Beat: Technology

Mad about technology

Free software, a good business

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USPA NEWS - This text comes from an interview with Jon Maddog Hall, during his latest visit to Colombia, where he reffered to the importance of developing free software not only as a mean of conceiving freedom but as a proper way to make bussiness.

When you talk to him, you cannot find nothing similar to a mad dog, maybe because you perceive there is much more going on his head, until you ask him and find that only at the age of 62 he has learned to control his temper; that is what he says about his nickname.

But when you ask him about his way of living based on technology and computers, you discover that his choice really helps the world, as well as the right of getting information and developing new ways to make business.

For instance, his latest acquisition and supporting activity is related to a new device named Raspberry Pi, which is a tiny computer that allows creative genius to develop any kind of equipments.

"The computer was developed in Cambridge University, it costs only 35 dollars and it was created because the professors saw a lot of students that weren´t programming, but just playing games. That upset professors because they say they just have students during 4 years; so everyone can play with this and programm in different computer languages", says Maddog.

He also believes that, by means of this type of prototypes everyone can learn how to develop free software and see clearly how computers really work. "In a lot of ways we don´t give credits to young people and we don´t give them enough chances to do what they want to do. The computer can even be used for highschool students, they can build electric circuits and control them and that will allow them to prototype new products, new ideas. People say to me, a highschool student can do that? Oh yes, I have seen 10 year old students doing things that would amaze most people. That's why the Raspberry Pi was developed."

But not everything is related to be creative, because there is also the complexity of business which Maddog believes is one of the mos important parts of the process. "Some people try to start companies without knowing about business plans, customers, so we want to be able to teach them how to think like that, so they won´t only be technical people but also be good business people".

Planning for Maddog is necessary, as well as prototyping and realizing clients needs. Of course, his biggest interest is making all that, based on free software. "For free software a lot of people think that they will charge just a little bit for their services, because they don´t want to make people pay a lot of money, but they after realize that they have helped somebody to save a lot of money, and they haven´t charged for their time and expertise. What I want to get across people is that free software is free as freedom and not free as a free beer, and that they have to charge money, but once they have created the software it is good that software could be free".

His concept of freedom then is related also to business, which makes you think that it is possible to be rebel, but also keep living in dignity, not only surviving.

Maddog explains that free software means "free to read the source code, to make changes to the source code, to redistribute those changes, to use software for any purpose, because you cannot limit another´s freedom".

For this rebel and hard worker, who doe not believe there is magic on anything, the only one path people should follow goes towards

freedom in the whole sense of the word.

"Many times I do not talk about freedom, instead I talk about slavery, beacuse people have much clear image of what a slave is. When you are a slave, you are told about when to talk, what to do, when to have children, you do not own anything because all belongs to the master. When you are a software slave, you are told of when to update, what computer systems you put it on, how a computer can be used, and you have no control whatsoever. So with free software you can make the choices because now it is under your control".

This is the most appropriate way of living and of gaining acces to a world that our masters insist is globalized but only for a few percentage.

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