
Subject: Stella Public Web Kiosk

Posted by [D8TA](#) on Fri, 19 Oct 2012 09:27:56 GMT

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I am coming from openSUSE where I used SUSE Studio to build a custom install of openSUSE where only the necessary packages are installed. In this case the kernel, Gnome Desktop, Printing, and Web Browser (Firefox). I believe that is all I have installed. I wanted a very slim OS to place on 15 PCs that I have for general web surfing.

Once I built the image up and had everything customized, locked down desktop so users could not change anything I used Symantec Ghost to ghost the HDD. Using ext3 Ghost works. I don't need LVM and just created a boot, swap, and / partition for these systems. Users are unable to save anything to the local drives. Once the image is dropped down on a new PC openSUSE has the ability to customize the first-boot which I then setup the time, networking, root password and all that good stuff. I also have a package called patch to email which is a cron job that checks the openSUSE update repos for updates and sends me an email regarding what updates are available. This is setup to run weekly in cron.

I discovered Stella and have been running it on my notebook for about 2 months now and want to try and replace my openSUSE Kiosk PCs with this distro. Is there a similiar way for me to do all this with Stella? Slimmed down with just the necessary applications, the ability to print and surf web pages? If I use ext3 partitions I know Ghost will work but couldn't find anything regarding customizing the first boot. Or is there a better method to accomplish what I am wanting to do with this locked down, single user, kiosk web browsing PC?

I believe that sums up what I am looking to do. I really love that everything I have tried to play or do with Stella just worked! Great distro and keep up the good work and most importantly...Thanks!

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk

Posted by [nux](#) on Fri, 19 Oct 2012 14:23:35 GMT

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Hello,

What you say can be done, but it would require a bit of work. If you're willing to wait I might have some time next week to assist you with this.

In the meanwhile, I wholeheartedly recommend you to check out a proper kiosk distro:

<http://webconverger.com/>

It may well be the answer to all your questions.

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk

Posted by [D8TA](#) on Fri, 19 Oct 2012 15:55:18 GMT

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That looks cool but I am looking for a free solution much like I have with openSUSE. Not sure I could get the peeps to spend the 100 year even though I think it would be well worth it. Plus I didn't see anything regarding printing.

I am going to continue to research and plug away so I can get Stella to do what I need. That would be great if you could lend me a hand, any assistance is greatly appreciated. Just let me know because I am not in any great hurry just would like to change over to Stella soon. Appears a bit more stable than openSUSE. Next week would be great.

Thanks again!

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [nux](#) on Fri, 19 Oct 2012 18:39:36 GMT

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Until next week can you prepare a detailed list with what Stella should be doing? I may be able to come up with a kickstart or even a custom image.

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [D8TA](#) on Wed, 24 Oct 2012 11:07:01 GMT

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I am looking for basic, simple features.

Auto login to a generic user account

Ability to setup a printer for printing, today and I see in the future printer is a Lexmark

Locked down environment so this auto logged in user account cannot save anything to the machine

Web browser that prevents modification by the user, I've found a few plugins that should help (CCK Wizard, Public Fox, and Menu Editor)

Ability to play most web media which Stella already does quite nicely.

Receive email indicating updates are available

These machines will all be using identical hardware so a standard image that could be cloned and have the ability to modify hostnames and all that unique setting per machine when setting up. openSUSE I use first boot to set hostname, root password, etc.

I think this is about it in a nutshell. Let me know if you want or need any more information.

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [nux](#) on Wed, 24 Oct 2012 16:04:24 GMT

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Hi,

Regarding security and retaining user data, would you say keeping /tmp and /home/guestuser as tmpfs (i.e. gets cleaned after each reboot) would be something useful?

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [D8TA](#) on Thu, 25 Oct 2012 00:13:31 GMT
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Yes, that would be useful. Never thought of that but great idea.

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [nux](#) on Thu, 25 Oct 2012 16:51:04 GMT
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I've just learned about xguest:
https://access.redhat.com/knowledge/docs/en-US/Red_Hat_Enterprise_Linux/6/html/Security-Enhanced_Linux/sect-Security-Enhanced_Linux-Confining_Users-xguest_Kiosk_Mode.html

Looks awesome! I'm getting more enthusiastic about Kiosk Mode Stella. I hope you're not in much hurry with this project, though.. It's not a thing I can have ready "tomorrow".

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [D8TA](#) on Fri, 26 Oct 2012 09:06:32 GMT
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Sounds awesome!! No, I am not in a super big hurry and appreciate your time and effort on this. I am just learning the Stella (RH) way of things with coming from SUSE there are some things that I usually use that don't appear to be present, tool sets. I would love to use Stella and I am looking forward to testing out your final release!

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [nux](#) on Fri, 26 Oct 2012 10:12:23 GMT
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D8TA,

I've played a bit with xguest and it's pretty sweet! I can generate you a custom Stella LiveCD image with xguest enabled or even an image that you can simply "dd" on to the PC's disk. Let me know if you would like software added or removed (otherwise it's stock Stella packages, some may be useful, some not). For additional security I can include <http://elrepo.org/tiki/kmod-tpe> , a really nice piece of software!

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [D8TA](#) on Fri, 26 Oct 2012 12:30:59 GMT
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If it isn't too much trouble please add the kmod-tpe package.

Would the LiveCD image have the ability to install to local disk? If so that would work; otherwise, how would I dd the image to the local disk?

Is it possible to print to say a Lexmark printer or I guess any printer for that matter? Since you have stock Stella I am guessing as root I can add printers, etc. I am just trying to think how I will take this Stella Kiosk image and image it to about 15 Kiosk PCs without requiring alot of time on my part to do so. Currently, I just PXE to a Symantec Ghost server and then select the image and when the image is dropped SUSE's YaST FirstBoot launches and I setup the networking, root password, license agreement, etc. Maybe I am overthinking this so once I get the image I will be able to see what else, if anything, may need to be done.

I soooo appreciate your work on this! Should be a good distro for others as well looking for a solid Kiosk image.

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [nux](#) on Fri, 26 Oct 2012 13:30:12 GMT
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D8TA,

Then if you are familiar with PXE already then I suggest the most elegant way to do this is to deploy Stella (or even Centos!) by this means:
http://wiki.centos.org/HowTos/PXE/PXE_Setup

Is this something you could do? If yes then we can focus our efforts towards a kickstart file that would give you a usable Kiosk out of the box.

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [D8TA](#) on Fri, 26 Oct 2012 13:58:49 GMT

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We do have PXE server I would need to contact that admin to see if we can piggy back off that. I don't see why not.

I do see value with the LiveCD as well if there is an install to disk option. Is it possible to do both without taking up too much of your time or resources?

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [nux](#) on Fri, 26 Oct 2012 15:56:33 GMT
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Nah, it should be fine.

Also, tell your admin that I could provide a raw image file with Stella, maybe it can be used with your existing Norton Ghost.
Let me know what he says.

Also, what arch are you using? Should I bother with 32bit or just go with x86_64?

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [D8TA](#) on Fri, 26 Oct 2012 16:04:22 GMT
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If you are able to provide a .GHO file we can try that. We can also try the raw image file as well.

I personally would use 64 bit but I think 32 bit will provide smaller image file right? If not or not that much I would use 64 bit so when the day comes when 32 bit systems are no more this Stella Kiosk image will still live on. :)

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [nux](#) on Fri, 26 Oct 2012 21:50:37 GMT
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Ok, here's a custom Live media with the xguest and kmod-tpe:
http://li.nux.ro/download/ISO/Stella6.3_x86_64.1_kiosk_TEST.iso

Let me know if it's missing anything.

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [D8TA](#) on Sat, 27 Oct 2012 00:46:07 GMT

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What is the password for the kiosk user? I can't get logged in. Anyway to get this user to autologin?

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [nux](#) on Sat, 27 Oct 2012 05:30:35 GMT
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There is no password for the xguest (aka Guest) user. Merely clicking on it in GDM will log you in. I did notice a bug where when you use "Switch user" as xguest in Gnome GDM won't let you back in. However if you do logout you can log back in without problems.

I'll try to raise a ticket with RedHat, see how we can fix the "switch user" problems.

Any more other problems you'd like to report?

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [D8TA](#) on Sat, 27 Oct 2012 12:27:03 GMT
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I tried just clicking on Kiosk and Log in but get Authentication error. Same if I try guest or Guest or xguest. I cannot get past the Login box.

Is it possible to auto login the xguest user?

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [nux](#) on Sat, 27 Oct 2012 13:51:44 GMT
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Hm, this is weird. I'm yet to encounter this problem.

Try to execute this in a console, as root:

```
cat >> /etc/gdm/custom.conf << FOE
[daemon]
TimedLoginEnable=true
TimedLogin=xguest
TimedLoginDelay=5
FOE
```

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [D8TA](#) on Sat, 27 Oct 2012 15:55:02 GMT
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What is the pass for root?

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [nux](#) on Sat, 27 Oct 2012 17:22:12 GMT
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Wait a minute! Are you running all this from the LiveCD? Try to install it on the HDD...

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [nux](#) on Sat, 27 Oct 2012 17:22:37 GMT
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And FYI there is no root passwd. Just use "su -" in a terminal.

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [D8TA](#) on Sat, 27 Oct 2012 18:41:29 GMT
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Yeah, I was trying the LiveCD. :d I installed to the drive and everything looked alright until I rebooted. Then gdm didn't start but wasn't sure if that was my video card or not. I could login as root and then run gdm but didn't know how to login to guest user as it asked about a security configuration and the default was [N].

Is there a way to customize the guest desktop? Remove all the Desktop icons and maybe even clear off the panel except the Firefox icon. Can probably remove all the other applications as well but it did install pretty quick. I still need to test the printing stuff to see if this user can print to a printer.

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [nux](#) on Sat, 27 Oct 2012 20:03:00 GMT
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Wow, any chance you can take a picture/screenshot of that GDM problem? You're hitting problems unknown to me.

Regarding the removal of Gnome panels and such, why bother? Better go with a minimalistic window manager instead.

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [nux](#) on Sat, 27 Oct 2012 20:27:50 GMT
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If you keep getting weird errors it might be because of kmod-tpe. Try to uninstall it and see if the issues persist.

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [D8TA](#) on Thu, 01 Nov 2012 14:32:42 GMT
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Any way to change the / partition to start at 20GB? Also wondering what is the best method to get update notifications? I currently use patch2mail on a weekly cron that emails me the hostname, IP address and what patches are available. This way I am not always checking for updates and the machine tells me it has updates. Makes administration easier. :)

I have been tied up the last couple of days but hope to test out more in the next day or two. I'll keep you informed and thanks again for all your hard work.

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [nux](#) on Thu, 01 Nov 2012 21:37:54 GMT
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Hi,

Been busy, too (RedHat dev day, yey!), I'll get back to this issue in the weekend. It would help if you could state your current situation: what works, what doesn't and what requirements are still to be satisfied.

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [D8TA](#) on Mon, 05 Nov 2012 19:10:44 GMT
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Sounds like fun, Red Hat Dev day!

I was able to get this to work after I installed again. Not certain what was going on originally but the xguest user appears to work as described. I have been trying to get printing to work but nada and then I read the doc again for the xguest user

https://access.redhat.com/knowledge/docs/en-US/Red_Hat_Enterprise_Linux/6/html/Security-Enhanced_Linux/sect-Security-Enhanced_Linux-Confining_Users-xguest_Kiosk_Mode.html and it looks like this will only allow Firefox web browsing? I wonder is there a way to configure the xguest desktop environment?

Another item, I would like to get the panel at the bottom as most users using this will be coming from Windows and trying to please customers. :d

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [nux](#) on Mon, 05 Nov 2012 21:15:42 GMT
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D8TA,

I'll have a look tomorrow at the printing issue and the bottom panel. There should be some easy way to do it via GConf.

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [D8TA](#) on Tue, 06 Nov 2012 10:12:52 GMT
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That is how I configured quite a bit of stuff on the openSUSE instance. I just couldn't find much information pertaining to the xguest and when I tried to configure settings obviously when I rebooted those modifications got flushed back to the default xguest settings.

Really a great concept, the xguest user that is, so hopefully there is a way to configure the xguest desktop environment using gconf.

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [nux](#) on Tue, 06 Nov 2012 12:17:11 GMT
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Can you try to do what they say here and check if it works:
<http://forums.linuxmint.com/viewtopic.php?f=90&t=111352& amp;p=623329>

Unfortunately I don't have access to a printer right now to test...

Regarding the panels, what exactly do you want to do? Move the top panel to the bottom and remove the bottom one altogether?

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [D8TA](#) on Tue, 06 Nov 2012 13:06:06 GMT
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That did the trick. I am able to print from the xguest user.

Regarding the panels I would like to move the panel to the bottom. Actually, it would be nice to be able to configure the xguest user with gconf to remove the Desktop icons and other "distractions" that many users would waste time on trying to break the system. Yeah, I have people like that. Feel the need to challenge themselves and try to mess up my Kiosk machines by changing background wallpapers, which is there a way to change that for this xguest user?, and just mess it up for everyone else.

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [nux](#) on Tue, 06 Nov 2012 13:12:37 GMT
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Well, the beauty of this implementation is all their changes will be removed once they logout, so why not let them mess around? :)

Let me look through gconf for the panel issue.

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [nux](#) on Tue, 06 Nov 2012 13:20:38 GMT
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Ok, found it, run this as root:
gconftool-2 --direct --config-source=xml:readwrite:/etc/gconf/gconf.xml.defaults -s -t "string" /apps/panel/toplevels/top_panel/orientation "bottom"

Then try to login as xguest. Both panels should be at the bottom.

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [nux](#) on Tue, 06 Nov 2012 13:31:48 GMT
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D8TA,

Regarding system updates and notifications, you can install yum-cron and then adjust /etc/sysconfig/yum-cron to your liking. Additionally you could subscribe to the centos-announce mailing list to be notified of updates:

"13:28 <@z00dax> the announce list gets the emails on a per package basis, but you can also subscribe to the digest version" said the Centos lead dev.

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [D8TA](#) on Tue, 06 Nov 2012 17:10:53 GMT

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That worked. So I guess I'll need to investigate the gconf stuff to make the other changes.

Granted I could let the users explore mess things up and then reboot to bring the system back but I know I'll get someone who doesn't reboot and then a user will call me saying the system is messed up or worse but some vulger background image on the desktop. I would like to keep everyting static and prevent users from doing anything but print and use the web browser.

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [nux](#) on Tue, 06 Nov 2012 18:19:12 GMT

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I'll look further into how to limit th eusers.

Btw, you don't need to reboot the machine, once you log out of the xguest everything disappears.

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [D8TA](#) on Tue, 06 Nov 2012 19:11:40 GMT

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I really like the use of this xguest user. Just wish I could configure everything THEN set the enforcing stuff. I have been trying to clear the Desktop of everything except a logout button. This way I could just have the users click this button to clear their activity after using.

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [D8TA](#) on Mon, 12 Nov 2012 17:14:15 GMT

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Is there an easy way to change the background image for the xguest user? I have been trying for days to change this and everything I've tried it goes back to the Stella default background.

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [nux](#) on Mon, 12 Nov 2012 23:02:35 GMT

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Try this:

```
gconftool-2 --direct --config-source=xml:readwrite:/etc/gconf/gconf.xml.defaults -s -t "string" /desktop/gnome/background/picture_filename /path/to/wallpaper.png
```

The above changes the default, system-wide setting.

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [D8TA](#) on Fri, 16 Nov 2012 10:27:33 GMT
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OK, that did the trick. I was able to use the gconf tool to make some additional changes and all looks good but I have been unable to figure out a few other things. One being add the logout/restart button to the xguest panel and remove the switch user and shutdown options. Second after I have everything in place what is the easiest way to convert this to an iso to install on other machines or "clone" to other machines? I don't want to customize each and every instance. Ghost doesn't support ext4. If I could convert this image to a bootable image similar to what you had provided with my customization I believe that would work unless there is an easier way.

Thanks again for your help and an awesome distribution!

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [nux](#) on Fri, 16 Nov 2012 11:01:03 GMT
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I think this is what Fragadelic is trying to do over at
<https://forums.nux.ro/index.php?t=msg&th=116&start=0> &
When he's finished you'd be able to make an image of the running OS.

In the meanwhile, I can create an ISO for you with the required changes, however I still need to find the time to mess around with Gnome panels, icon removals etc.
It should be possible to add or remove panels and panel entries through gconf only.

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [D8TA](#) on Fri, 16 Nov 2012 13:01:45 GMT
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I must have an issue with my Desktop image but with all the changes I have put in place the Desktop appears to be similar to what I am running currently with openSUSE. The only issues I still have is I can't get the panels customized for the xguest user. Here is what I am trying to get it to look like:

Firefox icon and a logout icon to flush the environment. I'll have auto login enabled so the system will just log back in to the xguest environment without having users figure out how to login to the system. Yes, I would have users who don't have a clue on this. :)

Any thoughts? I am continuing to look at the gconf stuff but nothing is standing out on how to remove the necessary items.

File Attachments

1) [image001.png](#), downloaded 1411 times

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [nux](#) on Sat, 17 Nov 2012 14:13:49 GMT
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Right, what I discovered is that you can easily do this by copying over the gconf directory. So just copy over the .gconf directory in /etc/skell and change owner (chown -R root:root /etc/skell/.gconf), next you log in as xguest you should have the same.

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [nux](#) on Sat, 17 Nov 2012 14:23:14 GMT
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If this works for you, then you could centralise /etc/skell on some NFS mount in the LAN or rsync it over from a central machine.

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [D8TA](#) on Mon, 17 Dec 2012 10:17:56 GMT
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That worked like a charm. Thanks! I finally got back around to finalizing everything but it appears Ghost doesn't like ext4 filesystems. I also could not make it ext3 because it said the image was created with ext4. Are you able to recreate that iso with ext3 filesystem? Or if you know how I can change the filesystem from ext4 to ext3 that would probably work as well.

Thanks and this is great stuff...keep up the awesome work with Stella. Great distro!

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [D8TA](#) on Tue, 18 Dec 2012 12:59:51 GMT
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I just discovered something vital! The PC hardware I have does not support 64-bit. :cry: Any chance you could roll up a similiar image using 32-bit?

I was wrong...I checked BIOS and 64 bit wasn't even enabled. Go figure. Trying again but doesn't look like 32-bit is needed. YeeHaw! :d

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [nux](#) on Tue, 18 Dec 2012 21:44:30 GMT
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Hey mate, I can generate a 32 bit iso for you if you want. Let me know if it's still the case.
If those computers are going to be upgraded in the near future I wouldn't bother with it though.

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [D8TA](#) on Wed, 19 Dec 2012 20:16:08 GMT
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Thanks nux but I am good, no need for 32 bit version.

I have encountered an issue related to SELinux. I set everything up the way I wanted and then copied the .gconf and .mozilla directories to /etc/skel. All is well and is the way I want it however, when you try to browse web pages there is a very, very long delay before the page actually completes. For example I try and pull up yahoo.com or msn.com the page is presented but then something else is going on, think it may be all the reference pages associated with the site, but Firefox appears to stop responding. If I put SELinux in permissive mode it works like it should. Pages pull up no issues but once I go back into enforcing mode the page loads but then hesitates but finally completes. Any thoughts on how I can correct this?

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [nux](#) on Wed, 19 Dec 2012 21:37:12 GMT
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Hmm, that's odd. Do you have a ".mozilla" directory in /etc/skel? If yes, what happens if you remove it?

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [D8TA](#) on Thu, 20 Dec 2012 16:24:38 GMT
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Same thing but without my customization. I am not that up on SELinux but how can I reset a directory for the xguest user?

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [nux](#) on Thu, 20 Dec 2012 19:38:12 GMT
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Well, running "restorecon -R -v /path/to/dir" (as root) usually does it, but in this case it might be more complicated since it's a special environment.

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [nux](#) on Thu, 20 Dec 2012 19:40:46 GMT
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Might be worth opening an issue on bugzilla.redhat.com for the "xguest" package with this problem.

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [D8TA](#) on Thu, 12 Dec 2013 19:11:19 GMT
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Been a long time but was wondering if the Kiosk Stella ever made it out to the world? I recently did a quick Google search but didn't find anything.

The current hardware that I am currently using is being replaced so I thought this would be a good time to see about refreshing the OS with the latest 6.5 version.

I am still dumb founded that this distro isn't in the top 10 of Distro Watch! Great distro.

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [nux](#) on Fri, 13 Dec 2013 10:16:07 GMT
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Hi D8TA,

Unfortunately it has not made it, due to time constraints. At this pace we'll probably have it done on EL7. :)

Thanks for your appreciation. :)

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [D8TA](#) on Tue, 02 Dec 2014 10:33:33 GMT
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I was getting ready to update my machines to the latest and just wanted to check back in to see if the kiosk version made it yet?

I am still currently running the 6.5 version and when I try to update my machine just sits on a cursor and I cannot do anything. Not sure if that is a grub thing or what but luckily my test machine is a VM so I was able to revert back to a snap.

I'm thinking about taking your advice and just let users login and do whatever and when they logout it would be nice to have their profiles removed so the next user would have a clean environment and/or prevent users from writing or saving to the disk to prevent any issues I would have to resolve. :d

Subject: Re: Stella Public Web Kiosk
Posted by [nux](#) on Tue, 02 Dec 2014 14:54:51 GMT
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Hi,

Alas the Xguest feature is still not working, I think it has problems also in Fedora and EL7. I don't think it's unreasonable to expect it never to work properly. :)
So for a kiosk, perhaps mount the homedir in RAM and reboot on logout or smth like this; just an idea.
