GORDON BUCHAN BLOG

A personal blog

DECEMBER 2, 2020 BY ADMIN

Fedora 33: Fedora version upgrade breaks a production web server, and Fedora's reputation for smooth version upgrades

My brother hosts his personal website and blog malak.ca on a baremetal DSL server. My brother uses Fedora on his laptop and server.

A perfectly good pre-fork mod_php MPM-ITK PHP handler was in place, and serving web pages.

Upon reboot after the major version upgrade, the web server was showing error 503 for PHP requests on the blog. The config files were a mismatched mess, so we ended up having to do a baremetal format. My brother keeps his data on a separate drive so the baremetal evac only involved a mysql dump file and a few config files, but still.

Note this post about Fedora 33: "Several relatively controversial changes are currently under discussion on the project's mailing lists…"

https://lwn.net/Articles/824620/

"The default doesn't matter, there's absolutely no reason to take away the sysadmin's choice here. There are at least 40 servers I personally am responsible for where I see no reason to move from mod_php to php-fpm, for example." John M. Harris Jr.

I was a CentOS web server admin for many years, and used Fedora on my personal laptop until last year. My brother ran CentOS in the past, but towards the end of the Long Term Support (LTS) cycle, CentOS had absurdly outdated but security-patched

versions of libraries. My brother started using Fedora on his web server, and we have been able to do several major version upgrades without incident. The reliability of this upgrade process is what made Fedora suitable for a web server.

Ubuntu has trouble with major version upgrades. On some Ubuntu version upgrades, the installer freezes, requiring that a rescue kernel be entered, apt-get update –fix-missing, dpkg –repair, and other exotic interventions take place before the upgrade process can be resumed and completed.

By comparison, Fedora version upgrading has a better track record, and is usually smooth. A technical error or unforeseen incompatibility would be understandable. A deliberate policy choice to break production web servers to enforce a policy opinion: not cool.

Fortunately, Remi RPM has come to the rescue:

https://rpms.remirepo.net/

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