

Fossetcon 2015 Orlando Florida Lake Buena Vista Hilton 19 – 21 November 2015

Ambassadors Report for Andrew Ward (award3535) and Julie Ward (jward78)



The event is the second annual event in Orlando and the surrounding areas. The Free/Libre and open source software expo/technology conference (FOSSETCON) was based upon free open and diverse expressions within the community. The events main focus was directed on the open and free aspect of software and technology. The event's organizer Mr. Bryan Smith is a very enthusiastic and dedicated individual that strived for nothing less in the conference.

We arrived in the area early Friday morning on the 20th to set up for the Expo portion of the conference. The first day comprised of training and talk sessions without any distractions from expo

booths. After checking in with the registration booth, Bryan and I discussed the expected attendance and what he expected from the attendees this year. We also discussed the advantages of this conference over the larger and more expensive conventions that are currently the standard. He had some good points. We also discussed why the venue was changed from the previous year's event. There were some complaints about the amount of time for meal breaks and the availability of other dining areas outside of the hotels available facilities. Bryan relocated the event to a more fluid area with access to many varieties and closer to popular attractions for after hour's entertainment. A wise decision in my opinion to move the event to the Hilton, everything you could think of for foods was a 5 minute walk to a variety of restaurants and 10 minute drive to even more.



We had the booth set up prior to 8 a.m. and were ready to roll. I would like to throw out a thank you to Ruth Suehle for dropping off some extra swag. It made the booth more attractive to those who really had an interest in the product and those who weren't but would listen to pitch. It is fact that the more appealing your table is, the more you will draw towards it. People in general will not visit your area if you have nothing to draw them in. By placing a few different items on the table sure made a difference in who appeared in front of you. I could tell just from the simple fact that those who were interested in Fedora or who were just interested in getting free items, but here is where the separation of might and means began. In order to get the more eye appealing items you had to answer a trivia question or historic question regarding

Fedora, and if you showed any general interest in the product, you would be successful in receiving the swag. The other usual items were available and were also popular with the Fedora enthusiasts, but it was the more eye appealing items that brought the crowd to the table. Again thank you Ruth Suehle.

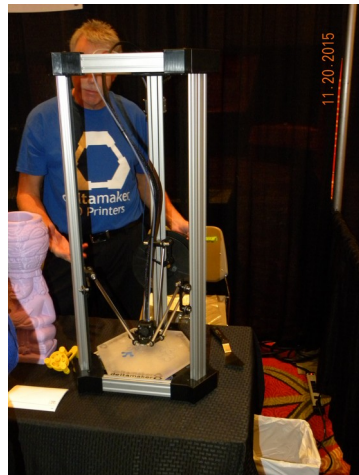


Once the day began, the first sessions got underway and the expo area became quiet. Gave us a few minutes to restock the items and get some coffee. There were quite a lot of new faces this year than from the previous year and the repeats as well. We went through an entire box of media the four hours of the event, then an additional half a box the rest of the afternoon. Our success was not gauged alone by the amount of media disturbed but by inquiring the customers about the product and if they currently use Fedora. We were quite surprised on how many have already downloaded and currently use Fedora. Two thirds of the individuals we talked to were already using Fedora and was absolutely satisfied with the product and the vision of where we were headed. Of course you always have those hardline individuals that will only use what flavor of Linux they are on currently. We did in fact meet a few of those individuals that wouldn't even come towards the booth. So when approached, they would either tell us they were not interested or they would make statements of why should I change from what I am running. We did have one individual that approached me on Friday that asked me tell me why I should change, and show me the difference from Ubuntu. I asked one question right back, how do you feel about technical/customer support if you have a problem, and how easy is it to get a question answered when you need it? This person's interest I now had. How much documentation and resources do you have with the other distribution? How many different desktops do they support? How many specialized models do they have? His reply was there were only interested in the cellular device issues. After a few minutes I had this person looking at our webpages, documentation, help sections, and lists of individuals willing to help at a moment's notice. He walked away from the table without a word and walked down to the other table (Ubuntu) and spent



about 5 minutes there. He then walked back and said, ok you sold me, and may I take the media. I replied with yes of course as many as you would like, and then handed the young man a T shirt, USB Key, and one of the few remaining ball caps. He smiled and said thank you. And just before he left I also showed the Labs directory to him as well. He was quite impressed and said that he did not know those existed. This seems to be the theme I have noticed from Conference/Festivals that at least a few individuals have left what they believed in for many years because of either a lack of support or willingness to grow with the times expanding (leading as well) with their own distributions. The role we as ambassadors carry is critical to the success of Fedora in communicating with customers and the market.

As the day went on, we continued to have a steady stream of faces at the booth as well as some repeat customers asking more questions and sharing their experiences with Fedora. By the end of the first day I had thought the accomplishments were excellent with respect to introducing Fedora to new users and hopefully those who were not quite convinced to at least try the media.



Starting the second expo day, the booth was ready to go the next morning at 9 a.m., although there was a schedule change that the expo area was not going to open until 10 a.m. we were ready non the less. As the second day began I expected to see more attendance than the previous day's events. We saw a lot of the same faces we saw the day before, and just a few new faces in the crowd. There was two individuals unexpectedly asked if they could get involved in the project. We gladly took their information and I will be contacting them shortly on how and what they are interest is within the project. One individual is from the Miami area and got wind of this event and made the 5 hour trip up to attend the conference, and was an avid Fedora user since FC1. This individual also stated that there is nothing for Linux users in their area other than the south Florida LUG in the area. There was no advertisement for FOSSETCON in the area as well. He is from Miami and can't wait to get involved with the project. As the day moved along the expo hall became less populated and gave us the chance to really talk with the event organizer. We focused in on a very sensitive subject of attendance and the LUGs. The event had invited several LUGs from Florida and Georgia. One point that was discussed is that there were some LUGs that declined to even think about recommending the event with their users. That is a trend that I saw in the

Jacksonville Florida LUG. Some of the chairs of the group didn't think that any other Linux outside of what they were using was even considered. The trends of LUGs losing members are directly related to diversity and open minded individuals lack thereof. There seems to be a changing trend, new leaders are getting involved and diversifying. I in fact saw this same response with a few hard lined users, it is not what they are using, and no one should use it around them or within the group. In my experience I have tried just about everything out there, and settled on the one that suited me the best, not short changing everyone else.



As the second day began to wind down, the crowd became smaller within the expo hall. I began to look at what was left for media, shirts, and the amount of items I gave away over the weekend. Since most of the people we talked to downloaded the media on a regular basis, we had given away 250 pieces of media, approximately 40 USB Keys, stickers and case badges were too numerous to count, and the T-shirts we only had about 5 left.

During the event I also asked individuals if they would fill out a voluntary questionnaire with a few general questions and a few specific. Most declined but it did get a few to fill them out.



To summarize the event from the view at the expo booths attendance was twice the amount from the previous year's event and a pleasant attitude of all staff members. The feedback on talks/training was also very positive as well as informative. Many of the comments from the keynotes were also impressive. I think that FOSSETCON will continue to grow with time and popularity. The event has the possibility of great things and larger attendance just needs a little larger advertisement/information dissemination. I plan to attend next year's event as well.