THE PRESENT

This is not a war, but we will need a lot of good people not to lose.

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With ideas for a modern Ubuntu Desktop
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This is part 3 of 3 of my project - "Finding Ubuntu".
I recommend reading the first two parts "Introducing" and "Design".

Intro

After I spent a lot of time searching for Ubuntu, looking at other distributions and OS', and after I came up with the idea for the new design, I stopped at two sentences in the first part of "Finding Ubuntu":

> *Also, a very important task to do: To ship every necessary standard app.*
> *For the basic work and play.*

With that, I started to try apps, programs and tasks. How to do this, how to do that. And this is basically the essence of part 3: To see, how everything works on actual systems. Are they really complicated? When do I need to use the terminal? How to perform certain tasks? Search for files? Get to my apps? Get informations?

I used Ubuntu and Ubuntu Gnome (17.10 Beta), because they are the main focus. And what can I say: There is a lot of stuff that works, a lot is weird, and some things are just not good at all.

You will see, I tried to use every app and program for everyday tasks and did everyday tasks with the system suggested apps and programs. How can I do it, how do I need to do it and so on.
It became quite a list.

And to get started, let's repeat the sentences:

> *Also, a very important task to do: To ship every necessary standard app. For the basic work and play. And to give the user a straight and easy line how to handle lot of the day by day tasks.*

Standard App's

Standard apps are apps or programs, shipped with the operating system, to perform standard, everyday tasks. This is very important, maybe more important than the operating system itself. Because people are not working with the operating system, they are working with apps and programs.

People want to get things done, copy pictures and edit them a little, show a slideshow, cut a video and surf in the web. Or write something, make lists and read/write emails. That is and was one of the prime disciplines that macOS and Apple in particular understood from the beginning right away.

When you have a look at macOS, it seems they compromise here and there to not have to change the operating system on the surface, but to bring new functions to it. So, the system works basically the same for years now, like having a DeLorian DMC-12 on the outside (still a stylish, cool car, but also a little outdated), with the same way to drive it, but upgraded everything else - from the engine, to the transmission, the wheels and so on - also including new buttons in the interior.

They understood that the average user is sick to pay and have to get third party apps, maybe working well with the system, to maybe do tasks better. The user is also sick of having choice - they are not

interested which program brings them to the goal. It is just the goal they wanna reach, as easy and fast as possible. Also, Apple showed us that the user is accepting compromises to have a simple and working way to perform whatever task, as long they can do most of it. But the apps are getting better and better over time - and richer in functions.

This is where Microsoft started to work hard on the built in apps, to also have a simple, intuitive and out of the box working experience. They did not completely succeeded to this day, but they are making great progress over the last years. And this is where Ubuntu is nice, but not enough.

Develop and contribute

Well, I think as a developer of open source apps and programs you have the same problems like other developers. It's kind of fun to start and build the main functions, but after a time, it is boring to fix bugs and to develop some small stuff that is also needed. So the app stands still at version 0.58 because of for whatever reasons. At Apple or Microsoft, they get paid to go on and on.

Gnome is doing well. Maybe the way to get things done faster is to bring more people together and to control everything that needs to be done from one place and exchange between Gnome and Ubuntu. And yes, it will feel like hard work and it is. This is also what scares people, when having a full-time job next to an open source project.

People maybe have the feeling their opinion is counting less. This could also be right. What we are facing is the possibility to serve the greater good. This is not about not to listen to every voice, but to decide whether this brings us closer to the set goal or not.

It is simply not possible to satisfy each individual. But it is possible to offer something to the great masses. And for me, that is the sweet spot.

It feels a little bit like taking the fun out of it. Because I think of something like having some people in charge and let them decide what to do and they should not be too involved in the pure development and programming process. They only should care about thinking of the best Ubuntu desktop for everyone. And the programmers should take care of realizing it.

This is a little like a well known working method, because the Linux kernel itself, is developed by hundreds of people, but only a few decide whether a new patch is worthy to get in. Sure, with a desktop it's not possible to work the same way, but kind of the other side around. Some say what to do, others do it. The people in charge got to always have an overview of every project and always the goal in mind. That is their big responsibility.

And so you say: That's just like in a company. Having a manager for the whole thing also, having project manager for different parts of it and programmers and designers to get all of it realized.
Yes it is. Why? Because it works. And yes again: People will have to bring out their best to feel well in that kind of working order. From the programmer to the manager.

And now you maybe ask yourself: Why should we use a company management structure in an open source project? One does not exclude the other. This is kind of the fastest way to get back on track. In order to even have a chance to rule a part of the desktop world. And this is also the part where a lot of good people are needed to get things done.

As said before, I'm very grateful and appreciate all of the developers' work which is done to this day and from this day beyond. But to me it is so important that I spend dozens of hours to write and design all of this, to bring Ubuntu not only back to the top of the Linux desktop ratings, but to bring Ubuntu in a serious position against every other operating system. Nothing less.

Again, it is up to a lot of people to achieve that wish. To appreciate all of the work of the Ubuntu, Gnome and of course the Linux kernel team and focus on those parts as hard as possible to make progress. Leave selfish thoughts aside and work together. There will be time for other stuff later.

And then you ask: Why work for Canonical? They are a company and they are making money with all of that. Sure, they do. But how much costs Ubuntu? How many distributions are building on Ubuntu? How many systems are built on Ubuntu?

What makes Ubuntu strong, makes us all strong. Because we are Ubuntu.

The Market Position

When you develop or create something new - a product for example - you have to decide, where this product is positioned in the market. That's not very hard to grasp, but what's a little more complicated is, when someone else has an equal product.

Where do we position the product now? Maybe the competitor's product is already in the market and enjoys a lot of customers and love. Do we really want to position it on the exact same spot in the market, or do we have something that stands out to not only be a competitor?

You sure already know what I mean. Trying to fight against the big player is just something that's impossible. I have and will talk a little more about how to get Ubuntu in shape, but the statement here is that we need to find and position Ubuntu on the empty or specialized spots in the market.

So: What are the key features an Ubuntu desktop has, what a competitor doesn't? Ubuntu is already fast, secure and versatile. Like other systems. It seems that the Ubuntu desktop needs to be more confident where it is positioned.

It's free

Sure I came up with that, because it is true. But also other systems seem to be free. Windows has had a free update period and macOS brings you updates for years. But you have to get a shiny new, very expensive Mac.

People say: What does not cost a thing is worth nothing. But this can be proved wrong, I guess. Because there are a lot of markets out there, which welcome free software. Schools, communities, public facilities, companies, cities, clubs and so on. Also people who cannot afford anything else.

When we think hard about that we also will have a lot of more ideas to form Ubuntu.
And find ways and develop features that fit more to those needs.

It's private

The main problem is that people get used to be stalked. At first they scream and shout out loud: Stop that! But after years, they are used to every camera around in public places. Also they are used to send personal information all the time, when using a pc or phone. Especially because we don't see, hear or feel it. It's just happening.

That means that a really big and important market position should be the privacy.
Privacy is not only important to a lot of users, it is also very important to governments, communities and companies and so on.

With that in mind, we also should find better and more ways to serve that requirements.

It's a workstation

One mistake was to spend a lot of time and money on the phone market. Even if it was a nice and fresh bunch of ideas (I wished that had gone into the desktop…), but the phone market is dominated, there is no space anymore.

Also the tablet market is filled with a maximum of three players. Then I saw Gnome going the way to be a system for smaller screens. That's nice for Gnome, but Ubuntu should maybe not follow that way.
The good thing about it is to have nice, compact and standardized Gnome apps.

But what I want to say is, that people need to have a system to work on to get things done.
Write, create and… just do work! Again we are hitting on companies, administrations and creators of all kind, but of course also the user at home, doing stuff. Later, they show it to other people on their phone.

That is the essence of an operation system of that kind: to work and create. Not only to consume, not only to watch pictures and videos or surf on the web. But to edit pictures, edit movies and build a website. Work on spreadsheets and write on your new book. Design the cover of your new book and also the buttons of your website. Render 3D sequences built in Blender and (why not…) play the new AAA game in between (because of Vulcan and the upcoming excellent working and performing graphics driver by Nvidia and AMD, hopefully). And did I mention that this game was partly also created on Ubuntu?

Do that and more on your Ubuntu PC. Because it is versatile and powerful, not only there for you to enjoy all of your content, but also there for you to create more of it.

Ubuntu is not a phone, a tablet or a "Chromebook" competitor - Ubuntu is a workstation.
With all the benefits.

It's working on your hardware

Also a nice point: Ubuntu is working on your hardware - whatever it is. That's of course the effort of the Linux kernel team, but also the effort of the developer of the desktops, to run smooth on old hardware and on a Mac, a PC or whatever architecture.

That also brings us to the people without money, they may be collecting parts to have a whole pc - and Ubuntu is running on that (or maybe a distribution of Ubuntu). Also we need to have in mind that there is also a lot of work to do, because there are still problems with certain hardware or certain ways to work with hardware.

It's open source

This is handled last, because this is not very important to the ordinary user. Sometimes people have heard that wording, but most of the time they just can relate it with free software. But sure - this is also a market position.

When this is important to a user, he or she can choose Ubuntu as an open source alternative against every other operating system. Feeling the enormous effort every day and the great motivation of everyone involved and everyone that contributed to the system.

Also the opportunity to change parts to fit certain needs is a big plus. So I would see for example an Ubuntu desktop, tailor made for communities/municipalities, connected with other communities and the government. Running an Ubuntu server in the back, of course.

Working and Tasks

Next, let's jump into the tasks and apps of Gnome and Ubuntu. I also did not expect what I experienced, I was surprised and sometimes disappointed. Sure, the 17.10 release is not a main release, but I don't think that most of the results will change to the 18.04 LTS release.

And of course there are a lot of working pieces, but we know, I have to focus on what's not working well.

Files

I like the files manager in Gnome. It is simple, clean and just works. There will be space for improvements, for now it's good. But I could not get Google Drive integration to work… like never… Maybe because of the VM. Preview (description in the Help/Guide) via space bar is not working.
Also I could not find out what the arrows on the top, beside the folders do - not the back/forward buttons. Only (confusing) design? And where are the tabs?

Photos

That was a little weird. I like the look of the "Photos" app, but I don't like the way it organizes my pictures. Maybe just because it is more logical to have albums sorted by folders, when at the same time you have a tab named "Photos" where the pictures are shown by date. Also, it is a little weird,

that it just shows every picture from everywhere. Here it shows my Google Photos pictures (still can't reach Drive via Files). But the biggest fault is when you open a photo from "Files". This is a nice and clean viewer, but why is there no connection to the photo app? Even the click on "open with" just gives me Firefox (what?) and "Image Magick" – which should be hidden to every ordinary user out there… As a user I wanna open my photos, want to show it as a gallery and it should be easy and fast to make basic changes - like in every other operating system. And the photos app is able to do all of that - but not to view my picture fast from the files explorer. But Shotwell can. And is also there. So my question is: What??
Who will ever find a way through this?

Music

Rhythmbox is quite useful and good for having an overview of your music, but it is a little confusing, when closing the app and the music still runs in the background. Then there is no quick way closing the music in the info panel. And: Should it maybe named "Music"? And yes, there it is - "Music" - beside Rhythmbox in Gnome. I understand why there are two of them - because the Gnome Music player is not good enough for now. But good enough to confuse people what to use. Decide!

Videos

"Videos" or "Totem" would not play a video or music in the VirtualBox. By the way, "Totem" is not a nice name. Includes the German word "Tot" which means death, if you should wonder why. Also, when you have to kill the app (I had to do this a few times in the VM) it shows not the app name "Video", it shows "Totem". Maybe it should be a kind of media player, named after what it is playing. Music or video, but on a same base like Totem.

Calendar

Seems to work fine, also synchronizing with Google. More configuration would be nice in the future. Scrolling with the mouse wheel in months overview is a little weird. Maybe combine the "manage your calendar" and the "settings" (burger menu) button? Especially because in the "manage your calendar" button there are the calendar settings, which should be in the "settings" menu…

Contacts

Quite good app, also synchronized with Google Contacts. Hung up on me when it tried to show the map of the location. More than once. Could not include a note to a contact, but syncs notes at least from Google. Not sure if everything works with the sync… And: The app is not present in Ubuntu. Why? Maybe it is too useful… Maybe they don't want to make business users' lives easier.

Help

The "Help" app in Gnome is quite useful, hope they will keep it up to date and also adopt it nice for the new Ubuntu. And: Please get rid of the ugly lifebelt symbol, it's also irritating and the common symbol is a (blue) question mark. Like in Ubuntu.

Software & Ubuntu Software

It was a good choice to switch to the Gnome Software Center, but it still needs a lot of work. Like finding a nicer way to show apps in detail, making a better overview/categories at start, how to show pictures in a better way and separate user and power-user apps - ordinary users don't need to install "Gnome Packages" or a different terminal app. Also at this time - why are you hiding the "Education" category on the start screen? But there are a lot of good working app stores to learn from (also Linux based). After that, it would be useful filling the store with good/helpful descriptions and pictures.

Calculator

Everything I need, it is just kind of ugly and the Ubuntu version has a bad overview somehow... the contrast between the buttons may be too low. I recommend a whole updated redesign.

Weather

Nice little app, needs a reordering for better usability. And why not bringing that app to Ubuntu? People love to have a look at the temperature while having to work on the PC... but why having a description of the weather in the information center? That's neither common nor a fast way to do it. Also: Why is that app not following the design rules? It's looking good, but does not fit to the other system.

Documents

Will maybe be useful when bringing improvements in the overview, the way it sorts and separates the documents (like Drive, documents folder, other folders and kind of document...)
AND: Why having one app to find and show documents, another app to show documents in the file explorer and then having LibreOffice, to show and work with it... better spend the work in other areas for now.

Books

Could not try it, but the idea is good - when it works well.

Backup

That is a useful app, works for me the way it is for now. Would need a little redesign in a while.

Map

I'm not sure how useful this app is, because most of us use Google Maps and the ability to find more than just streets - like shops and restaurants and businesses - especially because of the extra information you get. But: I find myself just scrolling through streets sometimes.

Log In / Sign in

Well, when there is only one user, why have to click or to hit a key to enter my password? Just wasting time here. And: Where is the guest login?

Lock Screen

Yes, we have to think this over. Pictures as a background are okay - but is it a desktop, or a touchscreen system? It is just irritating to not see the input field for the password, I spend time to push the lock screen away to enter my password, just to find out, that this is not necessary. I would recommend to design a new lock screen, because I also like the idea of showing stuff like clock, weather and notifications, if the user wants to.

Password

Also weird: I can set up the PC with a worse than bad password like "ok", but then I can't change it to a weak password like "weak" afterwards. Warning is good, restriction is maybe not so good.

Updates

Also here we can find inconsistency: Updates via the "Software Update" app, or the "Software Center"? And they block each other from time to time.

Terminal

Again more than one. They are maybe handy, but "Terminal", "UXTerm" and "XTerm" is too much, even for pros. I think the "Terminal" is more than enough for most of us.

Settings

I really like the new settings. A wonderful new way, more logical, but also I found some things to think about. First of all: Why are you hating the user? Why should the damned owner of the PC be in "Details"? I had to search for that. It's just inconsistent, but at the same time things are just right. Like "Devices" - there are the devices. Perfect! But it would be nice to have the same way with "User", with sub sections like "Users", "Region & Language", "Universal Access", "Online Accounts" and so on. To give it a logical and user oriented feeling. I don't have a complete solution for now, but I would love to work on that as well. But for the start let's think about personal settings, which the user can change the way he wants or prefers, and global/system settings, he has or wants to do to the system, like connections, sound or devices.

Thunderbird

I have to admit that Thunderbird is still my favorite mail client on every operating system. And I know this is no Gnome app, but I need to say: There is no progress going on for a long time. And we all know there is still work to do. What work? What about finally letting people change the order of the mail addresses. Or have simple, but better input field for signatures - like you know from WordPress - to

not have to use external HTML editors. Maybe improve the design a little, give it a more modern look and feel. Better compatibility with different accounts. AND: Finally build in native sync for Google Calendar & Contacts - as well as other providers. I think I would find more things to do, but this is not about my beloved Thunderbird... just wondering how they handle a program with more than 10 million active users... maybe it is time for a new leader of the open source mail clients.

Apps & Programs Conclusion

That's it for now, there are much more things going on, but this should be also enough to break down, what I mean with "inconsistency". Gnome is close to be a continuous experience, but when you have a close look, it is still far away. I apologize if I am wrong somewhere, please tell me.

Also this list should be updated every 6 months to stay accurate. But maybe we find a better way till then.

But I have to say this task took not only a lot of time, but also cost a lot of nerves. It was often disappointing and irritating. Sometimes I thought something like "no wonder why…".

So the main task here should be to provide a nice, logical way to handle certain tasks. Not to have a handful of choices thrown on the floor. Pro users will handle everything their way and install everything needed. But the ordinary user is left alone in the dark sometimes.

Some of the mentioned points are of course personal opinions.

Overall Conclusion

It was quite a task, but also a lot of fun to design and to try to think things through. Overall it was quite exhausting writing all of that, but that thought needed to get out of my head to prove that there is kind of a sweet spot. Maybe you say that this is not finished and it is not complete. Sure. It´s not.

It´s a concept, an idea, and a brave glimpse into a possible future of our beloved operating system. That's the first step.

It is a thoughtful way of saying what I think Ubuntu needs, to be a whole and complete operating system, for everyone. But maybe it's too late. Maybe Canonical gave up on the own desktop, after a lot of people got nothing but hate for Unity 7. Maybe the time of the operating systems is over soon, everything runs in a cloud, in a browser. Maybe there is no space between the major players. And maybe the Linux desktop will always be in a niche, because it wants to be there.

Always be in an "almost finished" manner, always feeling good, but not good enough. From the community, for the community. Always the terminal in the back, that frightens the s*it out of the end user. And still HAVE to use the terminal for some stuff. Still, have the reputation of being difficult and for experts. Be the kind of system you boot when you have problems with Windows, but just to repair it, or to get your files. Being the system everyone knows for being sooo alternative and kind of cool, but never use it, because no professional program you need runs on it. Be sometimes childish and easily offended, always in change, so that no software company takes it serious enough to build their programs for the system. And instead of finishing development for an app, fork and have three slightly different, unfinished versions.

Well, I say f*ck that. That is a choice that needs to be discussed, and when the answer is yes, everyone should push as hard as possible. The Linux kernel is developed by a lot of people and companies. Linus is the man in charge. So, Canonical, let's try something similar. I also just can't understand why smaller private projects for desktops are way ahead of Ubuntu in usability and design. This just doesn't make sense to me.

And dear community & developers: Sometimes it is better to work together on one thing, to finish or make progress with it. Stop forking, start progressing. Sure, it is often a compromise, but you know, sometimes it just needs a little step to the side to see, that this is not always bad. So the compromise turns into a consensus. What I think is that all of us need an extraordinary base - found in a good, modern, stable, feature rich Ubuntu desktop.

Two more personal statements for the end:
I hope my work was not an enormous waste of time.
This is not yet finished.

This is not a war, but we will need a lot of good people, not to lose.