

CHANGE IS GOOD?



Rikki Endsley, Editor in Chief

Dear Ubuntu User Reader,

Early in my career, I worked for an international company that regularly reorganized, laid off, hired and shuffled people, and launched, rebranded, shuttered, and relaunched publications. A few times management reminded us that “Change is good,” but we editors revised that statement and repeated, “Change

is good. You go first.” If you started using Unity when it first rolled out or have been playing with its new Head Up Display (HUD) feature, you probably understand what we meant [1].

I still haven’t warmed up to Unity, but I am adjusting to it. HUD isn’t working for me at all yet, but no one said it would, either. In fact, the HUD page on the Ubuntu wiki warns, “HUD is in a very early stage of development, and not ready for production use.” With that in mind, I am curious to see where HUD goes from here, and I applaud Canonical and the Ubuntu developers, testers, and community for trying something new.

When I asked my Twitter, G+, and Facebook connections what they thought of the latest Ubuntu release, the responses were mixed. On Twitter, @johnkerr writes, “I like HUD for finding programs. Unity is great for people who only use a small number of programs,” and then he added, “software ctr is better, I still like synaptic, Unity is such an improvement I do not know what the fuss was about.”

On G+, Dietrich Schmitz says that HUD is “counter-intuitive,” adding, “Really, it makes no sense to remove a proven-technology (Menus with accelerators) and coerce users to ‘recall’ or haphazardly hunt for what they need. (Sigh) I am sorry HUD is horrible. I am using Kubuntu 12.04 LTS. KDE is the ‘gold standard’ in Linux Desktop UIs. Beautiful, replete with functionality, and it doesn’t need third-party utilities to make up for deficits (e.g., Tweak-UI). There. Thanks. I feel better.”

On Twitter, Ted Gould replied, saying that he likes HUD, but then he admitted he might be biased. After all, in addition to being the co-founder of Inkscape, Gould is a Canonical developer on the Desktop Experience Team. When I asked him to tell me more about the feedback he’s getting from users, Gould replied, “There are a lot of passionate HUD users, and that’s really cool. But, it seems that a lot of people don’t really know what it is.”

Gould says that not even Ubuntu kernel developers understand HUD. One developer Gould spoke with thought he was using HUD, but was actually using the Dash. “Really, that’s not all bad, as we knew when making it without a visible mark and with the limited scope of just searching the menu items we were scratching the surface and effectively making it an ‘enthusiast preview,’” Gould says, “But we wanted to get the idea out and usable. And I think we’ve accomplished our goals there.”

Gould says he doesn’t know how far along HUD will be by the next Ubuntu release this fall, explaining, “We want to get more data out of applications and expose it to the search and make it more workable than just strings in menus. I don’t know how much of that will land in 12.10 just because it’s a lot of work. If you think about it, the HUD started when we did Dbus menu in Lucid [2].”

What do you think about Unity, now that it is starting to mature? And how are you feeling about HUD? Email us at edit@ubuntu-user.com and tell us what you like – or don’t like – about the changes in Ubuntu.

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[1] Unity and HUD: <https://wiki.ubuntu.com/Unity/HUD>

[2] Dbus: <https://launchpad.net/dbusmenu>