



Repositioning the KDE brand

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Introduction

The past years have seen pervasive developments in the KDE universe. The application framework has grown, matured and gone cross-platform, as have the applications. Strong growth in our community has created an increasingly diverse and large set of high-quality applications.

In the process, KDE's identity has shifted from being simply a desktop environment to representing a global community that creates a remarkably rich body of free software targeted for use by people everywhere.

***KDE is no longer software created by people,
but people who create software.***

To be able to communicate this clearly in our messaging, it is necessary to reposition the KDE brand so that it reflects this evolution and stands for the community, our international team of talented developers, artists, usability specialists, translators and other contributors who make the project what it is today.

This way the KDE brand will become the umbrella brand for the technology we create together. The workspace, the desktop itself, will get its distinctive "KDE Workspace" brand to give it its own identity which can't be confused with KDE as umbrella for platform and applications.

Proposal

1. Retire the term "K Desktop Environment". Replace it by "KDE".
2. Use the term "KDE" exclusively in two meanings:
 - a) KDE, the community, which creates free software for end users.
 - b) As an umbrella brand for the technology created by the KDE community.
3. Create distinct brands for the software that was previously referred to generically as "KDE", such as the desktop workspace.

Details

1) Retiring the term "K Desktop Environment"

The expanded term "K Desktop Environment" has become misleading, ambiguous, and obsolete. Settling on "KDE" as a self-contained term makes it clear that we have made the shift from a limited set of software components to a community providing an ecosystem of free software applications and platforms for the end user on the desktop, mobile devices, and more.

The term "K Desktop Environment" can be accurately and completely replaced by "KDE Community", "KDE Platform", "KDE Applications" or specific KDE application names, depending on what is actually meant.

We may even want to stop talking about “desktop environment” at all. For the desktop itself we will have the clearer "KDE Workspace" brand, and the huge set of KDE applications can be put under the KDE umbrella brand using more specific brands for individual applications or application suites. The confusion about what a desktop environment is and implies can be avoided by using clearer terms in this manner.

2a) KDE, the community

The main feature of KDE is the community. That's the ground on which everything we do is based. This includes the KDE culture, the KDE values and the KDE mission. The community is also what ties us together and gives us an identity. This identity is KDE. So it seems very obvious and natural that the brand and term "KDE" stands first and foremost for the community.

Sometimes we use the term "KDE project" as a weak way to say "KDE community". We have grown far beyond the situation where you could refer to KDE as a “project”. It is not a limited effort to solve the problem of having a desktop GUI for Linux anymore. It has evolved into a thriving community of people continuously working on creating and improving free software for end users based on specific values, ideals and goals.

The KDE brand transports the values of the KDE community, such as freedom, technical excellence, beauty, pragmatism, portability, open standards, international collaboration, professionalism, respect, and great teamwork.

2b) KDE, the umbrella brand

In the context of software KDE acts as an umbrella brand for the software created by the KDE community and software using the KDE platform. This includes the KDE platform itself, the KDE software distribution, and all other KDE applications.

The KDE Platform

The platform consists of shared libraries and a runtime base.

The libraries include:

- Qt, the core and UI toolkit.
- The KDE libraries containing Qt extensions and the framework to integrate with the desktop and use desktop services in a standard way.
- Bindings for various programming languages.

Technically Qt is not released as part of KDE, but it is the most essential component of the platform and is developed closely together with the KDE platform. As such it can be considered part of the platform.

The primary goal of the KDE libraries is to provide integration and cooperation across applications based on standards while making development easy. This means providing integration layers with underlying technologies such as D-Bus, HAL, kioslaves, multimedia backends, PIM storage, search and semantic data engines or standard file formats like ODF. This is all based on standards specified by general standard bodies, freedesktop.org or KDE itself.

The runtime base includes:

- Tools required to run desktop applications like control modules or help center.
- Required data like localization information and icons.

The runtime base provides the non-library infrastructure to run fully functional and integrated desktop applications.

The KDE platform is required to run KDE applications. Together with some additional development data and tools it provides the KDE development platform, which is used by core and third-party developers to create KDE applications.

Some specific parts of the KDE platform are referred to as pillars of KDE.

KDE Software Distribution

The KDE Software Distribution is a collection of basic components and applications which are released together as a coordinated effort. This distribution represents the core set of applications which provide a clean, basic desktop experience. The KDE Software Distribution is divided into thematic modules including:

- workspace (Plasma, KWin, System Settings...)
- base applications (Konqueror, Dolphin, Konsole, Kwrite, ...)
- personal information management, or PIM (Kontact)
- games, education, networking, graphics, multimedia, administration, ...

Applications that make up the KDE Software Distribution may be run independently of each other and additional applications can be added without problems. These applications can be freely mixed with applications using other frameworks and run in whatever desktop environment one may choose.

KDE Applications

KDE applications use the KDE platform as a toolkit and to integrate with desktop standards, so they can be run on various desktop implementations, be it GNOME, Windows, or MacOS. They can be freely mixed with other desktop applications independent of the toolkit or framework with which they are written (e.g. Firefox, OpenOffice, etc.).

In addition to the applications released as part of the core KDE software distribution there are thousands of additional KDE applications. Some are large, sophisticated products in their own right such as KOffice and Amarok, while others are smaller like many apps on kde-apps.org. They all use the KDE platform to integrate with the desktop and in some cases use KDE development infrastructure, such as the KDE Extragear source code repository. They may be released independently or aligned with KDE Software Distribution releases.

All these applications are part of KDE, but also have their own identities. Being part of KDE means that they are developed by members of the KDE community and that they use KDE technology. It does not mean that they are tied to certain desktop implementations or can only be run in combination with other KDE applications. For the end user this choice in underlying technology is transparent. A KDE application should provide a great experience because it's based on great technology and is created by people sharing the KDE values, not because it runs only in a specific desktop environment.

3) Create distinct brands for the software that was previously referred to generically as “KDE”, such as the desktop workspace

Calling the workspace "KDE" is misleading and might create the impression that it is a requirement for running KDE applications. So branding the workspace under a separate brand, e.g. "KDE Workspace", makes it align on the same level with all the other KDE applications which are a part of KDE, taking into account that KDE applications run just as well on any other workspace implementation, Linux, BSD, Solaris, Windows or MacOS.

The KDE workspace consists of the components which make up the desktop itself, which is contained in the kdebase-workspace module. This includes KWin, KDM, Plasma desktop shell, KRunner, System Settings, KSysGuard, etc.

By separating KDE-the-workspace from KDE as a whole, we can make it attractive to be more closely associated with the KDE brand, as the message becomes clear that KDE is not a desktop environment but rather provides one as a product.

It also gives the workspace components more freedom to be marketed independent of KDE as a whole, just as all other KDE applications are. Users of other desktops can run their applications together with KWin, KDM or Plasma just as they can run other KDE applications and vice versa. The workspace is a component like other KDE applications are as well.

Implementation

The following would need to happen to implement this proposal:

- Decide on sub-brands for the various KDE components that lack proper brands, particularly the workspace. A brand has to be found that is acceptable to KDE, Plasma, KWin and KDM (these are currently the primary active and important workspace teams). "KDE Workspace" might be acceptable, but something more crisp and marketable would be desirable. We also need a brand for the KDE platform. "KDE Platform" might be ok, but something more powerful would be desirable here as well.
- Start to use the KDE brand and the chosen workspace sub-brand actively in our communications, making sure to distinguish between them in a natural way, and start treating the workspace as "just another product" in these communications.
- Perform a press release noting the repositioning of the KDE brand to be more inclusive of all platforms and of all efforts (not just coding), and that as such it has been decided to brand KDE as the entire community effort, instead of just the workspace efforts.
- Rewrite key areas of the kde.org web site to reflect the new brand; reveal these changes with release of 4.2 (or 4.3 if necessary).

Time line

The marketing team would like to see these changes begin to happen by the release of 4.2. We would like them to be complete by the release of 4.3.