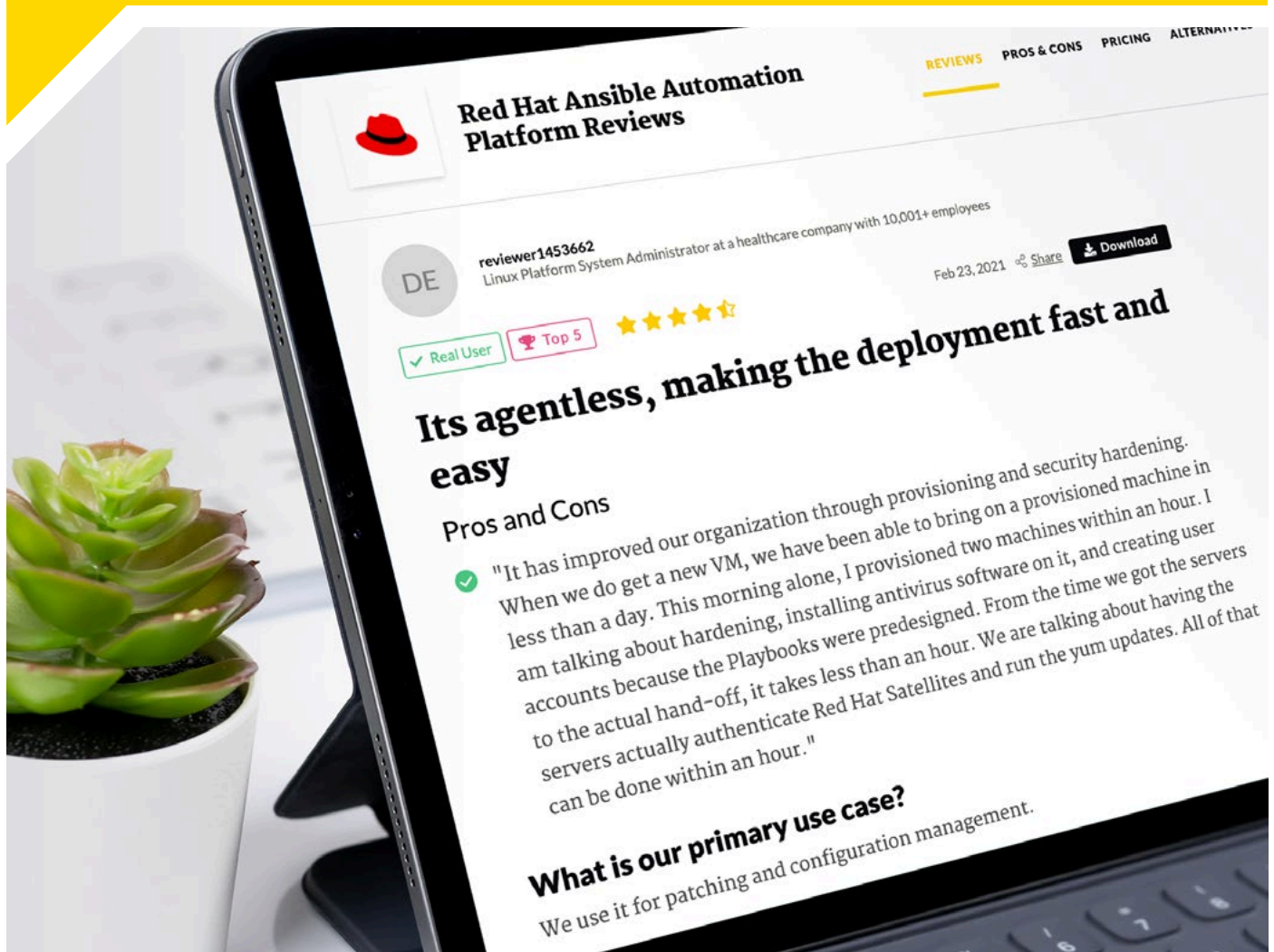


PeerPaper™ Report 2021

Based on real user reviews of Red Hat solutions

Assessing Enterprise with Free Open Source Options in the Public Sector



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Introduction

How free is free software? That's a question IT managers often ponder as they try to determine the best approach to developing, and then supporting, critical applications. Open source software, by convention, always comes in a free or "community" version. Indeed, the community is the essence of open source, the foundation of its strength in the world of technology. However, there can be consequences, and surprisingly high costs associated with the free option. In the public sector, in particular, the issue can be challenging to navigate. In this paper, Red Hat users on PeerSpot share their experiences with the Enterprise versions of Red Hat Enterprise Linux, Red Hat OpenShift, Red Hat Ansible Automation Platform and Red Hat Ceph Storage. They discuss how the Enterprise versions confer benefits like stronger security and scalability, along with the importance of speeding up deployment, support and open ecosystems.

Except where noted, the companies mentioned in this paper have over 10,000 employees.

Red Hat public sector use cases

PeerSpot members who work in government are putting Red Hat products to work in a variety of use cases. For example, an Infrastructure Architect at a government agency with more than 500 employees uses OpenShift for newly developed in-house applications. In his view, the solution's most valuable feature is its ability to have support throughout the whole platform, including logging, monitoring and operational features.

For a Systems Analyst at Sweden's City of Gothenburg, the primary use cases for Red Hat Enterprise Linux, Ansible Automation Platform and Red Hat Satellite from Red Hat span websites, applications for the city, automation and the underlying operating system for the city's GitLab server. He elaborated, saying, "We have many different databases running on Red Hat Enterprise Linux. Among them we have MySQL and POSTGRES and they all run great on Red Hat Enterprise Linux 7 and on Red Hat Enterprise Linux 8. Using this solution, we can offer our customers an easier way to get a WordPress site, and they can have POSTGRES and Tomcat installations, and these run smoother on Linux than they do on Windows." Figure 1 offers a simple reference architecture for Gothenburg's use case.

"They work like a charm. The integration works great."

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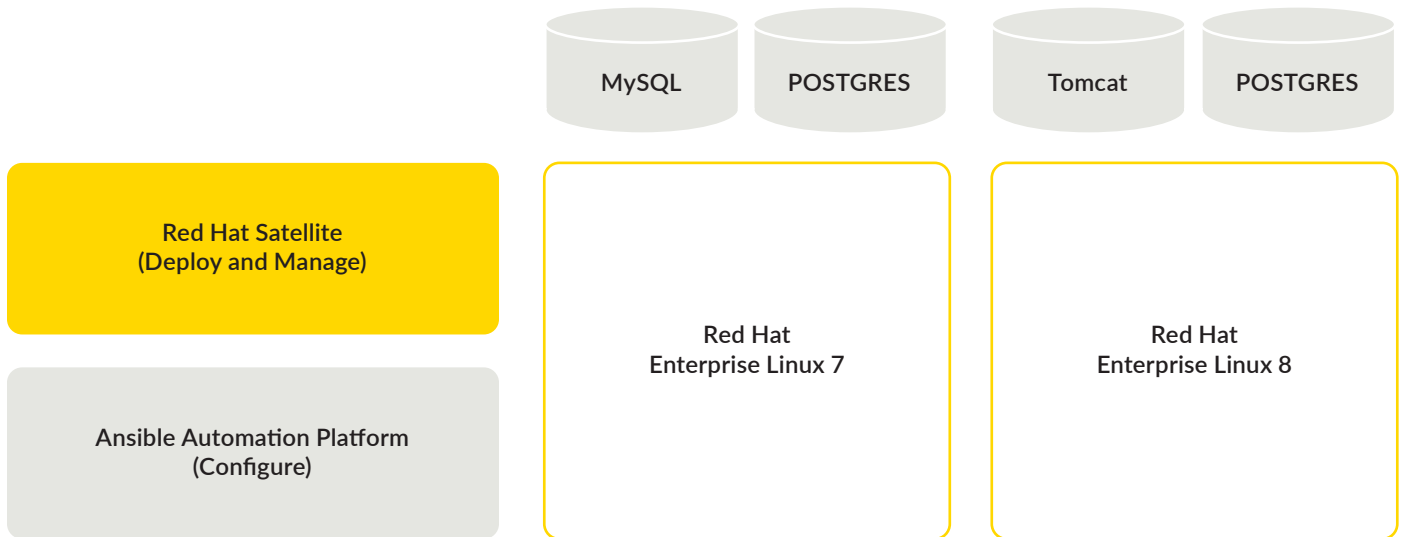


Figure 1 – Typical public sector use case for Red Hat Enterprise Linux, with multiple database versions and application server.



Run it once.

No need to run it on 100 servers.

The city integrates Ansible Automation Platform and Red Hat Satellite with Red Hat Enterprise Linux and, as he put it, “They work like a charm. The integration works great.” They use Red Hat Satellite for patching their Red Hat Enterprise Linux servers. Ansible Automation Platform helps with automating the patching and deployment of config files. That means, “We don’t have to worry that much about the patching. If we want to deploy the same config file to 100 systems, we just run the playbook with Ansible Automation Platform and it’s done. We don’t have to run it on 100 servers.”

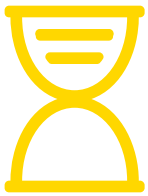
Where it matters: Enterprise vs. free

The Enterprise versions of open source software offer more features and greater breadth of use than free versions. One area in which users are seeing the benefit of Enterprise compared with free is in scalability. The Systems Analyst at Gothenburg simply stated, “It’s easy to scale up and scale out.” For a Linux Administrator who uses Red Hat Enterprise Linux at a small tech services company, the Enterprise version proved to be scalable. As he said, “I scaled it in a way that I put a load balancer and a few servers running behind that. When working with clients, we scale or expand usage based on the need.”

“If you really need an application, meaning one million customers are going to use the application, then this platform will be quite significant,” said a Cloud Native Engineer who uses OpenShift at a tech services company. He added, “We have seen return on investment. Applications used to run in VMware, but now they are running in OpenShift. There are benefits in terms of scalability and availability, and they can spin up more microservice applications and that is something that cannot be done in the VMware platform.”

“...an excellent and inexpensive solution with great security, stability, and performance... its security is the most valuable.”

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1 hour

provisioning
of multiple
machines

Security

Security also emerged as a field of IT where the Enterprise version of open source was advantageous. The tech company's Linux Administrator characterized Red Hat Enterprise Linux as “an excellent and inexpensive solution with great security, stability, and performance,” adding, “its security is the most valuable.” A Linux Platform System Administrator at a healthcare company concurred, finding that Ansible Automation Platform has improved their organization through provisioning and security hardening.

He explained, “This morning alone, I provisioned two machines within an hour. I am talking about hardening, installing antivirus software on it, and creating user accounts because the Playbooks were predesigned. We are talking about having the servers actually authenticate Red Hat Satellites and run the yum updates. All of that can be done within an hour.”

“We are able to operate a client's platform without downtime during security patch management each month and provide a good SLA,” said a TechOps Engineer who uses OpenShift at European Business Reliance Centre (EBRC), a small tech services company. He then shared, “Our company is focused on sensible information management and security is the most important part.

The tech company Cloud Native Engineer likewise noted, “When it comes to security, we have the Prisma Cloud image scanning so that each and every image is scanned and we get a report regarding the kinds of vulnerabilities there are in particular images. That way, in case there are any vulnerabilities or critical patches that need to be applied to the images, they will be taken care of before going to production.” This user also puts SonarQube to work for code scanning and Prometheus for monitoring.

“It’s agentless,
making the
deployment fast
and easy.”

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30-60

**minutes
deployment**

Speed to deploy

PeerSpot members like how Enterprise versions of open source software enable fast deployment of systems. According to a Principal Analyst for AIX and Linux at a transportation company , “Red Hat Enterprise Linux provides features that help speed our deployment. For example, for SAP HANA, they have full-fledged support for failover clustering using Red Hat Enterprise Linux High Availability Add-On, which is a solution to create a vintage approach of failover clustering. They do provide extensive support for value-adds for ERP solutions.”

Other notable comments about speed to deploy include:

- “It would speed up deployment and make it easier to manage. If you had a developer who needed to throw up a box real quick to check something, he could run a playbook, throw up a server and rather quickly do what he needed to do. Then, dismiss the server and all resource reviews and return back to the YUM.”- System Analyst II who uses Red Hat Enterprise Linux at an energy/utilities company with over 1,000 employees
- “Being able to design playbooks that can be validated in the development environment, QA, and production is very valuable. This helps in reducing configuration errors and provides faster deployments.”- CEO/Founder who uses Ansible Automation Platform at Zen Networks, a small tech services company
- “It’s agentless, making the deployment fast and easy.” - Linux Platform System Administrator who uses Ansible Automation Platform at a healthcare company
- “Deployment is quite fast because we have a CI/CD pipeline and we use GitLab for the source code. It can be done within 30 minutes or an hour for the UAT stage.”- Cloud Native Engineer who uses OpenShift at a tech services company



Figure 2 – Examples of integration between Red Hat Enterprise Linux, other Red Hat products and third party products, using an API

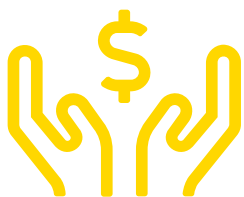
Open partner ecosystems and integration

The interconnected nature of government computing systems favors open source solutions that offer open partner ecosystems and integration. This capability means being able to link with products from the same vendor, as well as with others. The transportation company’s Principal Analyst for AIX and Linux spoke to this need when he remarked that Red Hat Enterprise Linux integrates very well with other Red Hat products. He then said, “In fact, they integrate with pretty much everything around the universe. We are doing API calls without even knowing what an API is, i.e., towards VMware vCenter as well as Centreon.” Figure 2 shows some examples of integration.

An IT Manager who uses Red Hat Enterprise Linux at a financial services firm similarly commented, “We find the Red Hat Satellite deployments very useful. It integrates well with other solutions.” The healthcare Linux Platform System Administrator got specific, declaring, “The new version of Visual Studio is quite helpful because Git is integrated with it. The YAML markdowns are also in place. My staff doesn’t need special coding skills to use it.”

“We’re definitely seeing cost savings since we’ve implemented it.”

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~10X
difference in cost

Cost

Enterprise does not always have to mean expensive when it comes to open source software. As the government Infrastructure Architect put it: “The licensing costs are quite cheap compared to other similar solutions.” The tech company Linux Administrator also felt that Red Hat Linux is inexpensive, likening it to Linux solutions that are also generally cost effective.

For some users, the cost benefit analysis is relative in nature, such as when Red Hat Enterprise Linux faces off against IBM AIX. The transportation company’s Principal Analyst for AIX and Linux related, “We do get a return on investment with this solution in regards to a comparative cost of ownership of going with the niche solution of IBM AIX systems and hardware. There is a tremendous difference in cost. It is about tenfold.”

A System Analyst II who uses Red Hat Enterprise Linux at an energy/utilities company with over 1,000 employees also switched to Red Hat Enterprise Linux from AIX because of the developer and the cost. As he shared, AIX is usually implemented on IBM hardware, so it usually costs more to run AIX than Red Hat Enterprise Linux, which can be on virtual systems or lower cost x86 servers.

“It’s possible that we should have used the solution a long time ago as it appears to cost the business less money to run some of our data systems using it,” said a Data Storage Specialist who uses Ceph Storage at a tech services company with over 1,000 employees. He added, “We’re definitely seeing cost savings since we’ve implemented it.” The healthcare Linux Platform System Administrator tried BigFix for two years, but then switched to Ansible Automation Platform because of cost savings. He discussed how “costs

are negligible when using Ansible Automation Platform. The costs are just learning to use the solution's various options. We save time and efficiency versus other solutions.”

Support and documentation

Enterprise versions of open source also include support, which is essential in a serious government or enterprise setting. “The most valuable thing for us is the support that we get from Red Hat for the product,” said the Systems Analyst for Gothenburg. For context, he explained, “One of our most important applications here in the City of Gothenburg runs on Red Hat Enterprise Linux, so if something happens, we have a partner to get support from.”

Customer support is also valuable to an Associate Engineer who uses Red Hat Enterprise Linux at a financial services firm with over 1,000 employees because, as he has found, most Linux distros do not have customer support. He commented, “Technical support from their customer service team is very good. They give responses unlike other Linux distros, and I think Red Hat Enterprise Linux has better customer support.”

The transportation company's Principal Analyst for AIX and Linux concurred. He said, “Their support is wonderful. They will go beyond what is supposed to be supported. For example, we had a ransomware attack. They went 20 times above what we were expecting of them, using software provided by them on a pro bono basis, meaning take it and do whatever you want with it, but it was not ours. That was a nice surprise. So, whenever we have needed them, they did not come with a bill. They came with support, listening, and solutions. That is what we expect of a partner, and that is what they are: a partner.”

“Their support is wonderful. They will go beyond what is supposed to be supported.”

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Conclusion

PeerSpot members who use open source software describe how the Enterprise versions provide benefits that are not available in the free editions. In the public sector, as well as in comparable commercial use cases, they discuss how Enterprise open source software enables faster deployments and security that's both effective and relatively easy to manage. The Red Hat users also remarked on the value of open partner ecosystems and integration that are available with Enterprise open source software. The cost of the software compared favorably to other commercial alternatives, too. As their experiences reveal, there is much to be gained from the choice to work with Enterprise open source software.

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User reviews, candid discussions, and more for enterprise technology professionals.

The Internet has completely changed the way we make buying decisions. We now use ratings and review sites to see what other real users think before we buy electronics, book a hotel, visit a doctor or choose a restaurant. But in the world of enterprise technology, most of the information online and in your inbox comes from vendors. What you really want is objective information from other users. PeerSpot provides technology professionals with a community platform to share information about enterprise solutions.

PeerSpot is committed to offering user-contributed information that is valuable, objective, and relevant. We validate all reviewers with a triple authentication process, and protect your privacy by providing an environment where you can post anonymously and freely express your views. As a result, the community becomes a valuable resource, ensuring you get access to the right information and connect to the right people, whenever you need it.

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