Olsen Communication

Charles Olsen
charles@charlesolsen.com (832) 819-1701

Thank you for your interest in my writing services.

Maybe you asked for this information kit out of curiosity. Some people do — especially if they've never hired a freelance copywriter before.

But, more likely, you need a writer who can get your sales and marketing projects started — and finished — quickly and efficiently. Someone who can help your customers understand that you're not trying to "sell" them on a product. Rather, that you care about them, and that you are there to help.

Most people don't buy from businesses — they buy from other people. People that they know, like, and trust. When you create your copy and content about them, speaking to their challenges, needs, and interests, they open up to you — and to your products and services. They buy from you because they realize you "get" them. That's where I can help.

Whatever your reason for calling or writing, you have questions for a writer before you hire him. I'll try to answer a few of those questions here.

WHAT ARE YOUR QUALIFICATIONS AS A COPYWRITER?

I understand your customers.

I have spent 20 years talking to people who use computers and software. I've done help desk support for software users on multiple platforms — mainframe computers, PCs, tablets, and phones.

I have also written articles and training manuals discussing how to use software — from short tutorials addressing a single facet of the software, to complete classes teaching how to fully use the system. And I have taught classes on how to use software.

In my experience as a class instructor, and doing help desk support, I have answered thousands of questions from hundreds of users. I understand the kinds of questions they have, and the problems they encounter.

Many people are afraid of the things they don't understand. And while nearly everyone uses computers, a lot of people don't actually understand them. And they really hate it when others talk down to them, or make them feel inadequate or even foolish about things they don't know.

I understand how to talk people in a way that does not make them feel intimidated. They learn about computers and software in ways that make them feel good about learning, rather than feel bad about what they don't know.

As a graduate of several highly specialized AWAI courses, I have advanced training in copywriting. AWAI (the American Writers and Artists Inc.) is the industry leader in copywriter training.

The attached material will give you the full story.

WHAT KINDS OF ASSIGNMENTS DO YOU HANDLE?

I cover the full spectrum. I write sales letters and emails, web pages, press releases, articles or blog posts, case studies, and white papers. I've included a complete list of services in this information packet.

Clients appreciate the fact that I can sit down with marketing managers, sales people, and techies and speak their language.

WHAT DOES IT COST TO HIRE YOU FOR A PROJECT?

For any copywriting assignment, just let me know what you have in mind and I'll quote you a price. The enclosed "Schedule of Estimated Fees" gives typical prices for a variety of different projects.

WHO ARE YOUR CLIENTS … AND WHAT DO THEY SAY ABOUT YOUR COPY?

A list of clients and a testimonial sheet are enclosed.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE YOU TO WRITE MY COPY?

Ideally I like to have 2-3 weeks to work on your copy. That gives me the time to research, polish, edit, and revise until I'm happy with every word.

However, I realize you can't always wait that long. So if the job is a rush, just indicate the date by which you must receive the copy. If I take on the job, I guarantee

that you will have the copy on your desk by this deadline date — or sooner. No matter what the deadline, the copy I submit to you will be right. You can depend on it.

WHAT HAPPENS IF WE WANT YOU TO REVISE THE COPY?

Just tell me what you want improved and what the changes are, and I'll make them … fast. There is NO CHARGE for rewriting. Revisions are included in the flat fee we've agreed to for the assignment, provided they are assigned within 30 days of your receipt of the copy and are not based on a change in the assignment made after copy has been submitted.

Most clients are pleased and enthusiastic about my copy when they receive it. But if you are not 100 percent satisfied, I will revise the copy according to your specific guidelines … and at my expense.

HOW DO I ORDER FROM YOU?

Putting me to work for you is easy. Simply pick up the phone and give me a call at (832) 819-1701 … or send me an email at charles@charlesolsen.com. You can tell me all about your project and together we can flesh out the details.

When you give me the go-ahead, I'll write the assignment for you. You will receive your copy on or before the deadline date. And remember: it is guaranteed to please you.

So … why not try my service for your next direct response letter, feature article, press release, ad, email, fundraising letter, or brochure? You'll be delighted with the results.

Sincerely,

Charles Olsen

P.S. If you have an immediate need call me right now at (832) 819-1701 or email the details to charles@charlesolsen.com. I will gladly discuss your job and provide a cost estimate at no charge. And there is no obligation to buy.

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What Others Say About Charles Olsen

"He is writing about people; what they need, what helps them"

I have known Charles for many years, and I have interacted with him as a writer for much of that time. I've learned that when Charles writes, whether ad copy, technical writing, or fiction, he is really writing about people; what they need, what helps them, what entertains them. He treasures people that he meets as individuals of worth, his long-time comrades as well as those he just met. As a writer, he is filling their needs, assisting their work, or making them look at things in new ways. He attains his goals largely by seeing that others are achieving their own. And for Charles, that is done through writing.

- Peter Norris DDS, family and cosmetic dentist

"Delivers on time"

Charles is one of the most talented editors I have ever worked with. He can make my text sound significantly better, but at the same time keep my voice. In my professional career I have dealt with many writers and editors over the years and Charles is the best I have worked with, he does a great job writing and editing. To top that off he delivers on time, which in my experience is a rare thing. You will be able to schedule your work based on his promise of delivery time.

- Scott Buckel, photographer and consultant

"I highly recommend him for his analysis and writing skills."

Charles effectively used his knowledge gained from managing the Help Desk to create and conduct training for software, hardware, and business practices for the Technology group at Litton Loan Servicing as well as on a limited basis the enterprise. We worked closely in conducting SOP training of the 50+ business contributors to the company policies and procedures project. I highly recommend him for his analysis and writing skills.

- Crystal Johnson, Marketing Supervisor

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Clients and Experience

All Smiles
Practice of family and cosmetic dentist Peter Norris

Scott Buckel Photography
Nature, Wildlife, and Travel Fine Art Photography

Litton Loan Servicing
Sub-prime mortgage loan servicing

Resource Development Company
Global leader in developing innovative learning solutions

Texas Microsystems Inc.
Manufacturer of industrial personal computers and servers

Radisys
Manufacturer of industrial personal computers and servers

Houston Area League of PC Users
Educational and Support Group for PC Users

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Getting To Know Charles Olsen

Charles has been writing and publishing for over 20 years. Much of his early writing consisted of tutorials and product reviews published in various computer magazines. Print magazines don't have the immediacy we're accustomed to now with blogs and comments, so it was important to anticipate all of the questions a reader might ask and make sure they were already answered.

When personal computers first hit the market, they were strange and intimidating. PCs seemed complex to many new users, but Charles learned to expand their knowledge in a way that was simple and easy to understand.

He continued to develop his communication skills by spending years working on PC help desks. Many users were afraid of their PCs and the software they had to use for their jobs.

A lot of calls came in because a user had made a mistake or simply didn't understand what they were doing, and sometimes they were even afraid that the mistake could cost them their job. At times like this, it was important to listen carefully and fully understand the problem, then provide verbal or written instructions that were easy to understand and follow.

Even when his job was Help Desk, he was often selling products. While supporting the software developed and published by Resource Development Company, he also took calls from prospects who were considering the programs. Charles learned how a good product can almost sell itself when you understand what the customers really need, and know how to highlight the benefits of the products.

Charles received much of his writer's training from American Writers and Artists Inc. (AWAI), the world's leading resource for copywriting training.

For more information, Charles can be reached at charles@charlesolsen.com or (832) 819-1701.

Schedule of Estimated Fees

Service Description	*Estimated Investment*
Sales/Fundraising letter	$1250-$4,000+
Direct-mail package, lead generation	$2,000-$4,000+
Direct-mail package – mail order	$2,000-$6,000
Brochure	$500-$1,000/page
Newsletter	$450-$1,000/page
Article or Advertorial	$1-$1.50/word
Press Release (1-2 pages)	$250-$750
Website – home page	$1,000-$2,500
Website – other pages	$500-$1,000/page
Email, short copy	$500-$2,000
Email, long copy	$1,500-$4,000
E-zine ad	$450-$600
Landing page	$750-$2,500
Blog Post (depending on length)	$150-$500/post
Case Study	$1,000-$2,000
White Paper	$3,000-$4,000

Terms

Copywriting fees are payable 50% in advance, balance upon delivery. All revisions must be assigned within 30 days of receipt of copy. Two rewrites are made free of charge unless the revision is based on a change in the assignment made after copy is submitted. Listed fees are guidelines only. Call today for a prompt price quotation on your specific assignment.

HTML5 | Giada Slim-N20 | Jolicloud | GNOME 3 | Unity | Nepomuk

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KDE's Semantic Desktop Technology

The Linux Desktop

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PLUS:
Check Out Alternate Desktop Managers

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HOW-TO:
Kexi, the KOffice Database Management Program

COMING SOON to Linux Desktops

What's in store when the GNOME Project finally releases GNOME 3, and what will Canonical choose for the new Ubuntu?

Charles Olsen

Linux is great for people who like having choices. For example, if you want to use a graphical desktop, there are many from which to choose, including XFCE, LXDE, Fluxbox, Openbox and Enlightenment, not to mention the two most popular desktops, GNOME and KDE. See Shawn Powers' article for more information on other desktop options (page 48).

KDE version 4.0 was released in January 2008, but GNOME hasn't had a major version update since 2.0 was released in 2002. Quite a few incremental updates have been made to GNOME, and until recently, the GNOME Project had planned to release version 3.0 in September 2010. At the time of this writing, the release has been pushed to March 2011.

When KDE 4.0 was released, it was a major change from KDE 3.5. Although KDE 4.0 was labeled a stable release, it actually was intended for developers and early adopters. Much of the functionality from KDE 3.5 had not yet been re-implemented. KDE 4.0 felt like a huge step backward, and it was widely criticized as being incomplete. GNOME 3's delayed release may be an attempt to avoid a similar situation.

When I started using Linux, I came from the world of Windows and preferred the KDE desktop because it seemed more familiar. I initially was excited to see the new KDE 4.0. But after the upgrade, I soon became disgusted with the mess I now had on my system. So I installed GNOME and was quite happy with it. Not only did it *work*, but also my PC ran faster with GNOME than it did with KDE 4.0.

I haven't completely ignored KDE 4 since then. I've occasionally installed it on a test system and tried it out. KDE 4.1 seemed generally usable, and by the time 4.4 was released, it actually seemed pretty good. But for my production systems, I've stuck with GNOME and have been quite happy with it.

Now, GNOME is close to releasing a major upgrade to GNOME 3, which uses GNOME Shell to display the application windows and other objects. Will this be another fiasco like KDE 4? I don't think so. Based on what I've seen so far, I think GNOME 3 will be a solid release.

But, that's not all that's coming. Canonical is charting its own path and developing a different desktop called Unity for its next version of Ubuntu. Unity is already Canonical's desktop for Netbooks—is it suitable for laptops and PCs?

GNOME 3

Although it has not been released officially, GNOME Shell has been in the repositories for a while now. You can install it and get a preview of what's coming in GNOME 3.

According to the GNOME Project Web site, "Our goal in designing GNOME Shell is to provide a consistent, self-teaching user interface based around the day-to-day tasks of the user." Let's take a look and see how GNOME plans to accomplish that.

Instead of the two panels in GNOME 2, GNOME Shell has a single panel at the top of the screen. It contains some of the items you're familiar with, such as the clock and notification icons. But instead of the three menus, now there's a single button named Activities. Next to the Activities button is the name of the currently running application. This eventually will contain the application menu and options, such as close, open a new window and options specific to that application.

When you click the Activities button, the full screen switches to the Activities overview mode. You also can invoke the Activities overview by pressing the Super key on the keyboard, or Alt-F1, or just by moving the mouse pointer to the upper-left corner of the screen. I hope GNOME offers an option to disable that last choice, because I found it way too easy to activate the overview unintentionally while working on my laptop.

The Activities overview takes the full screen, and it shows all the ways that users can switch from doing one activity to another. It displays a preview of all the windows that are open, on all the workspaces in use. It also shows a list of favorite applications, applications currently running, places (favorite directories and connected devices), and the 20 most recently used documents. There's also a Search box at the top left; if what you're looking for isn't immediately visible, simply start typing part of the application name or description.

I love workspaces. I tend to leave a lot of applications open as I switch from one task to the next, and it's nice to be able to group the windows into a workspace so I can look only at the programs I'm currently using.

GNOME Shell lets you create workspaces as needed. When you're in the Activities overview, you'll see a small plus sign at the lower right. Click the plus sign to create a new, empty workspace. While still in the overview, you then can drag windows from the other workspaces into the new workspace. Drag an application icon into a workspace to launch the program in that workspace. You also can create a new workspace and launch a program in that workspace by dragging the application icon onto the new workspace plus sign icon.

In GNOME 2, switching to a running application in another workspace often meant switching to the appropriate workspace, then selecting the program you want. In GNOME Shell, the Activities overview shows all workspaces and previews of all windows in each workspace. I can go directly to the workspace and application simply by clicking the window in the overview.

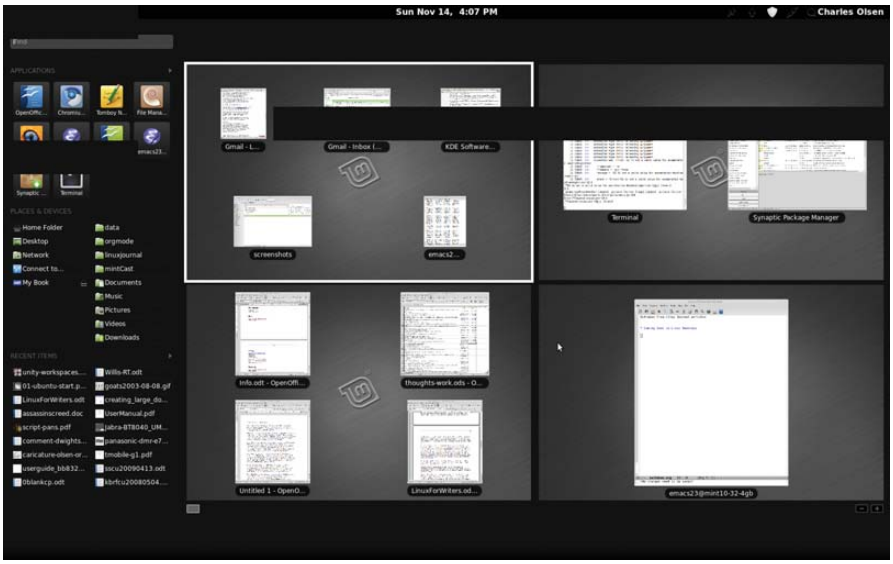

Figure 1. The GNOME Shell Activities Overview with Four Workspaces

Pressing Alt-Tab displays all applications that are open, even if they're not in the currently selected workspace. A vertical separator bar separates the programs in the current workspace from those in other workspaces. You can select any program in the traditional way, by pressing the Tab key and releasing Alt when you get to the desired application, or you can use the mouse to click the application you want.

A new function that is not implemented yet is that Alt-` (the key above the Tab key on US-layout keyboards) will switch between windows of the same application. Some applications do this now with Ctrl-F6, but that takes two hands and is not consistent across all applications. Using Alt-` will be much easier and feel more natural.

As you use Alt-Tab to cycle through open programs, programs with multiple windows open will be grouped in one icon. If you pause while that icon is highlighted, a preview of the open windows will appear below the icon. You also can get the preview immediately by pressing the down-arrow key. You then can select the specific window by using the left- and right-arrow keys.

Canonical is charting its own path and developing a different desktop called Unity for its next version of Ubuntu.

Customizing your favorite applications is easy. Use the Search box to find the application you want to add, then simply right-click the icon and choose Add to Favorites. To remove favorites you don't need, right-click the icon and choose Remove from Favorites.

The Places section of the Activities overview shows the items in the Places section in Nautilus. Simply add or remove items in Nautilus to customize the Places in your Activities overview.

The plan is that GNOME Shell will put a bigger emphasis on applications than the separate windows of the application. When you switch to the Activities overview, applications with multiple windows open will be represented by a single icon. In GNOME 2, you see an icon in the panel for each open window, and sometimes you have to guess which is the window you want.

In GNOME Shell, you can right-click on the application icon to see a list of open windows. You can select the specific window you want or open a new window. This wasn't working properly in the GNOME Shell I was running, so I wasn't able to test it.

The Search box will search not only application names and descriptions, but also through the names of recent documents and system customization commands.

When you're in the Activities overview with the small window previews, you can zoom the preview of a particular window without selecting it by pointing to it with the mouse and rolling the mouse scroll wheel upward. Scroll down with the wheel to zoom back out.

Several of the functions still work the way you're used to from GNOME 2. Alt-F2 still brings up a command line where you can enter a single command. The Esc key will escape from anything, such as the Activities overview, the Search within the overview, and the Alt-F2 command line. You still can switch to a different workspace using Ctrl-Alt-Right or Ctrl-Alt-Left, and you can move the current window to another workspace by pressing Ctrl-Alt-Shift-Right and Ctrl-Alt-Shift-Left.

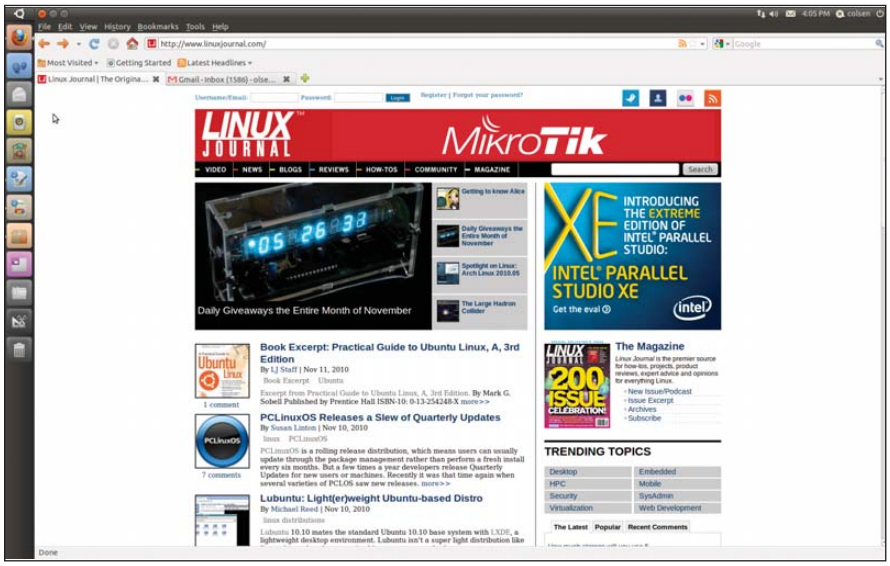

Figure 2. The Unity Desktop with Firefox Maximized

GNOME Shell offers a new way to look at your desktop and activities, without making a radical break from the previous version on GNOME.

Unity

It would seem ideal for Ubuntu's April 2011 release to include GNOME 3. However, Mark Shuttleworth has announced that Canonical will be taking a different direction and the next release of Ubuntu will feature Unity as the desktop.

According to Shuttleworth, the Canonical folks spent quite a bit of time analyzing screenshots of a couple hundred desktop configurations from the current Ubuntu and Kubuntu user base to see what people used most. They also wanted to identify things that were *not* needed in a lightweight environment.

They found that most users have between three and ten application launchers on the panel for quick access to their most-used programs. The new interface would follow that example and make a few applications instantly accessible, while still making it easy to get to everything else.

They also focused on getting the best use out of screen real estate. Unity initially was designed for Netbooks, where the screens were usually wide but not very tall. Now laptop and desktop monitors are moving to more of a wide-screen format. They realized they needed to be very conservative in using the vertical space.

Finally, they wanted the interface to be finger-friendly. Touchscreens are becoming more common, and Canonical wants Ubuntu to be ready.

This research and these decisions were the basis of Unity in Ubuntu Netbook Edition 10.10. And, according to Shuttleworth's announcement, Unity will be the default desktop for future editions of Ubuntu.

Rather than the traditional panels at the top and bottom of the screen, Unity

According to Shuttleworth, the Canonical folks spent quite a bit of time analyzing screenshots of a couple hundred desktop configurations from the current Ubuntu and Kubuntu user base to see what people used most.

conserves vertical real estate by moving the bottom panel to the left side of the screen. This panel also is widened to make it more touch-friendly. It will show a few icons for instant access to selected applications, and it also will display icons for all applications currently running. Programs currently running are shown with a small indicator on the left side of the icon. The application that has the focus has an additional indicator on the right side. A single touch or click is all that is needed to launch a favorite application or switch to another program that's already running.

The three-menu design of traditional GNOME has been replaced with a single global menu that you invoke by clicking a button on the left panel. The titlebar, including the Close/Minimize/Maximize buttons of the currently selected application, is rendered in the top panel.

When you open the global menu, the top panel displays a search field and the following application categories: All Applications, Accessories, Games, Internet, Media, Office and System. Initially, the All Applications choice is selected, and the screen is a mess with the icons for all installed applications on the display.

You can narrow it down by choosing one of the categories, so that only a few icons are displayed. Or, you can click the search field and type part of the application's name or description. This displays not only installed applications that match the search text, but also any matching applications available in the repository. Click the icon of the available program to launch Software Center with that application already selected. If you want the app, just click the Install button.

The result of all this is a display that has saved a significant amount of space and is optimized to use one application at a time. This is how most people work; you may have other applications running at the same time, but normally you interact with one application at a time.

Unity is available now, in Ubuntu Netbook Edition and as a PPA you can install in the Desktop Edition. (See sidebar for install instructions.) Shuttleworth said, "I'd very much like to get feedback from people trying it out on a Netbook, or even a laptop with a wide screen."

Not all of these features described here are fully implemented, but they should be by the time Ubuntu 11.04 is released. Other things seem unfinished too. I couldn't find a way to make any changes, for example, to customize the launchers on the left panel. Presumably, this will be corrected by the time it's released.

And, if you don't like Unity? Don't worry; you still can install standard GNOME or one of the other desktops from the repository.

Conclusion

Both GNOME Shell and Unity are quite usable today in their current forms. We're not going to see the kind of problems and uproar that occurred when KDE 4 was released. The changes going into the creation of GNOME Shell and even Unity are far less ambitious than the changes that created KDE 4.

Unity also is a shell for GNOME, although it's completely separate from GNOME Shell. Unity and Gnome Shell essentially are opposite ends of the spectrum. Unity is designed for a simple environment where people tend to do one thing at a time, and Gnome Shell is designed for a more complex environment where users are doing multiple activities simultaneously.

Personally, I really like GNOME Shell on a desktop or laptop PC. My impression is that Unity will be a good choice for small touchscreens, but I'd rather have GNOME Shell or even GNOME 2 on a larger display.

But, that's just my preference. If you want something different, your ideal setup is only a few clicks away.■

TRY THEM YOURSELF

GNOME 3 and Unity are not ready for release, but you can get a preview and see where the projects are at the moment. Because they are unfinished, they are not recommended for use in a production environment.

GNOME 3 is easy—just use the package manager to install gnome-shell.

Once the package and dependencies have been installed, you can activate it with the command:

```
gnome-shell --replace
```

To install Unity, you need to add a Personal Package Archive. Open a terminal, and enter the command:

```
sudo add-apt-repository ppa:canonical-dx-team/une
```

Enter your password when prompted, and apt will add the PPA and import the key.

Then, update your software list:

```
sudo apt-get update
```

To install Unity, type:

```
sudo apt-get install unity
```

Once Unity is installed, the next time you log in, the interface will default to Ubuntu Netbook Edition. (Ubuntu Desktop Edition still is available, of course.)

Charles Olsen has been working in IT help-desk and technical training for more years than he will admit. He is one of the hosts of mintCast, a podcast by the Linux Mint community for all users of Linux. You can find mintCast at www.mintcast.org or, if you must, via iTunes.

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Podcasting

If you want to contribute to the Linux community but would rather talk than develop software or write documentation, podcasting may be the ideal approach for you.

CHARLES OLSEN

If you like to talk and have something interesting to say, you may enjoy podcasting. A podcast is simply an audio file in MP3 or Ogg format that people can download and listen to on their own schedule.

A few years ago, I created a podcast called mintCast, which was designed to help new users get started with Linux. I had been listening to several podcasts, but I knew nothing about producing one myself. This article summarizes what I learned during the following two years. It should save you some time and pain, if you decide to create a podcast.

Entire books have been written about podcasting, and you should read some of them if you want to study the subject in depth. To keep this article to a manageable length, I focus on what I learned while producing mintCast.

Plan

The first step is to choose your topic and target audience. If your topic is too broad or too narrow, it will be hard to build an audience.

Going Linux has a great example. The home page describes the target audience ("New to Linux, upgrading from Windows to Linux, or just thinking about moving to Linux?") and what it provides ("practical, day-to-day advice on how to use Linux and its applications"). Potential listeners can see at a glance if this is a podcast they want to listen to.

A podcast episode usually has multiple segments. Typical segments might include an introduction, personal news, industry news, opinions and commentary, interviews, tutorials, tips, recommendations of software or Web sites, and listener feedback. Whichever segments you decide to use, it's a good idea to stay consistent.

That doesn't mean you need to be absolutely rigid. A typical episode of mintCast would have these segments: introduction, personal news, Linux news, main topic, Web site recommendation and listener feedback. The main topic would be a tutorial, interview or discussion about a new distro release. This approach gave us a consistent format, with enough variety to keep it fresh and interesting.

You should write an outline before you start recording. Include the topics you want to talk about and the points you want to make. If your show has multiple hosts, Google Documents is an effective way to share your notes, because all the hosts can read and even edit the document.

Do not write a script of exactly what you want to say, and do not read directly from your notes. It's very obvious to listeners when you do this, and it sounds bad. It's acceptable to read a *brief* quotation, for example, when you're reading from a news item. Otherwise, just write out the points you want to make, and use the list only as a reminder as you're speaking.

Will you work alone, or with other hosts? I always found it easier to record a show with one or two other hosts. Having additional hosts means that you don't have to know everything, and you don't have to do all the talking.

In the first few episodes of mintCast, each host recorded separately, then we edited the recordings together. In later episodes, we recorded at the same time, allowing us to converse and play off each other. Doing it that way made the shows more interesting, and it was easier for the hosts to keep going. It did, however, add complexity to the process of recording the show.

Recording

There are many ways to record a podcast. Sometimes I used a small handheld recorder that saved the recordings in MP3 format and had a USB port that allowed me to copy the files over to my PC.

Most of the time, I used Audacity to record the show. Audacity is an open-source program that can record, edit and play audio files. You can install it from your distro's repositories.

A good quality microphone makes a big difference when you're recording a podcast. It doesn't need to be expensive, but do some research and read reviews before choosing a microphone.

A headset may seem to be a good choice, and that's what I worked with. It causes problems, though—unless you're very disciplined about always keeping your hands away from your head, it's very easy to bump the headset, making an ugly noise on the recording. A microphone boom can help avoid this.

Although Audacity has a lot of power and features, it's very easy to use. The default settings are fine for recording spoken voice. You can tweak the input settings by watching the meter while speaking a few words, then click the big red Record button when you're ready to start.

It becomes more complicated if you have two hosts and you're not sitting in the same room. On mintCast, we solved this problem by talking on the telephone, and each of us recorded our own audio in Audacity. We could then assemble the recordings as side-by-side tracks in Audacity. This gave us a very high recording quality.

When more hosts joined the team, or when we did user interviews, we needed to get three or four people on the call at the same time. We did not have the ability to do conference calls from our personal phones, and we didn't want to ask our interview subjects to try to use Audacity.

We tried Skype and Skype Call Recorder, but never managed to get that working. I know other podcasts use this software, and I certainly would try it again if I were doing a podcast now.

Some podcasts use the Talkshoe Web site. Once you've created a free Talkshoe account, you can create a call series and invite others to the calls. You can allow them to participate fully or just listen. Calls can be recorded and then are available to listen to or download at any time.

You can listen to Talkshoe calls on your computer or telephone. You can participate by calling in from a telephone or by using Skype or Ekiga. Talkshoe also sets up a chat room, allowing listeners on a live show to interact with the hosts.

Talkshoe can be your start-to-finish solution to podcasting. It allows you to promote, broadcast, record and publish your recordings. Why, then, should you bother with any of the other tools and processes in this article?

For mintCast, I could not bring myself to publish our shows without a considerable amount of editing. Each of the hosts had a verbal tic—for example, frequently saying "uh", "you know" or "basically"—that was too embarrassing to leave in the recording. In Talkshoe, the audio is published exactly as it is recorded.

We also wanted to edit in theme music at the beginning and end of the show. We couldn't do that with Talkshoe.

Still, we often used Talkshoe to record the show. I then would download the recording and do the necessary editing before publishing it to our own Web site.

The mintCast team now is using Mumble to record shows. Mumble is a free and open-source voice chat program. It uses a nonstandard protocol, so you need to set up a Mumble server to which the Mumble clients can connect. With Mumble server and client version 1.2.3, you have the ability to record the Mumble call. You then can load the recording into Audacity for editing.

Recording Tips

Before making your first recording, it's a good idea to do a test recording for at least five to ten minutes. Make sure your recording levels are good, and that it sounds like you expect. Listen for background noise—things that you normally don't even notice, like ceiling fans and air conditioners, might interfere.

Even low-quality microphones seem to pick up everything you don't want on the recording. If you're eating, drinking or typing, listeners will know it.

Make sure you know where your mute button is. If your microphone doesn't have a mute button, leave the sound control panel open on your PC and find the mute control. A lot of things can happen that you don't want on the recording, and the mute button can save you a lot of tedious editing.

Don't worry about making a perfect recording. Unless you're using Talkshoe to publish the podcast exactly as recorded, you can edit out most mistakes. We often found ourselves rambling or stumbling over our words, and then we would take a moment to collect our thoughts and then go back and start over at the beginning of the sentence or paragraph. These "do-overs" helped us produce a better show.

Editing

Once you have the show recorded, the best tool for editing is Audacity. It's in the repo of every major distro, and it's very easy to use, even if you have no previous experience editing audio.

If you recorded in Audacity, you're ready to start editing. If you recorded with some other tool, Audacity can open files in any audio format. If you have each host's audio in a separate recording, you can add new audio tracks and paste each recording into a separate track.

I also like to add a separate track for music. We had a theme song at the beginning of the show, a longer version of the theme for the end of the show, and a five-second clip from the theme that we used as a bumper between segments. I put all of those clips into the audio track.

Audacity allows you to select part of the audio, then cut or copy and paste it. A scrolling display shows a waveform of your audio for each track, making it easy to select exactly the part of the clip you want to work with. You can zoom in or out on the waveform display. After doing a few shows, I could recognize my "uhs" from the waveform before I even heard them.

If your audio is in multiple tracks, be careful about deleting material. If you delete a clip from one track, you've now changed the timing for the rest of that track, and it will be out of sync with the other tracks. If you delete a clip, be sure to select and delete that time frame from all tracks so that they will stay in sync. Audacity allows you to click and drag across all of the tracks if you need to.

But, if you need to remove unneeded noise from one track while a host is talking on another track, you don't want to delete it. Just select the noise in the waveform, then click the Generate menu and choose Silence. This will silence that part of that track, without affecting that track's timing compared to the other tracks.

Audacity has several useful tools on the Generate and Effect menus. If you want to remove a sound without silencing it, you

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also can select the clip and Generate a tone, a chirp or a noise that sounds like static.

It was not unusual for our initial recording levels to come out way too low. The Effect menu includes an Amplify command, allowing us to select an entire track (or any portion of it) and amplify the volume.

If the volume varies too much in different parts of the recording, the Compressor command on the Effect menu can bring the levels closer together. The volume will be increased for the quiet parts and reduced for the loud parts.

If you do have a consistent noise in the background, such as an air conditioner, the Noise Removal command on the Effect menu often can remove it. You need a few seconds of audio where you're not talking, where the only sound is the background noise you want to remove. When you click the Noise Removal command, a dialog box pops up explaining how to use it.

Save often as you work. Although crashes were not frequent, Audacity did crash more than any other program I've used in Linux.

Finally, Audacity can export the finished file to the appropriate audio format. Podcasts are typically MP3, though many also are offered in Ogg format.

Music

Remember that all those CDs and MP3s you've purchased over the years are copyrighted—you can't use those songs in your show. However, there are sources where you can get music without spending thousands of dollars.

The Podcast Themes Web site has music specifically created for podcasts. A few songs are available for free, and many others are available at a low cost. Various licenses allow you to buy exclusive or non-exclusive rights to the music.

Unique Tracks is another Web site that offers royalty-free music. They offer individual songs and albums in many different styles: classical, uplifting, rock, heavy metal, hip-hop, New Age and many others. Many of the songs include the full-length song as well as shorter versions, and some even include a loop of five to ten seconds, which is ideal for a bumper.

Publishing

Once you have a completed recording, you need to publish it so that others can download it. If you recorded in Talkshoe, it's already published. Even if you recorded in Talkshoe, you still can publish it to your own site.

Any Web-hosting company will offer a template for publishing a podcast. If your site uses WordPress, you'll need the PodPress plugin. In any case, you'll have a Web location to upload the finished files. Then, create a blog entry on your site and link the audio files.

Although your site probably already offers a feed, you can use Google FeedBurner to get information allowing you to analyze your traffic. Once you're set up in FeedBurner, it's a good idea to submit your podcast to the iTunes store, the Zune Marketplace and Podcast Alley. All of those will make it easier for people to find your podcast.

Feedback

Once you have listeners, some will give you feedback about the show. It's best if your Web site is set up with a forum where listeners can discuss the show. On simpler sites, they may be able to leave comments only on the blog post. If nothing else, at least get a Gmail account and publish the address.

Read the comments and consider them seriously, especially the negative comments. I know it's painful to read criticism after you've put so much work into the podcast, but those criticisms often can help you make a better podcast. Encourage listeners to write in with comments and suggestions, and thank them for their feedback.

Conclusion

When I first started using Linux, the podcasts I listened to really helped me a lot. I was reading books and magazines, of course, but listening to a friendly voice really helps make a new topic accessible. It's also nice to be able to learn new things while driving to and from work.

If you like to talk and know a thing or two about Linux, why not help others increase their mastery of Linux?■

Linux Podcasts

Going Linux (**goinglinux.com**): for computer users who just want to use Linux to get things done.

Linux Action Show (**www.jupiterbroadcasting.com/show/linuxactionshow**): video broadcast with Linux news and reviews.

Linux Outlaws (**www.linuxoutlaws.com**): two pragmatic Linux users talk about the latest developments in free and open software and culture (*warning:* explicit language).

Linux Reality (**linuxreality.com**): an excellent podcast, no longer actively produced but still available for download.

mintCast (**www.mintcast.org**): generally focuses on helping users get started with Linux.

The Linux Link Tech Show (**www.tllts.org**): a live weekly Webcasted audio show dealing with the Linux computer operating system and any other geeky subjects that the hosts find interesting at the time.

TuxRadar (**tuxradar.com/podcast**): news, reviews, rants, raves, chit-chat, geekspeak and more.

Ubuntu UK (**podcast.ubuntu-uk.org**): all the latest news and issues facing Ubuntu Linux users and free software fans in general.

Many more podcasts about Linux, or that frequently cover Linux topics, exist. You can find dozens more podcasts at the Linux Link: **www.thelinuxlink.net**.

Charles Olsen has been working in IT help desk and technical training for more years than he will admit. For two years, he was lead host of mintCast, a podcast by the Linux Mint community for all users of Linux. You can find mintCast at www.mintcast.org or, if you must, in iTunes.

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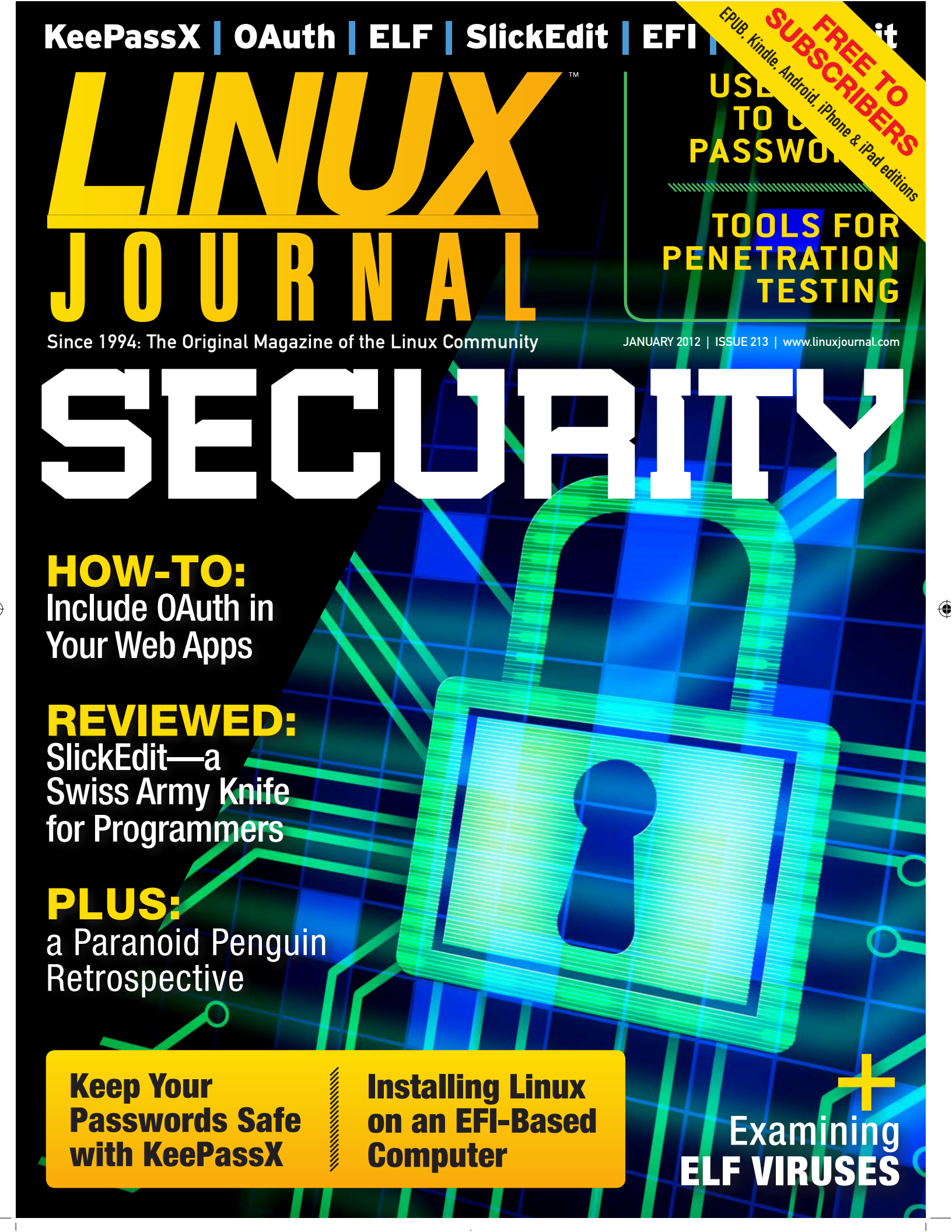


HOW-TO:
Include OAuth in Your Web Apps

REVIEWED:
SlickEdit—a Swiss Army Knife for Programmers

PLUS:
a Paranoid Penguin Retrospective

Keep Your Passwords Safe with KeePassX

Installing Linux on an EFI-Based Computer

\+ Examining **ELF VIRUSES**

Fade In Pro

When I switched from Windows to Linux, I found software to replace almost everything I had been doing in Windows. Most of the software I needed was in the repos, although I did pay for a couple commercial programs.

The most difficult program to replace was Final Draft, a commercial program for writing screenplays. Final Draft is available for Windows and Macs, but not for Linux. It also does not run in Wine or CrossOver Office.

I understand that software for writing screenplays is a small niche, but it's not limited only to writers in Hollywood. Any company that prepares videos for training or other purposes would benefit from a program that helps write scripts.

You can write scripts with a word processor, of course. But, the formatting is tricky and goes beyond what you can accomplish just by using styles. A dedicated script-writing tool ensures that all your formatting is correct, and it also can help in other ways.

At first, I was able to get by with Celtx, a free screenplay program that is available for Windows, Mac and Linux. But a nasty bug crept into the Linux version, making it painful to enter character names for dialogue. Although the developer acknowledged the issue two years ago, and several new versions have been released since then, the bug is still there.

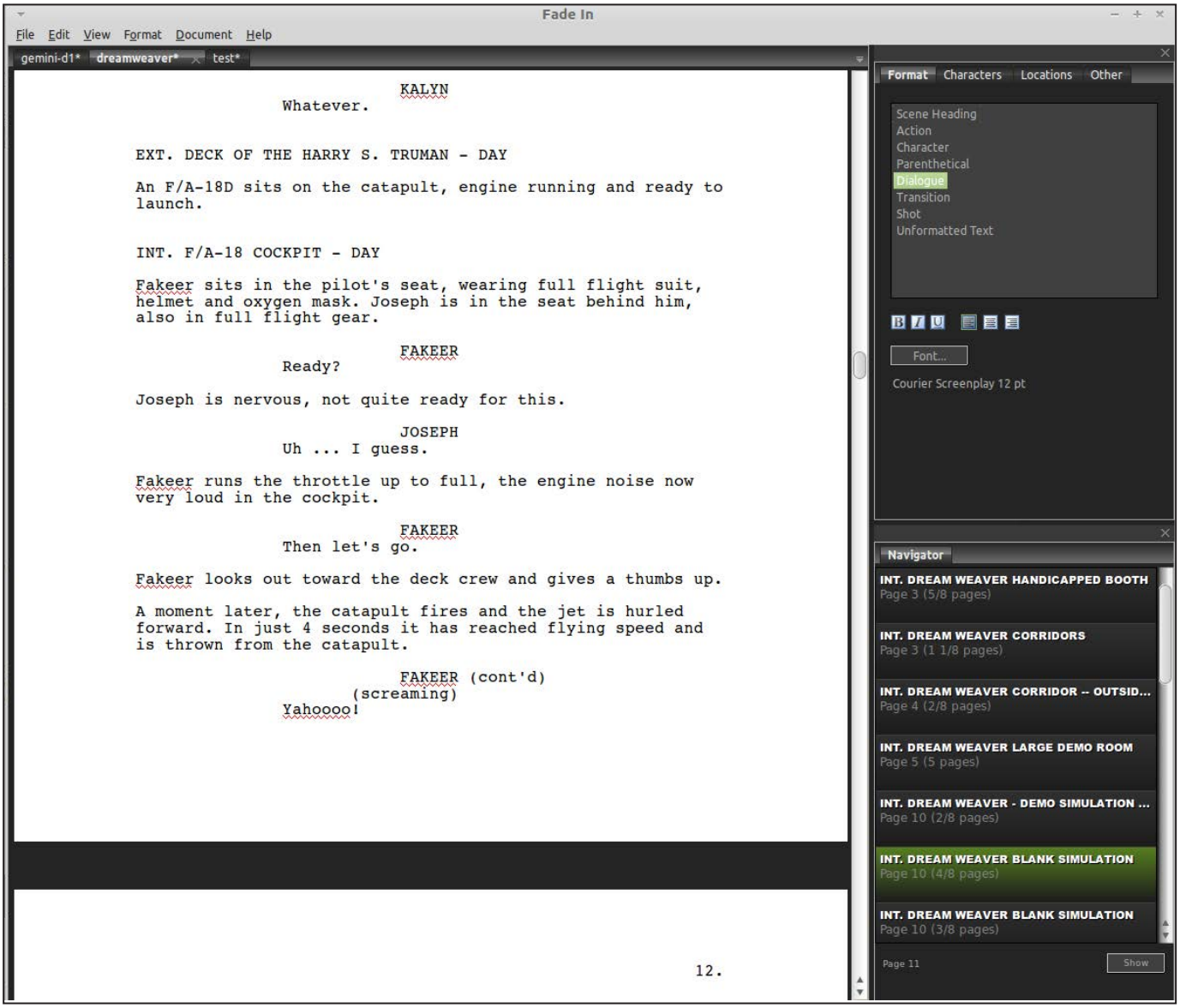
A new solution now is available. Fade In Professional Screenwriting Software is a powerful application for writing screenplays, and it includes tools for organizing and navigating the script, as well as tools for managing revisions and rewrites.

Fade In intelligently handles the various formatting elements of a screenplay. You can format the elements manually using key combinations or menus, or you can format everything just by using the Enter and Tab keys. Type a Scene Heading and press Enter, and the next element automatically is formatted as Action. Press Tab to change the formatting to Character, which automatically is followed by Dialogue. Press Tab to change from Dialogue to Parenthetical, which formats properly and inserts the parentheses.

Fade In builds autocomplete lists of your characters and locations. Once you've written a character or location, you can re-enter it with a couple keystrokes.

When it's time to produce a screenplay, Fade In can help by generating standard production reports including scenes, cast, locations and so on. You then can print these reports or save them to HTML or CSV.

Fade In can import and export files in these formats: Final Draft, Formatted Text, Screenplay Markdown, Unformatted



Text and XML. It also can import files in Celtx or Rich Text Format and export to PDF and HTML. The Final Draft format is particularly important if you want to sell your script or submit it to certain screenplay-writing contests.

Fade In is not free. According to the Web site, the regular price is $99.95, although at the time of this writing, you can get it for $49.95. Either way, it's much cheaper than $249 for Final Draft. You can download the demo and try it first, then buy it if the software works for you.

There also are versions of Fade In for mobile devices: Android, iPhone and iPad.

You can download the Linux version as a DEB, RPM or tar.gz file in either 32-bit or 64-bit versions.

Check it out at **http://www.fadeinpro.com**.

—CHARLES OLSEN

Scott Buckel PHOTOGRAPHY

Whooping Crane Photo Trip

January 23 and 24, 2016

Join Scott Buckel for a two-day trip to see and photograph the endangered Whooping Crane. The only migrating population of Whooping Cranes spend their winter in the area that includes Aransas National Wildlife Refuge.

Scott is a professional natural history photographer who specializes in birds and Texas Coastal wildlife. He will help you get the best possible photos of the Whooping Cranes.

We will be on the *Jack Flash,* a boat that is specially designed for photographers like you. Hand rails around the upper deck and bow deck make it safe for you and your gear. The cabin also has a restroom, and space for you to keep your equipment and personal items secure and dry.

The captain, Kevin Sims, can get us close to the birds in a way that does not harm or stress them. He knows how to orient the boat to help us get great photos of these birds. Kevin is one of the hardest working captains you will ever see, and he will ensure that the trip is one you will remember for years to come.

You will also see many other species of birds. We will go out on two mornings and will see different activities and behaviors each day. We will see many other species during the trip.

Each morning we will meet at the marina about 30-45 minutes prior to sunrise, to board the *Jack Flash* and get to Aransas National Wildlife Refuge to photograph these birds in the best possible light. The trips will last until the light becomes too harsh, which will probably be after 10 a.m. depending on the weather conditions.

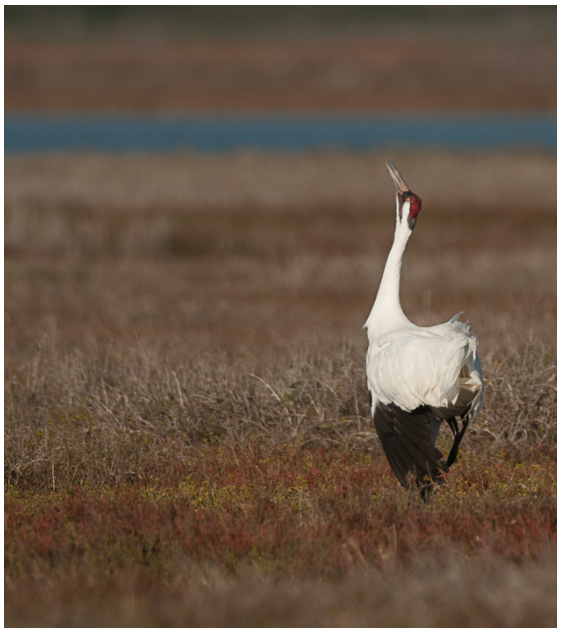
On Saturday after the boat trip we will meet for lunch and plan the afternoon shoot. We have arranged for an afternoon shoot from blinds at a private property. Both Sandhill and Whooping Cranes come in to feed each afternoon and will be the subject for our cameras. After the Sunday boat trip you will be free to either continue your adventure in the area or head home.

Scott Buckel's Whooping Crane Photo Trip Includes:

- Two Extensive Boat-Based Photo Shoots
- One Afternoon Photo shoot to capture images of Sandhill and Whooping Cranes

Day 1: Saturday, January 23, 2015:
We will meet Captain Kevin Sims about 30 minutes before sunrise. After the morning photography trip we will have lunch in town. After lunch we will car pool to the private property to use blinds to photograph Sandhill and Whooping Cranes.

Day 2: Sunday, January 24, 2015:
Spend another morning with Scott and Kevin aboard the *Jack Flash* capturing more photos of the beautiful endangered Whooping Cranes and the other abundant bird life. The boat leaves about 30 minutes before sunrise



The Trip Does Not Include:

Meals, lodging, or transportation to and from the photo trip are not included in the price. Carpool for the afternoon shoot at the private property to capture images of Sandhill and Whooping Cranes.

Lodging Assistance:

When you join us for Scott's Whooping Crane Photo Trip, we recommend you stay in the Fulton/Rockport area. Large chains such as Hampton Inn, Super 8, and Econolodge have hotels in Fulton/Rockport and many other motels are also available. Scott plans to stay at the Hampton Inn in Fulton.

Dates: Saturday, January 23 and 24, 2016

Space For: 5 photographers

Price: $325 per person

Reserve your spot by:

email:**scott@BuckelPhotography.com**

or

call Scott at 626-607-6268

ALL SMILES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ALL SMILES ADDS THIRD DENTIST TO STAFF

Dental Office Continues to Expand to Provide Excellent and Timely Care for Growing Patient List

Lake Jackson, TX: All Smiles, www.allsmilesdentist.com, has added a new doctor to the staff. Dr. Tara Burgess DDS is the third dentist at All Smiles in Lake Jackson.

“Our practice has been growing by 7 to 10 new patients a day,” says Dr. Peter Norris, DDS and owner of All Smiles. “We needed a third doctor to be more responsive to patients’ needs, and continue to provide care that fits the patients’ schedule.”

Dr. Burgess graduated from the University of Houston Clear Lake with a Bachelor's and a Master's in Biological Sciences, and is a graduate of University of Texas Health Science Center School of Dentistry at Houston.

She has participated in a lot of volunteer work, working in organizations that help people who need dental care. This includes volunteering with the Texas Mission of Mercy, and the Give Kids a Smile Day at the U.T. School of Dentistry.

Her volunteer work includes an externship in the Arctic which she spent working with Indian Health Services in Alaska, performing fillings and extractions. She was one of only nine dental students selected for the externship. She found the experience very rewarding, despite the hardships.

“Dr. Norris is very patient and compassionate, and his expanding practice and extended hours are in line with my goals for helping others,” says Dr. Burgess.

Her background also includes research, publication and teaching. She worked at the Houston School of Dentistry in Salivary Diagnostic research and has a publication in the Academy of General Dentistry. She was also an adjunct professor at San Jacinto Community College in Anatomy and Physiology, and is a Board Member and instructor for MDI Prep, working with Medical and Dental Students who are preparing to take their board exams.

About All Smiles: All Smiles is the practice of Texas family dentist Peter Norris. Dr. Norris and his staff are deeply concerned with facilitating patient comfort, and use the latest technology to provide care with minimal pain or discomfort. Their flexible scheduling allows them to see patients when it is convenient for the patient – often on the same day that they call, if necessary. Visit their web site at www.allsmilesdentist.com.

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Contact: Peter Norris DDS, allsmileslj@sbcglobal.net, (979) 316-2122

ALL SMILES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ALL SMILES HOSTS CHARITY EVENT

Dentistry From The Heart Serves Those In Need

Lake Jackson, Texas: On Saturday March 21, All Smiles hosted a Dentistry From the Heart event. DFTH is a national non-profit organization dedicated to providing free dental care to those in need, serving people who don't otherwise have access to dental care. All Smiles provided blood pressure screening as well as dental treatment including extractions, fillings and cleanings. Over 70 people received care, despite heavy rain and flash flood warnings.

Dr. Peter Norris, Dr. Pauline Spencer, and the staff of All Smiles learned about DFTH during a training meeting. The staff immediately wanted to bring this program to Lake Jackson, as it perfectly embodies their values of caring for family and community. We hope to make this an annual event and serve even more people in the future.

Many people worked hard to make this event happen: Dr. Nathans Phillips and his assistants, Stephanie Hulbert and Jenny Trevino joined the All Smiles team of Dr. Norris, Dr. Spencer, Lindsey Vasek RDH, Melissa Hopwood RDH, Becky Damian RDH, Lorraine Garza CDA, Katie Krumwiede CDA, Ashley Gutierrez CDA, Maegan Davis CDA, Martha Patek office manager with staff Aurora Hudgins, Claudia Silva, Hayley Hoffman, Chelsea Villareal, Alyssa Pena and Sara Norris. Other assistants and hygienists included Katie Drew and Tabby Dowry from Dr. McCann's office and Ariadna Solis, RDH from Dr. Bell's office. Others helping included Prisalk Carrasco, Katie Drew, Tabby Dowty, Chelsea Nance, Melissa Orea, Chrystal Pierce, Itzell Mendoza, Ester Merta, Blake Hudgins, Valdemar Silva, Bianca Guerra, Shelby Peden, Natalie Closs and Angela Nowka. Patterson Dental, CVS Lake Jackson, Walmart Lake Jackson, Annie Penn of Billy's Donuts of Freeport and John Castoneda of Events All Around provided supplies for this event.

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