Trustix Secure Linux FAQ

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1 Why TSL?

1.1 Q: Why make another linux distribution when there are already so many others?

A:
After installing other distributions on various servers we came to the conclusion that it was just too much work. Many packages unneeded on a server, like the X windows system and its libraries were included, and hard to remove. Also most distributions come with many services running, which would have been nice if the world consisted only of nice people, but as the internet of today is plagued with both "script kiddies" and more evil computer criminals, running unneeded services is a no-no.

We wanted something that an experienced sysadmin could install and have configured in as short a time as possible, while still going easy on the inexperienced user. We wanted less bloat and more focus on security. We wanted Trustix Secure Linux.

1.2 Q: How does Trustix Secure Linux differ from other distributions?

A:
As noted earlier, it is made especially for servers.

Perhaps most noticable we have included no X windows system. This makes sense as TSL is a Unix-like system and therefore very friendly to remote administration. A GUI would only waste memory, CPU cycles, and disk space.

We also try to maintain secure defaults. As it is easier to know what is needed than what is not needed, the default configuration for the system is not to run any services at all. An admin will know what services to run, but as admins are people too, not all admins would bother to close down the services they do not have to run.

As most other distributions we also strive to update our programs both for features and for security reasons. It is a goal that no known security problem in Trustix Secure Linux should be there for long.

2 Installation

2.1 Q: I run windows. How can I download TSL and create a CD?

A:
Get the iso image that should be on most mirror sites. All good CD writing programs support writing a standard iso9660 image file to a CD.

2.2 Q: What does trustix-1.1-20000724.i586.iso mean?

A:
After a release, we still try to keep the current version up to date. This means that every time we release an updated package for the distribution, we will build an updated iso image. The dated file is just a symbolic link to the "undated" version, so you do not need both the trustix-1.1-20000724.i586.iso and the trustix-1.1.i586.iso. These two are the same file.

2.3 Q: TSL 1.2 won't boot on my AMD Athlon/Duron

A:
This is a known bug in the kernel, and thus TSL-1.2. It should be fixed in the upcoming 1.5 release. The problem is that the kernel thinks it should be disabling your PIII serial number, but since you do not have a PIII, this does not work.

Until 1.5 is released, you can type '`linux x86_serial_nr=1`' at the boot prompt when installing, and make sure to specify the `x86_serial_nr=1` argument when the installer asks for special kernel arguments. This should make the kernel behave better.

2.4 Q: What packages do you include?

A:
Really... Go check the packages on the ftp site.

3 General

3.1 Q: I can't su to root as user 'foo'

A:
Trustix Secure Linux uses a wheel module for PAM to limit the amount of users that are allowed to su to root. Make sure your user is listed in group root, edit the file /etc/group to do this, ie:

```
root::0:foo
```

Separate more users with commas:

```
root::0:foo,baz,quux
```

3.2 Q: Why don't you support my ISA network/SCSI/coffee making adapter?

A:
Our reasoning is plainly and simply that the ISA architechture introduces many possible errors on your system (for instance, unlike PCI devices, you cannot reliably probe for devices, if you did, chances are your system locks solid). In addition, the age of the ISA bus shows, both in speed and reliability and since you already need somewhat a modern PC to run TSL in the first place, we thought we should save you from even considering it.

Why is speed an issue? An ISA network adapter can not keep up with a 100Mbps network. A SCSI controller on ISA is at best the bottleneck of your system, and will hurt you even more than the network card. You really don't want either on a server, and that is what TSL is made for.

Note that ISA video cards will probably work quite well, because these generally require no specific software support for just a text terminal.

3.3 Q: Why no telnetd?

A:
The standard telnet daemon for linux does not support any secure form of authentication.

We therefore encourage the usage of ssh instead of telnet and include only the ssh daemon. (The telnet *client*, however, is a very nice tool for example for interfacing directly with your mail server and other everyday network debugging tasks, and is therefore included.)

3.4 Q: Why no kernel 2.4

A:
The 2.4 kernel series has not yet proven itself to be so stable that we would recommend that people use it in a production environment. We have therefore shipped the Trustix Secure Linux 1.5 release with a 2.2.19 kernel for maximum stability. We hope to be able to use a 2.4 kernel as the default for the 2.0 release.

In the meantime, TSL 1.5 should be compatible with a 2.4 kernel, so compiling and running one of your own should be quite easy.

3.5 Q: When will the next release be out?

A:
When it's ready.

3.6 Q: Where can I find more information on a particular feature in TSL?

A:
If you do not find any relevant information in the documentation available on the CD and our web site, you could try checking if the package itself has some files under /usr/share/doc on an installed system. If you still can't find anything, try checking the HOWTOs at www.linuxdoc.org.

If you fail to find any helpful info at these places, it's time to ask on our mailing list. Note that you will have to be subscribed to post. Subscription information is available at our web site.