Top 10 Windows Applications (free)

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freeware productivity programming software windows

Well, I've spent the last 12 months working on a Windows box (doing Unix development). In the last 12 months I have found a few freeware apps I could not live without - they are now part of my standard deployment toolkit.

I'm a bit of a windows gumby, but I've found that with the right tools you can start making yourself feel more at home...

1. Putty (including pageant) - ssh client software for Windows (pageant is great for caching your private keys).
2. Winscp - secure copy tool for windows (uses the aforementioned cached keys in pageant).
3. gnuWin32 - give you heaps of standard unix utilities for use in the windows shell (no more cursing when you type ls, or try using tab completion!).
4. Password Safe - Application written by Bruce Schneir for managing your passwords/passphrases
5. Virtual Dimension - Virtual desktops for windows!
6. 7Zip - Open Source winzip replacement
7. Rocketdock - Mac OSX-like Application launcher for windows!
8. Firefox + my favourite extensions (of course)
9. Lookout - google for your outlook (you may need to scour the web to find an executable, Microsoft bought the company and crushed the product).
10. Notepad++ - suitable replacement for the standard notepad application, open source, fast, tabs - love this little editor.

Runner Ups: ActivePerl, Ruby, Eclipse, TortoiseSVN, JEdit, vim... I've been using cygwin for several years - it still has a number of annoyances (wacky path issues, crap UI (bad font support), out of date packages...). Don't get me wrong, it's bloody useful - but I don't like it.

I recently trialled andLinux as a potential replacement - it runs up the Linux kernel as a user-land process, provides integrated X support, nice fonts, good package management system (apt/synaptic) - still only in Beta, but it looks like a suitable alternative to cygwin (keeping in mind that it does not use native Windows executables like Cygwin does).

Still not ready for prime time, but it's pretty damn impressive. Installed chrome at home the other day - interesting UI, good speed (I believe they wrote their own javascript engine to enhance the performance of their complex web apps) and solid security architecture, I didn't see any of the "killer" features I was expecting to see from Google.

Looks like they are starting to promote the technologies we will see in their Android mobile computing/phone operating system. As a heavy Firefox extensions user I'm going to find it very hard to migrate.

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