

Write System Documentation

Information

These notes were originally written in the year 2000 as part of a set of LPI Exam 101 training materials. The LPI training course at Bromley College was subsequently discontinued and some of the sections of the notes modified and incorporated into our one-day System Administration Courses. The remainder of the notes have now been made publicly available on the linuxtraining.org.uk website.

If you are a beginner please do not be put off of training courses by these notes, as they are rather technical. On the other hand if you are a more experienced Linux user we hope you find the coverage of this topic refreshingly clear.

For full details of our current Linux training please visit the site:

<http://ce.bromley.ac.uk/linux>

If you have reached this page from a search engine and wish to see the full contents list for the published notes please visit the site:

<http://www.linuxtraining.org.uk>

We hope you find these notes useful, but please remember that they apply to the 2.2 kernel. I will update them when I have the time.

Clive Gould - 21st December 2004

Write System Documentation

Objective 3

Write System Documentation: Write documentation and maintain logs for local conventions, procedures, configuration and configuration changes, file locations, applications, and shell scripts.

Documentation

Writing local documentation and keeping up to date records is an important part of a system administrators job and can prevent a lot of wasted time if carried out properly.

It is recommended that the following logs are maintained:

- A System Installation Log
- A Change Log
- A Problems Log
- A Backup Log

The table below gives more information on these logs:

<i>Log</i>	<i>Description</i>
System Installation Log	<p>A system installation log should be maintained for each machine. It should contain all the installation details such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Hardware specification● BIOS settings● Type, number and size of drives● Partitioning structure● Hostname● TCP/IP settings● Network and graphics adapters and settings● X configuration settings● Attached peripherals

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<i>Log</i>	<i>Description</i>
Change Log	<p>A change log should be maintained to record what changes were made to each machine and why they were made. It should contain the information on the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Changes to hardware● Changes to hardware configurations● Applications you install● Changes to configuration files● Custom shell scripts <p>The documentation in the installation log and the change log should be complete enough to allow the system to be rebuilt in a minimum amount of time</p>
Problems Log	<p>When a problem occurs, you should document the details of the problem. The problems log should contain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● A description of the problem● The solutions you tried● The solution which worked <p>That way if you encounter the problem again you will be able to solve it in the minimum amount of time.</p>
Backup Log	<p>This log should be updated every time a backup is performed. It should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Date the backup was made● Name of the backup tape or CD● Type of backup made (e.g. full, differential etc.)● What filesystem was backed up● Where the backup media is stored. <p>This log will assist you when you need to restore backed up information.</p>

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You will also need to write user guides to tell both administrators and users how to use the system. These need to be clear, informative and user friendly. You should avoid the use of unexplained technical jargon wherever possible.

You can keep documentation in either paper or electronic form. The advantages and disadvantages are discussed in the table below:

<i>Type</i>	<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Disadvantages</i>
Electronic	Easy to update and search Easy to include command output and screen shots	No access if computer is down. Hard to carry around
Paper	Available if the system is shut down Can include screen shots and command output	Hard to update or search Can be messy and hard to read