



## French National Police Force saves \$2 million a year with Ubuntu

### La Gendarmerie Nationale upgrades 85,000 PCs to Ubuntu Desktop Edition

#### Fast Facts

<b>Organisation:</b>	La Gendarmerie Nationale
<b>Industry:</b>	Government
<b>Country:</b>	France
<b>Challenge:</b>	Spiralling licensing costs Time-consuming maintenance
<b>Solution:</b>	Ubuntu Desktop Edition Ubuntu Advantage: Premium Service Engineer
<b>Results:</b>	Switching to Ubuntu saves €2 million per year Ease of maintenance saves time Seamless integration simplifies processes Employees enjoy an enhanced user experience Canonical support brings peace of mind

#### Summary

La Gendarmerie Nationale's IT team must ensure that the police force can provide a responsive and cost-effective service nationwide. With growing IT infrastructure costs, the organisation decided to review its existing Microsoft-based environment. After switching from Microsoft Office to OpenOffice.org and Internet Explorer to Firefox, the police force decided to upgrade 85,000 PCs to Ubuntu Desktop Edition, removing its reliance on the Microsoft operating system almost completely. As well as simplifying maintenance and improving ease of use, Ubuntu Desktop Edition is saving the police force €2 million a year in licence fees alone. By repurposing 4,500 machines to act as local servers, it has also dramatically reduced its hardware expenditure.

## Challenge

Employing over 100,000 people, La Gendarmerie Nationale (a part of the French police force) is responsible for public safety and policing in France. The force must ensure that its IT infrastructure is cost-effective, easy to manage, reliable and simple for employees to use.

Prior to 2005, the police force found that spiralling licensing costs and time-consuming maintenance were placing a strain on its resources. It decided to move away from its Microsoft-based infrastructure and start using open-source software.

Jean-Pascal Chateau, Commandant, La Gendarmerie Nationale, says: "We weren't experiencing technical problems, but financial ones. For the same amount of work, yielding the same results, we realised that Windows would cost us €2 million more than Ubuntu every year."

## Solution

The police force's IT team tested a number of operating systems but found Ubuntu to be the best fit for the organisation. Chateau says: "Following a series of tests, we embarked on a project to deploy Ubuntu Desktop Edition on 85,000 PCs across 4,500 police stations.

"We have structured the migration path so that we upgrade 10,000 desktops to Ubuntu every year. By 2015, we expect that 90 per cent of the police force will be running Ubuntu."

So far, the police force has successfully deployed Ubuntu Desktop on 7,000 desktops and laptops across each police station. Each branch also uses Ubuntu Desktop Edition as a local server for file-sharing and software and anti-virus update distribution. Chateau says: "This means that we've been reducing the amount of servers we need at the same time as we've been upgrading our users' PCs."

The police force's IT team also chose to adopt a Premium Service Engineer (PSE) contract with Canonical. This means that Canonical provides a single point of contact for any technical issues the team experiences. The PSE offers expert advice that supplements the front-line support that the IT department provides itself. Either serious issues or advice on configuration and deployment can be escalated to a dedicated Canonical expert.

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## Results

### Switching from Windows to Ubuntu saves €2 million per year

Instead of following the traditional Microsoft upgrade path from Windows XP to Windows Vista, the police force decided to switch to Ubuntu. As a result, it has seen a dramatic drop in the total cost of ownership of its IT environment.

Chateau says: "The simple change from Windows and Office to Ubuntu and OpenOffice.org has saved us €2 million per year. And that's not just down to licensing costs. The fact that we no longer need 4,500 dedicated departmental servers means that the savings just keep growing."

### Ease of maintenance delivers significant time savings

The police force has found that Ubuntu Desktop is much easier to manage and maintain than Windows. Updates and upgrades can be made quickly and easily.

Previously, an IT administrator needed to be travelling all year to physically install new versions of anti-virus applications on the desktops in the Gendarmerie's outposts – some of which are as far away as French Polynesia. A similar operation can now be completed within two weeks and does not require travelling.

### Seamless integration simplifies processes

With access to thousands of open-source applications, the police force has found it easy to introduce new software. Chateau says: "The tools available with Linux respect open standards so they don't seem to cause as many interoperability issues."

"In terms of software administration, the fact that we now have a replicated mirror architecture also allows us to add new software very easily. It's much more complicated and error-prone on Windows, which can lead to inconsistencies in the field."

### Employees enjoy an enhanced user experience

The police force has been able to tailor Ubuntu Desktop to meet its exact requirements. Chateau says: "We have a lot of personnel who work in the field. The fact that Ubuntu Desktop is so easy to use is a huge benefit. Agents can personalise their desktops to fit their needs. That means that they can access the same desktop environment no matter which workstation they log in from."

He adds: "Now staff are more motivated and we've reduced costs and introduced solutions that better match our needs."

### Dedicated Canonical support brings peace of mind

The police force adopted the Premium Service Engineer service so that it could support its own technical skills with those of the Ubuntu experts.

Etienne Goyer, Premium Service Engineer, Canonical, says: "First and foremost, the PSE is an Ubuntu expert. By making regular contact with the IT team, we can get to know a customer's IT environment intimately, and proactively advise on how to make the most of Ubuntu in the specific context of the organisation."

"Because the PSE's experience with Ubuntu is both very deep and very diversified, we have been able to suggest proven best practices that can save the police force's time and resources, ensuring a smoother experience and helping to future-proof the Ubuntu deployment."

"Finally, the PSE acts as a liaison with Canonical's various business units, including the engineering team, and makes sure the customer's needs and issues are handled by the right person. That means that if an issue arises, the police force can rely on their PSE to handle the communication with Canonical in an efficient manner, ensuring smooth escalation and fast resolution of problems affecting their operations."

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