

Linux Magazine: Subscription Woes

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For the third year I've been receiving a subscription to **Linux Magazine**, however for about 6 months I'd not actually received it, but the subscription was still valid and I did not change any of my customer data such as the address. It took me a while to realize that something was wrong, and I just bought it off the rack during that time.

I finally got around to writing to their customer support email address, and the response I got was completely underwhelming. Most email responses were to the effect of "sorry, can't find you in our database", with no further questions or follow up. I'd reply back with details about my mailing address, billing information, and information directly off the mailing label, and I sent this to a wider distribution as I began searching for all related Linux Mag emails that I could find. Replies to this varied widely. One told me that I had a subscription and it was valid until Feb 04 but with no follow up on my request for missing back issues. Another reply to the same email said that they still couldn't find my customer id in their database, again, with no follow-up.

By this time I was becoming enraged, so I emailed the editors, the sales staff, and customer relations. Customer relations were consistent and they replied back that I did not send them enough information, not telling me what information exactly I was missing. Apparently they never bothered to scroll down to see earlier parts of the thread with all that data in the body. One editor did reply, and completely agreed that customer relations there handled this very poorly, and he vowed to bring my complaint to the Circulation Manager.

Unfortunately, before his reply, I had telephoned Linux Mag directly to find out what's up. They also could not find a trace of my customer history, although strangely enough they thought I was someone else who happens to work at my company... has he been receiving MY magazines I wondered. In the end, there was nothing they could do because I was a non-person in their records. I just want my subscription to start and if possible I'd really like my missing back issues. Just to expedite things and set the record straight once and for all, I decided to just pony up another 20 bucks and buy a new subscription (which would start in 6-8 weeks!!!). A day later I got another reply from a Linux mag customer rep stating that they still could not find me in their records, although very interestingly my credit card already showed a charge for the \$20. Funny bout that, isn't it?

About a week after having received the reply from the editor, at least a month from seeing any new issues, I got a postcard in the mail stating that my old subscription had the wrong zipcode and they use the zipcode to identify the customer. I ask you, are there so few customers out there that there's one subscription per zipcode? Don't they use firstname/lastname as a unique id or primary key? Yikes, already! How was it that I was happily receiving my subscriptions, sans 6 months, if I had provided the wrong zip code in the first place?

The postcard went on to reply that they were indeed going to send me my AWOL back issues, and that they had combined my new subscription with a 6 month extension of

my old subscription to provide me with pure reading pleasure for the next 18 months!!!
Count'em up!

Alas, a FedEx envelope has arrived dutifully, containing all 6 issues of my lost flock.

Thank you Linux Magazine. Thank you ;-)