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By Don R Crawley The Accidental Administrator: Linux Server Step-by-Step Configuration Guide [Paperback]



Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As a student of Don's, I can see how his logical, easy-to-follow and hands-on teaching style have made their way to his book. My biggest complaint with tech books is the huge amount of raw data (not fun) you must deal with before actually working on the items you want to learn (fun). This is a non-issue in Don's book. He has you on your first task, installing the operating system, almost immediately in the first chapter (seriously, it's like the third page). This step-by-step method continues throughout the book. You can pick almost any task that you may be charged with (configuring an NFS server, for example) and find detailed, yet simple, directions on how to finish the job. During this process, you can't help but retain the information you've just worked with; it just makes sense. I can honestly say I've learned more from this book than I have from various classes (not referencing Don's classes in this case, obviously) I've taken in the past. It's a fantastic read, and it will easily benefit people of all skill levels.

I picked this book up not because I needed it for work, but because I was personally curious about the inner workings of Linux. When they say there is very little theory and mostly interactive examples, they mean it, and if that is how your brain functions you will feel right at home with this book. I feel much more confident in my Linux skills now and may be investigating further for my own personal gain. The book takes you through a fresh Linux install, to understanding the filesystem and command line, to getting the system online and hosting your email and web site (and everything in between). You can even learn how to turn your Linux computer into a router and firewall! Now I can get rid of that router I have to restart once a day. One part that stood out to me was the sections on getting your Linux machine to talk with the other machines in your house. I was able to connect to both my Mac and Windows boxes with ease, and can even control them straight from the Linux machine. If you suddenly find yourself as an "Accidental Administrator" and need (or want!) to use Linux, I would definitely suggest picking up this book. The step-by-step instructions alone can get

you set up with everything you need for a functioning network or server.

The book opens with a terrific description of installing CENTOS. Step-by-step. A real confidence builder. But then it starts shrugging off things like DNS, focusing only on a local network configuration apparently used by the author. To the author's credit he explains that the book is derived from a workbook he uses in his oft cited training courses. But in the end it comes off as something of a promotion for his courses where it quite conceivably could be useful. There are pearls in this book and while terse it has a consistent style that makes it quite readable. Consider this as perhaps a "first book" before you wade into the thicket of setting up a CENTOS/Apache server.

While this book is helpful in learning some Linux commands used by all distros, I found it was a bit outdated with regards to CentOS. I believe the book was geared towards a CentOS 6.5 version. This book is not helpful if you aren't running the specified version of CentOS. With CentOS version 7, many of the examples in this book are no longer valid or many warning messages are received due to the use of outdated commands. Don't get me wrong, this is a very good book. It just will not be very helpful if you are using a newer version of CentOS. However, it is good information to know.

There are two primary benefits of this book, in my opinion: 1) Concise (180 pages). You can actually finish it, rather than just having it sit on the shelf like the typical 700+ page tech book monster. I have used it as a broad overview to then search the internet for the exact steps I need in real situations. 2) Hands-on. It's clearly a training course material, but can stand on its own. You can install a free virtualization software on your PC (e.g. VMWare Player) and have CentOS running in under an hour. Plus, you can test some of the networking and file sharing with other machines (your actual desktop or laptop) this way. I have done some Windows Server administration for several years, and needed/wanted to branch out. If you have some understanding of server management and just need an overview of how to do it on CentOS/Red Hat, then this book is excellent. If you are new to server administration, then I recommend starting with a community college course or two that has GOOD instructors. If you have knowledge of Linux already, then this book probably isn't needed for you. With that said, here are my critiques for improvement: a) Needs to be updated to CentOS 6.x. Some of the Linux packages used in the book don't pertain any longer. b) Genericize the networking exercises (as much as possible) for stand-alone readers who are not in a training course. Perhaps leverage a virtualization software in the book for these purposes. c) Some key

concepts are not covered sufficiently, in my opinion: IP tables and package management pop into mind. Others could be removed (e.g. printing).d) Give a short description for parameters in the command line. Student Exercise 16.6, number 4, is a perfect example. I debate about this one, as it could lengthen the book too much.Overall, nicely done, and useful.

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