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12 Reasons Why Every Linux System Administrator Should be Lazy

by Ramesh Natarajan on July 20, 2011

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Lazy sysadmin is the best sysadmin –Anonymous

System administrators job is not visible to other IT groups or end-users. Mostly they look at administrators and wonder why sysadmins don't seem to have any work.

If you see a sysadmin who is always running around, and trying to put down fire, and constantly dealing with production issues, you might think he is working very hard, and really doing his job. But in reality he is not really doing his job.

If you see a sysadmin (UNIX/Linux sysadmin, or DBA, or Network Administrators), who doesn't seem to be doing much around the office that you can see, he always seem to be relaxed, and he don't seem to have

any visible work, you can be assured that he is doing his job.

The following are the 12 reasons why a lazy sysadmin is the best sysadmin.

1. **Who is the boss?** The main reason why lazy sysadmin is the best sysadmin is because of his attitude. They look at the machines little differently than how other IT departments looks at them. There is a difference between developers and sysadmins. Developers thinks they are here to serve the machines by developing code. There is nothing wrong in this approach, as developers have lot of fun developing the code. But, sysadmins think other way around. They think the machines are there to serve them. All they have to do is feed the machine and keep it happy, and let the machine do all the heavy duty job, while they can relax and just be lazy. The first step in being a lazy sysadmin is a slight change in attitudde, and letting the machine know that you are the boss.
2. **Write scripts for repeated jobs.** Being lazy means being smart. A smart sysadmin is a master in all scripting languages (bash, awk, sed, etc.,). Anytime he is forced to do some work, and if there is a remote possibility that the work might be needed in the future, he writes a script to complete the job. This way, in the future when he was requested to do the same job, he doesn't have to think; he just have to execute the script, and get back to being lazy.
3. **Backup everything.** Being lazy means taking backup. A lazy sysadmin knows that he has to put little work in creating a backup process, and write backup scripts for all critical systems and applications. When the disk space is not an issue, he schedules the backup job for every application, even for those that are not critical. This way, when something goes wrong, he doesn't have to break a sweat, and just have to restore from the backup, and get back to whatever lazy stuff he was doing before. This is also the [rule#1](#) in the three sysadmin rules that you shouldn't break.
4. **Create a DR plan.** Sysadmins doesn't like to run around when things go wrong. When things are running smoothly, they take some time to create a DR plan. This way, when things go wrong, they can follow the DR plan and quickly get things back to normal, and get back to being lazy again.
5. **Configure highly redundant systems.** Lazy sysadmins don't like to get calls in the middle of the night because of some silly hardware failure problem. So, they make sure all the components are highly redundant. This includes both hardware and software. They have dual network card configured, they have dual power, they have dual hard drives, they have dual of everything. This way, when one component fails, the system still keeps running, and the lazy sysadmin can work on fixing the broken component after he wakes-up in the morning.
6. **Head room for unexpected growth.** Lazy sysadmin never allows his system to run in full capacity. He always has enough head room for unexpected growth. He make sure the system has plenty of CPU, RAM and hard disk available. When the business unit decides to dump tons of data over night, he doesn't have to think about how to handle that unexpected growth.
7. **Be proactive.** Being lazy doesn't mean you just sit and do nothing all the times. Being lazy means being proactive. Lazy sysadmins hate being reactive. They are always anticipating issues and anticipating growth. When they have some free time in their hand, they always work on proactive projects that helps them to avoid unexpected future issues, and to handle future growth.
8. **Loves keyboard shortcut.** Lazy sysadmin knows all the keyboard shortcuts for all his favorite applications. If he spends significant time everyday on an application, the first thing he'll do is to master the keyboard shortcut for that application. He likes to spends less them on the application to get his things done, and likes to get back to being lazy.

9. **Command line master.** Every lazy sysadmin is a command line master. This applies to Linux sysadmin, dba, network administrator, etc. If you see an administrator launching a GUI, when the same task can be done from the command line, then you know he is not a lazy sysadmin. There are two reasons why lazy sysadmin loves command line. For one, he can do things quickly at the command line. For another, it makes him feel that he is the boss and not the system. When you use the command line, you are in control, you know exactly what you want to do. When you use GUI, you are at the mercy of the GUI workflow, and you are not in control.
10. **Learns from mistake.** Lazy sysadmin never likes to make the same mistake twice. He hates to work on unexpected issues. But, when an unexpected issue happens, he works on fixing it, and thinks about why it happened, and he immediately puts necessary things in place so that the same issue doesn't happen again. Working on the same problem twice is a sin according to lazy sysadmin. He likes to work on the problem only once, do things to prevent the same mistake from happening in the future, and get back to being lazy.
11. **Learn new technology.** There is nothing wrong in learning a new technology to get a better job, or just to keep up with technology growth. But, lazy sysadmin doesn't learn new technology for this reason. Instead, he learns new technology because he likes to be in control of the systems all the times. He knows he is the boss, and not the machine. So, when a new technology comes, he takes time to study them. Now he has new tools that he can use to keep the system busy, while he continue to be lazy. He learns new technology just for selfish lazy reason.
12. **Document everything.** Not every lazy sysadmin does this. Only the best lazy sysadmins does this. You see, lazy sysadmin never likes to be disturbed when he is on the beach enjoying his vacation. So, what does he do? He documents everything, so that when he is not around, other junior sysadmins can do the routine job, and get things moving without disturbing his vacation. There is also another reason for the lazy sysadmin to document everything; because he forgets things. Since he is lazy, he tends to forget what he did a month ago. Since he never likes to think and research the same topic twice, he documents everything, and when he needs to do the same thing in the future, he goes back to his documentation to understand what he did earlier.

Probably you are now convinced that begin a lazy sysadmin is not that easy. It is lot of hard work. If you are not a sysadmin, you can now apprecie a lazy sysadmin when you see one. If you are sysadmin, and always running around, now you know what you need to do to be lazy.

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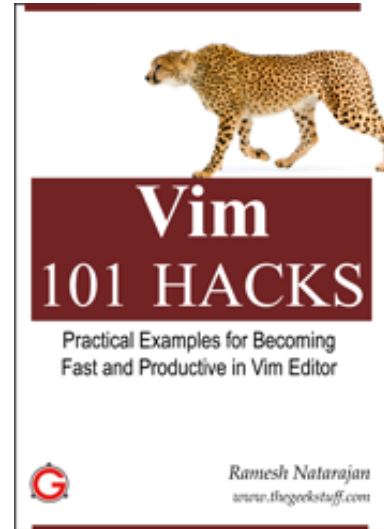
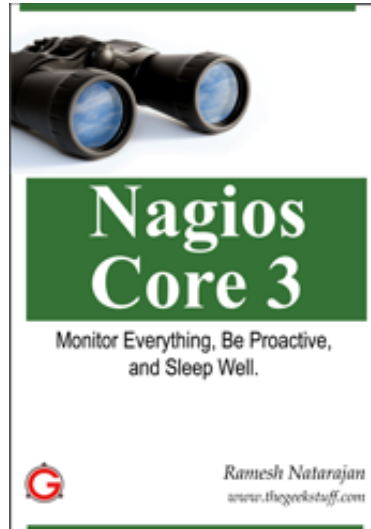
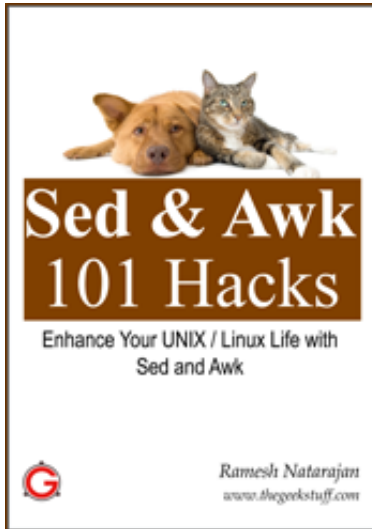
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[1 jay](#) July 20, 2011 at 12:24 am

13.Has a great monitoring system.. 😊

[2 Cuetzpallin](#) July 20, 2011 at 12:48 am

Hell yeah!!! everybody at the office says that I only drink coffee and walk around the desks, but they doesn't know the reason behind the scene.

[3 Norbert V](#) July 20, 2011 at 2:31 am

Nails it. I'm loving this post 😊

Perfectly describes my every-day life at work 😊

[4 Anonymous](#) July 20, 2011 at 3:23 am

Ha ha ha ..Good post,I like it and my respect for sys/dba admin increased after reading this.

[5 Venu](#) July 20, 2011 at 4:19 am

Nice article..

[6 Sham](#) July 20, 2011 at 4:20 am

Great tips for SysAdmins..Loved the article..Thanks for posting

[7 Pushpraj](#) July 20, 2011 at 4:20 am

Great one...liked it...:)

[8 E. Menout](#) July 20, 2011 at 4:39 am

Great post. Very good.

[9 Jollyr](#) July 20, 2011 at 5:05 am

i like this post sometimes reflections of my personality...hahahaha

[10 Bhargav](#) July 20, 2011 at 5:37 am

Superb....!!! 😊

[11 Navin Pathak](#) July 20, 2011 at 5:51 am

Very good Morning,

very funny and very logical.

[12 Jordan](#) July 20, 2011 at 7:39 am

Couldn't agree more but requires support from whatever organization you are working for. It's hard to be relaxed/lazy when there isn't enough capacity for backups, systems are old/aging/consistently dying, redundancy is seen as waste, etc...

[13 Aye Kay](#) July 20, 2011 at 8:19 am

lovely. way to go

[14 Hamilton](#) July 20, 2011 at 9:11 am

strongly agree with this article

[15 McNally](#) July 20, 2011 at 10:06 am

Great post! Made me laugh and it's so true. Thanks Ramesh!

[16 jalal hajigholamali](#) July 20, 2011 at 11:11 am

Hi,

13) Know your job and customer type

[17 Vinay Jhedu](#) July 20, 2011 at 11:16 am

This is really nice article and is inspiring me to be a sys admin

[18 P.R.Karthik](#) July 20, 2011 at 11:27 am

As a junior MySQL DBA your articles makes me to grow on Linux too.

[19 Kevin Benton](#) July 20, 2011 at 11:49 am

Here are some additional items that I don't see:

- 1) A lazy administrator writes and automates tests to verify that recovery processes will work before those processes are needed. There's nothing worse than needing to restore a backup that's unusable. It's easy to forget (as an administrator) that after doing the backup, our job isn't done yet – we need to verify that we got what we needed. Failing to make sure that a backup succeeded is worse than not taking a backup at all because it lulls others into a false sense of security.
- 2) A lazy administrator uses version control to track configuration changes. This makes it possible to see what changed at what time so others can quickly see not only what was changed but when it was changed. This also makes it possible to revert back to an earlier configuration and makes it a lot easier to catch mistakes by comparing current with previous.
- 3) A lazy administrator writes re-usable libraries of administration tools for him/herself and/or his/her company. A smart administrator keeps a copy of that library for him/herself when legally allowed to do so, giving him/her the ability to carry that library to his/her next job.
- 4) A lazy administrator extends monitoring systems to do more than simply monitor systems for issues. A lazy administrator writes automation to handles failures as much as possible without human intervention and notify others even if the system automatically fixed the issue.
- 5) A lazy administrator tracks issues and resolutions in an issue tracking system. This allows monitoring systems, the administrator, and others to report issues in the issue tracking system so not only is the problem documented, but so is the fix along with the process used to fix the issue.
- 6) A lazy administrator utilizes maintenance windows to handle tasks that may have a negative impact on production environments. This helps everyone better communicate when an outage is likely or planned.

As you alluded to, being a lazy administrator is not about wanting to avoid work. It's a state of mind that seeks to work in a way that avoids unplanned work for the administrator and unplanned outages for users.

kbcmdba

[20 Pablo](#) July 20, 2011 at 12:16 pm

Excellent! Thank you!:)

[21 battlesysadmin](#) July 20, 2011 at 11:08 pm

Love love love this post. My goal is to be LAZY!

[22 Anonymous](#) July 21, 2011 at 12:50 am

Yes, it is hard work,being lazy.

[23 benjamin](#) July 21, 2011 at 1:20 am

14. Read The Geek Stuff: Lazy sysadmin reads The Geek Stuff and learn cool tricks 😊

[24 Sathiya](#) July 21, 2011 at 9:42 am

Nice post !

[25 Anonymous](#) July 21, 2011 at 11:00 am

1. Who is the boss?

As a developer, I must be doing it wrong, or I should be a sysadmin 😊 . I have always thought the machine should be serving me. Otherwise good post.

[26 Andrew](#) July 22, 2011 at 12:50 pm

I gonna to be the laziest admin in the world!!

[27 Vonskippy](#) July 22, 2011 at 4:21 pm

Nice article – but why the photo of a bean counter at top? No self respecting SysAdmin worth his pay wears a suit unless it's job review day, or a co-worker (or server) died.

[28 Jwalant Natvarlal Soneji](#) July 28, 2011 at 8:06 pm

It makes me remember admin guy in my last comp!

A really nice article!

Thanks!

[29 wey~!](#) July 30, 2011 at 4:22 am

Nice...I want to be a lazy admin...I think and im really sure that my Senior database admin is a lazy admin 😊 I'm saluting him..!!

[30 Birger](#) August 1, 2011 at 5:41 am

Tha lazy sysadmin writes his documentation in /bin/bash language. So he never has to follow his

documentation, just run it.

Web applications get documented as /usr/bin/curl commands.

Thanks for the article.

[31](#) silver August 6, 2011 at 12:20 am

nice post, i think i have to be lazy sysadmin

[32](#) flyhaze August 19, 2011 at 8:39 pm

nice, i very like the article.

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My name is **Ramesh Natarajan**. I will be posting instruction guides, how-to, troubleshooting tips and tricks on Linux, database, hardware, security and web. My focus is to write articles that will either teach you or help you resolve a problem. Read more about [Ramesh Natarajan](#) and the blog.

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