Team Silverblue - The Origins

What is Team Silverblue?

Team Silverblue is an initiative around an overarching developer desktop story, starting with what was previously known as Fedora Atomic Workstation. The descriptive name for this product is **image-mode container-based Fedora Workstation based on rpm-ostree**, which is clear but terrible for branding. Therefore, we call it Team Silverblue.

The long-term goal for this effort is to transform Fedora Workstation into an image-based system where applications are separate from the OS and updates are atomic. Red Hat engineers have built most of the pieces for this new desktop over the last few years: OSTree, flatpak, flathub, rpm-ostree, gnome-software. Endless has already gotten there with Endless OS and delivers what we are envisioning.

Fedora Atomic Workstation (FAW) was in stealth mode as part of Project Atomic and used by only a few people, mostly within the Project Atomic team. It has been classified as hobby or side project.

The image mode is a good fit for the main Workstation use case that is being promoted here: a container-focused developer desktop. It also enables scenarios that require frequent rollback, such as classrooms and exams, and is good for testing.

Team Silverblue is a Fedora initiative that needed to work fast in order to not lose the current upward momentum - the plan is to fully integrate into the Fedora space by Fedora 30 (circa May 2019) at the latest. It might then be called Fedora Silverblue in case the branding takes off or simply Fedora Desktop.

There is a side benefit of drawing in current non-Fedora users to Fedora. As soon as it's feasible, it will be on the Fedora website and integrated properly (possibly F29).

Read on for more details.

Who is Team Silverblue?

Team Silverblue was born out of several discussions around Fedora Atomic Workstation. Sanja Bonic saw this as a good way to promote Project Atomic - which worked. We have doubled the number of IRC users (up to 300) within a few weeks after devconf.cz, we have people asking questions on the mailing list and receive positive feedback specifically about the Workstation - mainly due to the talks and subsequent blog posts on gnome.org by Matthias Clasen.

Team Silverblue was previously Fedora Atomic Workstation and the SIG for it under Fedora was initiated by **Owen Taylor, Matthias Clasen,** and **Sanja Bonic.** Colin Walters had an advisory

function during the SIG creation. Other regular participants in the SIG meetings include Kalev Lember, Micah Abbott, Dusty Mabe, and Stephen Milner.

How did Team Silverblue happen?

Several people from the Project Atomic side and the desktop team gave presentations about rpm-ostree, flatpak and image-based OSs like Atomic Workstation at devconf.cz 2018, and we realized that the time is right to push Atomic Workstation. Owen, Sanja and Matthias had a hallway meeting and started the FAW SIG. It has met bi-weekly since then.

Couldn't you come up with a better name?

No.

And in more detail: Matthias and Sanja have vetted over 150 words and word combination for something suitable, starting with tree names and going to atoms, physics, nature, landscapes. Several other people have been asked to contribute. The entire process lasted for roughly 2 months, culminating in an open discussion of naming in the SIG meeting on April 16.

On April 19, Matthias and Sanja decided for the name **Team Silverblue**, because it was
- available on Twitter, GitHub, and as a .org domain
- makes sense and sounds nice within the Fedora realm (color alignment)
- opens up fun and entertaining ways to have swag (silver-blue wigs, sports jerseys with the logo on it, phrasing like "Go, Team Silverblue!", "Want to join the Team and improve Silverblue?")
- works as Fedora Silverblue or Team Silverblue without losing branding investment

What has happened so far?

Fedora Atomic Workstation has been a [low-priority effort](#) under the auspices of the Fedora Workstation WG for a few years. It started around F25 with Colin Walters running Atomic on his own system. While the FAW effort is under the Workstation WG, the actual building and hosting is done under Project Atomic, parallel to Fedora Atomic Host (FAH). The ultimate goal of this effort always was to create an image-based variant of the Workstation that is at feature-parity and better suited for certain use cases than the traditional variant.
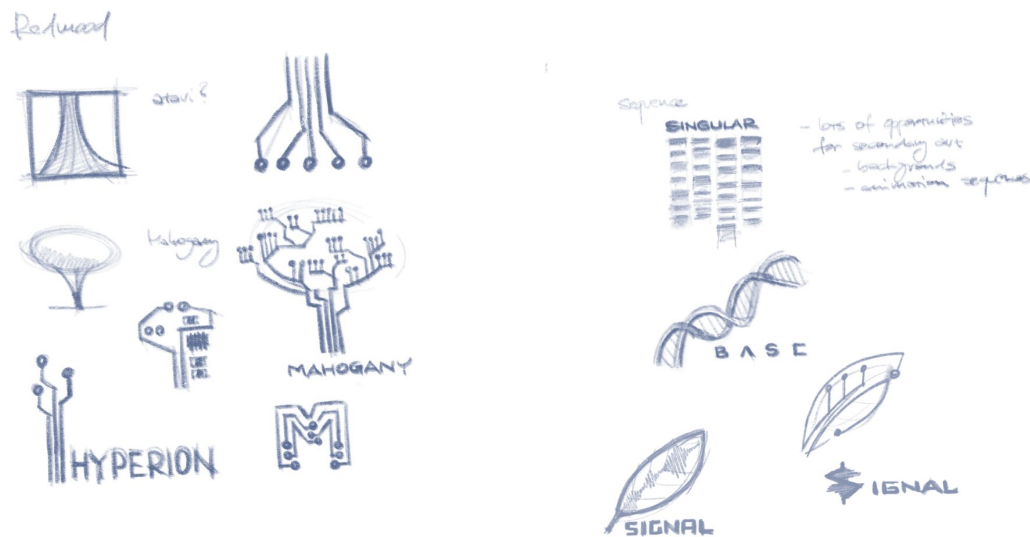
Until the end of 2017, the desktop team slowly completed necessary pieces for the vision of an immutable image-based OS with independent applications: Wayland, flatpak, and rpm-ostree support in GNOME Software, etc. During the same time, Project Atomic has added new features like package layering to rpm-ostree and added rpm-ostree support to anaconda.

At DevConf 2018, Sanja, Matthias, and Owen started the Atomic Workstation SIG to formalize this effort. We announced the SIG on both the atomic and desktop mailing lists, inviting participants. The SIG has been meeting bi-weekly since then and has established an issue tracker. Several other people are participating regularly.

After DevConf, Matthias started an ongoing series of blog posts about FAW topics from a user perspective. We've used these posts to generate interest in FAW and Project Atomic in general, by retweeting them from @projectatomic.

After FOSDEM, we learned of the CoreOS acquisition. Since it was foreseeable that Atomic Workstation as such cannot coexist with a system specifically tailored towards OpenShift and Tectonic, naming a new modern thing after whatever comes next and might be different, is suboptimal for branding, we decided very soon after the acquisition announcement that a new name is needed. Some options that were discussed included a completely separate project, a Fedora spin, a Fedora remix, or a not fully formalized other initiative under the Fedora umbrella.

At the same time, we were aiming for a more marketable personality than FAW - a better name, a logo and a nice website. Sanja, Matthias and Owen had some initial branding discussions with Colin, Allan Day, and Jakub Steiner. Some of these initial discussions also crossed lines with the ongoing internal CoreOS discussions.

The name search was made public in the SIG meeting on April 16, and shortly thereafter, Sanja and Matthias settled on the Team Silverblue name. Since then, we have initiated the legal vetting of the name and started to put in place Twitter, GitHub, a website and a logo for this project. We've agreed with Matthew Miller to position this effort as part of the Fedora family in the form of a Fedora initiative.

Jakub Steiner came up with a logo suggestion, which was quickly finalized. The result can be seen on the title page of this document.

Starting in April, the desktop team under Matthias has started planning for improved pet container support in the Workstation, which is part of the general desktop team mission to target developers, but fits very well with FAW. These plans are still in an early phase, but will be made public soon.

What's left to do?

By the Red Hat Summit
- Print stickers
- Presentation/talking points (Sanja will create slides, Josh Berkus and/or Matt Miller will present them at the BoF)

By Fedora 29
- See issues on F29 milestone of the SIG issue tracker
- Close feature parity gaps
- Build flatpaks from rpms in Fedora
- Create initial pet container tooling
- Flesh out website and documentation

By Fedora 30
- Polished desktop container integration

What's the future vision?

By F29, the Atomic variant will be at feature parity with the traditional variant and ready for a general audience. Container-based development workflows will be supported with the initial release of the pet container tooling.

By F30, the Atomic variant will be the preferred Workstation offering. The new container tool will have a well-rounded feature set.

What's the mission statement?

Team Silverblue aims to present an overarching developer desktop story, by combining an image-based OS with good support for container-focused workflows.

Sharing similar patterns with the server-side will reduce the learning curve for developers, increase their productivity, and grow the mindshare for the entire ecosystem.