Windows. But Oracle couldn't use Windows as its main developer environment because software written for Windows isn't portable to other operating systems, Coekaerts said.

Oracle is a major Linux backer. In addition to spending lavishly on its "unbreakable Linux" marketing campaign, it employs 14 developers who work on the kernel, or core, of Linux. The company helps fund work such as [Red Hat security certifications](#).

At the same time, Oracle faces threats from the open-source realm. The [MySQL database is gaining in popularity](#), while Computer Associates International this week announced a plan to [make its Ingres database open-source software](#).

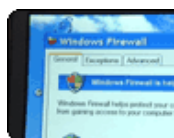
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