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Microsoft's Savvy Open Source Move

posted on: **April 04, 2008** | about stocks: MSFT
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Repeat after me: Microsoft (MSFT) Windows is wildly popular for running open source applications.

Skeptics may not believe that statement, but it's true. Whether its the Firefox Web browser or the latest open source server application, chances are there's a very popular version for Windows.

And Microsoft wants to keep it that way. In fact, a small but strategic Silicon Valley company is helping Microsoft to certify open source applications for Windows Server 2008.

It's a super-smart move by Microsoft, I believe, since the software giant needs Windows Server to continue to compete effectively against Linux servers.

First, let's be clear: Despite growing Linux deployments, Windows Server remains quite popular for running open source applications. SugarCRM, the fast-growing open source application provider, is quick to note that many of its business developments occur on Windows Server. And Microsoft itself has sponsored SugarCRM's conferences, in order to stay in front of open source crowds.

But Microsoft isn't stopping there. The company is working with SpikeSource to ensure open source applications work with Windows Server 2008. SpikeSource has so far certified five PHP applications for Microsoft's new server operating system, according to SpikeSource's Web site.

I first heard about SpikeSource in November 2006, and I have watched the company a bit since that time. SpikeSource specializes in certified open source server stacks. Or, in everyday terms, SpikeSource makes sure open source applications work together -- as advertised.

SpikeSource also has a relationship with Intel (INTC), according to the chip giant's corporate blog, and Intel apparently is pumping \$10 million fresh dollars into SpikeSource.

At first glance, that's ironic: "Wintel" working closely with an open source company? Intel has long supported open source companies, and Microsoft is learning to do the same — at least for selected, highly strategic engagements.

That's certainly the case with Windows Server 2008, where Microsoft hopes Windows replaces Linux in the LAMP stack, according to *All About Microsoft* blogger Mary Jo Foley.

Companies like SpikeSource could help Microsoft in that effort.