InfoWorld Home / Networking / The Deep End / Take this GUI and shove it

The Deep End
PAUL VENEZIA

OCTOBER 04, 2010

Take this GUI and shove it

are

In many cases, a command-line interface makes life easier than some fancy GUI. Here's why

are

Print | 6 comments   Like   18 people like this. Be the first of your frien

‹ previous page   1   2   3

are

These examples are based on network devices, but the same concept holds true for just about anything. If you have to make significant, identical changes to a bunch of Linux servers, is it easier to log into them one-by-one and run through a GUI or text-menu tool, or write a quick shell script that hits each box and either makes the changes or simply pulls down a few new config files and restarts some services?

And it's not just about conservation of effort -- it's also about accuracy. If you write a script, you're

are

certain that the changes made will be identical on each box. If you're doing them all by hand, you aren't.

are

As to my mention of Windows earlier, I definitely use the GUI tools extensively -- while there are CLI analogues to many of the GUI interactions, that's not universal. However, when faced with a task like having to make significant permissions changes on large filesystems, I'll use fileacl 10 times out of 10.

are

The moral of this particular story is that GUI interfaces are fine and necessary in many cases. But they need to be built after a complete CLI is already in place, and they cannot interfere with the use of the CLI, only complement it. Otherwise, all you've done is make easy things easy and hard things much harder.

This story, "Take this GUI and shove it," was originally published at InfoWorld.com. Read more of Paul Venezia's The Deep End blog at InfoWorld.com.

‹ previous page   1   2   3

Tags: networking

Print | 6 comments   Like   18 people like this. Be the first of your frien

Sign up for InfoWorld's Today's Headlines: First Look newsletter ▸

Recent Posts

- Take this GUI and shove it
- iPad redux: Apple listens to users!
- Dear VMware: Please don't buy Novell
- Terminal servers -- saving your bacon, one console at a time

List of all recent posts

Recommended Resources

See all *White Papers / Webcasts* ☞

Most Popular

- 10 great free desktop productivity tools that aren't OpenOffice.org
- You can no longer rely on encryption to protect a BlackBerry
- Five-year plan: 8 problems IT must solve
- Is open source a dead end for desktop applications?
- Microsoft Security Essentials: Free, so what's the catch?

IT Jobs

Related Content...

- **An Improved Architecture for High-Efficiency, High-Density Data Centers** | White paper
- **Data Center Infrastructure: Optimizing Business Value** | White paper
- **Cooling Strategies for IT Wiring Closets and Small Rooms** | White paper

---

☉ Additional Resources

WHITE PAPER
7 Technologies Behind Ultimate Storage Efficiency

Get the most out of the storage you already own. Download this whitepaper today and examine 7 key technologies behind maximizing your storage efficiency.

Download now »

WHITE PAPER
Insider Threat Deep Dive Report

Stop unscrupulous insiders. A clever criminal can lull the boss into believing nothing is amiss. Systems designed to monitor the network for patterns of criminal or destructive behavior are much harder to fool. Learn how to put the right countermeasures in place and vastly reduce the threat posed by insiders.

Download now »

WHITE PAPER
A Powerful Platform for Virtualization

Examine the 5 unique requirements that virtualization imposes on hardware, and discover how the next generation of HP's ProLiant server line can deliver virtualized, efficient data centers, rapid ROI and lower operational expenses.

Download now »

WHITE PAPER
Backup Best Practices for HP EVA and VMware

Address the backup and restore challenges created by virtualized server environments by following these technical recommendations. Learn how VMware Consolidated Backup in conjunction with HP Data Protector can realize a VMware ESX backup that surpasses the 1 TB/h performance threshold, while minimizing storage resources overhead.

Download now »

Comments 6 of 6 comments   **Sign In** or **Register** to comment

uke
4-Oct-10 6:52am

captcha registration and still the spammers manager to register!

Count me in the CLI camp. GUIs trick people into thinking they know what they are doing, often with disastrous results.

---

registering_is_unhelpful
4-Oct-10 7:27am

1 reply

How many network admins do know what sed is? Let alone use it

Let's face it. You, Myself and other old timers do have some understanding of using utilities to speed up our work. However, WE ARE AN EXTINCT BREED.

CLI is very helpful in management of IT infrastructure. However, many IT managers don't have any clue on using CLI utilities, They lack programing skills and they know when and on what to click. That's the IT today.

Matt Cary
4-Oct-10 6:49pm

>How many network admins do know what sed is? Let alone use it

I would guess that many more people know sed now than knew it 20 years ago. Many newbie admins of today will be power admins 5 years from now.

It's true that there are many more people now who admin systems by GUI, but we shouldn't let the vendors dumb down our essential tools. It serves no one in the long run.

---

tscoff
4-Oct-10 9:58am

I agree completely. I find it entertaining that the more time I spend working in IT the more I work with a CLI. It's more reliable, it works faster, and it's easier once you get over the initial learning curve.

My employer cares about results. The faster something gets done the happier my employer is. So I work with a CLI and I expect people working for me to learn it too.

Linatux
4-Oct-10 4:49pm

I prefer CLI, but there are plently of times (less familiar tasks) I find a menu/GUI easier. What I hate is when the gui doesn't refer to the .conf file but uses it's own stored settings. YaST (last time I used it) was awful for this. Change something manually - works fine. Use gui to change something else & your manual change gets overwritten - unacceptable!!!

JasonDick
5-Oct-10 4:51am

I have to agree with this article rather strongly.

GUI's are great when you are only going to perform a task every once in a great while, so that the primary time sink is learning the system. Any good GUI is always going to be much faster to learn than a CLI.

But this pretty much discounts the usefulness of GUI's for any sort of serious system administration tasks. Sure, YaST is great for the single-user PC (it's one big reason why I run OpenSUSE on my laptop), but I agree that there's no way in hell I'd want to use YaST to work on multiple machines at once. And probably not even on my single machine if I spent much time fiddling with the configuration.

So yeah, if a company is expecting to sell products in a business setting where more than one computer is expected to be in use, a fully-featured CLI is absolutely essential.

Search