The biggest LPI Mass Certification in the world

In the beginning of February this year, there were a mere 22 people in South Africa who held the LPI (Linux Professional Institute) Level 1 qualification. This, however, all changed on 25 February 2005, when world records were smashed with 196 people writing a total of 282 LPI exams in just one day. This event nudged out the previous record holders of LPI mass exam labs - China (with 200 candidates) and Hong Kong (250).

An even more impressive statistic, according to Alan McKinnon, head trainer at Afribiz, which spearheaded the certification drive, is that many exam labs usually don't produce full Level 1 graduates because candidates don't write both the 101 and 102 exams needed to obtain the junior Linux administration certification. But, says Alan, "we had 60% of (participants) tackling the 101 and 102 together", essentially quadrupling the number of Level 1 graduates in the country.

In addition to the Level 1 exams, a handful of Level 2 (intermediate) exams were also written.

But, emphasises Alan, "breaking records was never the focus." "The focus was always on giving you, the individual Linux sysadmin, the opportunity to prove your skills and test your knowledge. To give you the opportunity to earn the certification that the community built. If you passed the exams, it means you passed the test that the community and your peers set you. To me, that's thousands of times more valuable than any other certificate out there."

Alan pays tribute to the South African partners of this venture: The Shuttleworth Foundation, Smartsource, Obsidian Systems, Novell and NetCB, for having the common vision to improve open source understanding and Linux skills within South Africa.

The Shuttleworth Foundation plays the role of the LPI Affiliate for Southern Africa, who manage the exam process.

But if you missed out on the exciting event in February, don't despair. The LPI and The Shuttleworth Foundation have together committed to at least two more mass exam sittings this year – one in Johannesburg in May and one in Cape Town in September, in partnership with IDG and LinuxWorld. In addition, two coinciding exam item writing workshops will be held with LPI Level 1 Certified community members.

For these or other exam and workshop dates or for more information on getting involved with the LPI in Southern Africa, please contact Jason
Hudson or Karien Bezuidenhout.