Myths vs. Facts

in the case of

SCO vs. IBM

Because of the technical nature of the SCO vs. IBM case, there are a lot of misconceptions surrounding the case. Let's set some of the facts straight.

- **Myth: SCO owns UNIX**
  SCO owns only the rights to System V UNIX -- an ancient distribution no longer in production -- and its own UNIX distributions: OpenServer and UnixWare. Based on the settlement of the 1992 case *USL vs. University of California*, other distributions of UNIX -- including IBM's AIX, SCO's UnixWare, Sun's Solaris, and Linux -- have all been so heavily modified from the original UNIX code that they can be considered entirely distinct products. SCO can claim no rights over any products not its own. SCO doesn't even own the UNIX trademark; UNIX is a trademark of The Open Group.

- **Myth: SCO's OpenServer and UnixWare are major UNIX distributions**
  Even by the most liberal estimates, SCO's products cannot have more than a 5% share of the UNIX market.

- **Myth: IBM copied features from SCO's UNIX into Linux**
  SCO has not enumerated which features IBM allegedly copied into Linux; they have used only the blanket term "enterprise features," which commonly means support for multiple processors, large amounts of memory, and a "journalled" filesystem. System V -- due to its age -- does not contain any of these features, but Linux and OpenServer do. In all cases, Linux out-does OpenServer in speed, range of features, and reliability. Why steal parts for a Mustang from an Escort?

- **Myth: Linux would not have enterprise features without IBM's help**
  Linux already had support for multiple processors and large memory long before IBM contributed any code to it. In fact, Caldera Systems -- SCO's predecessor -- had funded some of this development. IBM's contributions have accelerated the development of existing features more than they have added new features.

- **Myth: The Open Source development community -- particularly Linus Torvalds -- has a blasé attitude towards intellectual property rights.**
  Programmers, not lawyers, comprise the bulk of the Open Source development community. Linus Torvalds manages a team of hundreds of developers that contribute dozens of changes per day. Under these circumstances, Linus has to trust each programmer to contribute proper code -- much like a movie director trusts his music crew to obtain copyright permission for songs used in a movie. The development process remains completely open, so that if any issues arise, the code can be audited easily -- and changed if necessary -- in the future.

For much more detailed information about the SCO vs. IBM case and the tangled history of UNIX development, please read the Open Source Initiative Position Paper, available at:

http://www.opensource.org/sco-vs-ibm.html