

Re: Time to shut down this list?

Source: <http://unix.derkeiler.com/Mailing-Lists/FreeBSD/newbies/2004-12/0197.html>

From: Jay O'Brien (jayobrien_at_att.net)

Date: 12/23/04

Date: Thu, 23 Dec 2004 11:58:58 -0800

To: Wes Peters <wes@softweyr.com>

Wes Peters wrote:

> *On Thursday 23 December 2004 04:37, Eric wrote:*
>
>> *How about rename this list "Newbie Questions" and just go on trust that*
>> *the people asking the questions are really newbies.*
>
>
> *Newbies asking the questions isn't the problem. The problem is the newbies*
> **answering* the questions. ;^)*
>
> *We (Core) are very interested in how best to address the needs of newcomers.*
> *If the newbies list is a nice, low-intimidation place to meet that need, we*
> *need to get better answers to the newbie questions.*
>
> *Perhaps some legwork over the holidays by a couple of not-so-new newbies to*
> *put together a newbie FAQ would be a start? Perhaps a nice notice to append*
> *to the bottom of all newbies messages, reminding newbies of the list charter,*
> *where the newbies FAQ is, etc, would be helpful? Perhaps we could find a way*
> *to entice more experience users from the -questions list to troll the newbies*
> *archive occasionally, answering questions not yet found in the FAQ? Maybe we*
> *can set up a donation program where experienced users can get a Krispy Kreme*
> *in return for answering a newbie question?*
>
> *Come on, newbies, let's hear YOUR ideas on how to get better answers for your*
> *questions.*
>
> *(I personally wish we had the ability to clone Doug White a dozen times and*
> *throw all the Douglets into supporting newbies, but we keep experiencing DNA*
> *copy errors and the Douglets become flightless antarctic waterfowl. Weird.*
> *Maybe we shouldn't gzip the DNA before transmittal...)*
>

Wes,

As a newbie, I've had many questions; I still have them and as I get the time to learn more I'll have more questions. I've received very useful, prompt and

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detailed responses on -questions, and I've monitored the -newbies list. My take on the -newbies list is that most of the responses are "take it to -questions", so I did that without first posting to -newbies.

You ask newbies to respond; "how to get better answers?". How about a search engine that provides useful responses to newbie questions? I get much better and more useful responses from google than I do at the <http://www.freebsd.org/search/> page. To see what I mean, at "Web pages (including FAQ and Handbook)" type boot. The response is intimidating, the 25 hits are in six languages, and you don't learn how to select your language until you learn by trial and error. There is no way to restrict hits to one language. There are no snippets of helpful text to help you decide what to try first. That was my first exposure to FreeBSD; my reaction was to order some books from Amazon. Later, after reading Leahy and Lucas, I found the FreeBSD handbook on line to be an even better source; but initially I was overwhelmed, especially when trying to "learn" from MAN pages. MAN pages are written for someone who already knows the answer. Try MAN BOOT for example. Mind boggling as a first exposure; but now that I have it working, MAN BOOT NOW makes sense to me. MAN BOOT explains what IS working, not how to make it work. Not a problem, but in retrospect I think I should have been warned about the tenor of MAN pages and steered away from them initially.

For a comparison, go to Google and type in FreeBSD boot. Now this is useful, and where I go first, not to the FreeBSD search page. Maybe google could be used as the FreeBSD search engine, limited to the FreeBSD pages?

FreeBSD suffers from the malady of most technical documentation. The docs are written by people who understand the subject and do a great job of telling the story to those who already know the story.

Well, you asked, and thanks for asking.

You didn't ask about -questions, but I'm going to answer anyway. The folks on -questions are better, faster, friendlier and more accurate than any paid support staff I've ever encountered. I'm pleased to be associated, if only in a small way, with such a dedicated and committed team.

Merry Christmas to all.

Jay O'Brien
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freebsd-newbies@freebsd.org mailing list

<http://lists.freebsd.org/mailman/listinfo/freebsd-newbies>

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