

# Locatrix and Ubuntu

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## Company Overview

Locatrix Communications is a developer of mobile location-based application services, for deployment by enterprises and mobile network operators.

The four-year old Brisbane-based company is the brains behind the Uandme™ social networking service, which lets mobile subscribers find their friends, receive alerts when they are nearby, and browse for places to meet. Uandme™ also allows users to share geo-tagged content – such as text messages, blogs and photos. The service is currently being deployed on a number of mobile networks in Australia, Asia and Europe.

## Business Challenge

When Telstra, Australia’s leading mobile network operator, wanted to enable a social networking community across its extensive subscriber base, it selected Locatrix to provide an industry-leading solution

The Locatrix UandMe™ service, which in the Telstra context is known as WhereisEveryone, lets users with GSM, 3G and HSDPA mobile services keep a real-time and constantly updated snapshot of colleagues’ and buddies’ locations on their cell phones, and set up individual alerts. Once the group - all users have to expressly permit the tracking - has converged, they can use location services to help them find a nearby point of interest or meeting place.

Locatrix started development on Sun hardware running Solaris, then went the Linux route - first with Red Hat Linux and then, after active lobbying from their software architect, to servers running Canonical’s Ubuntu distribution.

“We tried Ubuntu as a development platform and it quickly spread through our various projects, (so) we made a decision to host our first mobile operator deployment - Telstra - on Ubuntu,” said Locatrix Founder & CEO Mark White.



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## Ubuntu Solution

Ubuntu fit the job like a glove, he said. For one thing, it allows developers to install and lock down the specific components they want. That has big ramifications from a footprint and security perspective. Unlike other major Linux distributions, with Ubuntu there was no need to recompile from source code every time the developers had to work on more than one native platform.

“The minimum install capability lets us deploy a basic LAMP configuration very quickly, running only the services and daemons that we need - and nothing else,” he stressed. “Hardware detection is fantastic and the stock kernel has everything we need. From a security standpoint, the fact that we get to select very specific package sets to be installed is useful.”

The company’s developers also rave about Ubuntu’s AptGet (advanced packaging tool) which automates the retrieval, configuration and installation of applications and eases their management. AptGet is a “huge improvement” over the RPM package manager found in other distributions, White noted.

In addition to PHP and Python, Locatrix developers use JavaScript and Java as required. They also work with Visual Studio when they have to program for Windows Mobile devices, but other than that UandMe is a solid LAMP citizen.

## The Result

Telstra, which launched the service via its BigPond Mobile portal in February 2007, is thrilled by the uptake of Whereis Everyone. Indeed, the community of users grows by thousands every week, and the stability of Ubuntu Linux has been a key factor in the service’s success.

