

Executive Summary

Customer

UKFast

Challenge

UKFast needed a cost-effective and scalable solution for teaching Linux to their apprentices, as well as students and teachers in the local community.

Objectives

- Develop the next generation of IT professionals by providing free Linux training to apprentices, schools and young people in the local community
- Deliver vendor-neutral Linux training aligned with Linux Professional Institute (LPI) certifications
- Track and assess learner performance to improve success rates and outcomes

Technology Solution

NDG's Linux Essentials, Linux I and Linux II courses enable UKFast to deliver free training to prepare learners for LPI certifications and new IT careers.

Results

Thanks to its innovative training and apprenticeship programs, UKFast boasts the largest number of LPI-certified employees in the UK. The company has used NDG's Linux courses to train apprentices, local teachers and students, and even clients, and it's now working with the Manchester Dean Trust to create a new high school in Manchester focused on digital literacy.

Training the Next Generation of Linux Professionals at UKFast

What do you do if your business depends on Linux, but you struggle to find qualified Linux professionals? This is precisely the challenge UKFast faced several years ago.

The Challenge

Founded in 1999, UKFast has quickly grown to become the largest privately-owned hosting provider in the United Kingdom. Linux has been at the heart of that success, enabling UKFast to develop innovative hosting solutions for small- and medium-sized businesses without depending on expensive hardware or software licenses. This open-source approach provides UKFast's customers with significant cost and performance advantages—and it's helped fuel the company's growth.

Yet, like so many businesses today, UKFast often struggled to find qualified Linux professionals. According to the Open Source Jobs Report, 87% of employers say it's hard to find open-source talent. But unlike most businesses, UKFast was not content to wait for others to find a solution to the global IT skills gap. So, it set about creating its own training programs.

In 2007 the company teamed up with Aaron Saxton (now UKFast Director of Training and Education) to build an IT training program for apprentices. Saxton immediately saw the need for a vendor-neutral curriculum and qualifications—and he partnered with Bill Quinn at the Linux Professional Institute (LPI) to align UKFast's training program with LPI's certifications.

The resulting apprenticeship program was so successful that in 2012 UKFast began looking at ways to extend its educational capabilities to the broader community in Manchester. To do this, it needed a cost-effective and scalable way to deliver curriculum, labs and assessments to a wide range of learners, including teachers, local students and even customers.

The Solution

UKFast discovered NDG's Linux courses in the Cisco Networking Academy (NetAcad), and immediately saw the value of NDG's innovative learning platform.

With NDG's Linux courses, students don't need to navigate the confusing world of distributions or know how to set up their own Linux machine. All they need to do is launch the module in a web browser. The Linux courses include a live Linux virtual machine alongside the course materials, so students can immediately start entering commands and learn by doing.

"With NDG's courses, we're now able to provide schools and young people in the community with free training for LPI's Linux Essentials certification."

Aaron Saxton, Director of Training and Education at UKFast

"It was a no-brainer to incorporate NDG's Linux courses as a core part of our curriculum," explains Saxton. "One of the challenges any training organization has is ultimately the labs. They take time to set up, maintain and keep up-to-date. Having the labs in the NDG courses makes our task a lot easier."

NDG offers three Linux courses aligned to LPI certifications. NDG Linux Essentials, available for free through NetAcad, provides an introduction to Linux and gives learners the basic command-line skills they need to obtain the LPI Linux Essentials Professional Development Certification. NDG Linux I and Linux II, also offered through NetAcad, provide learners with the more in-depth system administration skills they need to obtain LPI LPIC-1 and CompTIA Linux+ certifications.

Results

Today, UKFast has the highest number of LPI-certified employees in the UK. At any given time, the company has approximately 50 apprentices learning the skills they need to successfully contribute to the team. The business benefits from having ready access to LPI-certified professionals at a time when many companies grapple with the IT skills gap.

Moreover, UKFast has had a tremendous impact on the community. It offers free Linux training to both students and teachers, hosts a Coding Club for young learners, and serves as an exam center for qualifying schools, teachers and even clients. Most recently, UKFast has partnered with the Manchester Dean Trust (a consortium of eight primary and secondary schools) to create a new school focused on digital literacy to give young people the skills they need to thrive in an increasingly technology-driven workplace.

Explore NDG's Linux Courses

netdevgroup.com/Linux