

Campaigns

Novell's SUSE platform reaps rewards from creative effort

Novell.



The Disters were named after the one-year-old SUSE Studio mascot

Client

Novell (Waltham, MA)

PR agency

PAN Communications (Andover, MA)

Campaign

The Dister Awards

Duration

July 27-December 15, 2010

Budget

\$35,000

Novell's SUSE Appliance Program is an innovative platform to package and deliver software appliances. It includes SUSE Studio, a Web-based appliance creation tool, and SUSE Gallery, an online appliance showcase.

Ian Bruce, Novell's director of global PR and analyst relations, says an appliance is the combination of an operating system and an application. Many enterprise systems run on Linux, he adds.

Last July, Novell and AOR PAN Communications launched The Dister Awards, a contest to drive the Linux developer community and independent software vendors to use the SUSE tools to build and share appliances.

"This approach," says Bruce, "differentiates us in a crowded market. The number of appli-

ances built, downloaded, and placed on the gallery site, and the number of independent software vendors that got involved would all translate to sales leads."

STRATEGY

The contest, which ran from July through December, raised awareness of software appliances as a viable, easy way to package and distribute software while highlighting Novell's innovation and talent in the open-source community. Jennifer Meyer, VP, technology portfolio at PAN, says the launch date hooked into the one-year anniversary of the SUSE Appliance Program.

Those who built appliances with SUSE tools and shared them on the gallery could win cash, including grand prizes of \$10,000 each for one Linux community winner and one independent software vendor.

Engaging multiple audiences was key, as was leveraging the very large and social Linux community. The eclectic internal team, including Web specialists, product marketers, and salespeople, underscores the goal of driving hard business outcomes, explains Bruce.

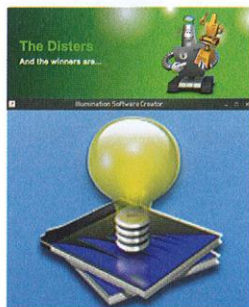
Websites, videos, podcasts, tweets, and media and blogger relations drove engagement.

TACTICS

The contest was announced to trade media and bloggers. Industry influencers were recruited as judges. Social features integrated into the SUSE Gallery, such as voting mechanisms, encouraged engagement and visits.

Twitter updates were posted at least twice a week. Judges also tweeted, while the Linux Foundation promoted the contest on its website.

An "Appliance of the Week" was chosen by Novell engineers



Bryan Lunduke's Illumination Software Creator won a Dister

and announced via Twitter and the contest website (novell.com/thedisters). Updates were posted on a PR blog (novell.com/PRblogs), as well as Novell and SUSE Studio Facebook pages.

Winner podcasts were posted on the PR blog and featured on a "Cloud Chasers" podcast on Novell's website. Videos of the winners' demonstrations were posted on the contest website.

Logistics prevented a live awards show, so the team created a virtual event hosted by judges. It included acceptance speeches and was broadcast on Ustream and posted on Facebook and YouTube. Internal viewing events were also held.

RESULTS

More than 3 million appliances were downloaded, reports Bruce, while involvement and business rose from independent software vendors such as IBM and Dell.

An average of 15 appliances were posted daily on the SUSE Gallery, which includes 1,300 total appliances. Registered SUSE Studio users increased from 82,000 in July to 103,000 in early February. The event video got 800 views, and Facebook impressions totaled 7,000.

FUTURE

The Disters will become an annual event. The team will also promote enterprise security and identification management programs this year.

Tanya Lewis

PRWeek's View

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This campaign clearly illustrates the power of tailor-made programs to drive business results. Novell's global PR director Ian Bruce stressed the campaign goal of helping to achieve specific business results. It was very smart to involve multiple departments internally at Novell. The entire team did their part to drive deep engagement with the contest and through broad and consistent outreach. Business results are apparent, while the campaign also established solid relationships that should continue to deepen and pay off.