COMMUNITY AND COMMUNICATION

Posted on February 13, 2010 by Eddie

Category: Mission

Over the last few days, I've been on the fringes of a new community and it's been a fascinating experience. After years of using MS-DOS and then Windows, I've been giving Linux a try (though this is not a post about Linux). Because I've been trying to do a few non-standard things, I've spent a fair bit of time reading Linux forums looking for advice. Here are a few thoughts...

Not everyone speaks Linux! I'm far from a computer novice, but I really don't speak Linux. Unfortunately, far too many Linux enthusiasts assume that everyone speaks their own particular jargon. Even when writing for newcomers, they load their advice with confusing terminology. Sometimes a writer will put something in clear English, but will then link to a jargon laden page at some crucial point.

You need to start where people are. Newcomers to Linux will often write things like 'I know how to do this in Windows, but I'm confused in Linux'. Embarrassingly, Linux enthusiasts will often reply dismissively by saying something along the lines of 'If you are so keen on Windows, go and use it then'. They don't hear the question, the person is not saying that Windows is better, they are simply saying that Windows is familiar and they need some advice. The best writers on Linux start of by saying 'you are used to doing X in Windows, but in Linux you need to do Y, here is how you do it'.

Reflecting on this, I wondered whether newcomers find our churches similar to the way I found the Linux community. Do we expect people to automatically speak our Church language and do we expect them to understand our insider culture without us helping them to make the transition? Just a thought.