

Open Source

Why it's a big deal for your business software

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What do we mean by 'Open Source'?

For readers who are new to Open Source software, here's a definition:-

Open-source software (OSS) is computer software that is available in source code form for which the source code and certain other rights normally reserved for copyright holders are provided under a software license that permits users to study, change, improve and at times also to distribute the software.

This means it's FREE. Seriously! Open Source really does mean freely available to the general public. We've recently seen articles - usually posted by organisations which provide a 'proprietary' platform - claiming that many Open Source software packages are very costly in terms of support, hosting and management. This is a fallacy. The vast majority of Open Source software packages are managed by reputable companies with a strong market position.

To confirm, managing Open Source requires exactly the exact same processes as managing proprietary source code. The only difference with proprietary code is that it's NOT freely available to develop.

The growth of Open Source > changing market dynamics

In the past, organisations have often been forced to pay huge premiums for software application development, consultancy and customisation. In today's market, they are not.

A great example is Google, which now offers a huge amount of useful and innovative software for free (advertising being their primary revenue stream). This capability and model has allowed them to supersede other vendors who previously held a monopolistic position in the market. Google's actions have created a distortion in the market and led the monopoly vendor to think twice about their strategy and pricing. Another example is the rich functionality that Mozilla Firefox provides (as open source software) compared with other proprietary web browsers.

Much of the ideology behind Google's advance in the market to distort competition and create more innovation has been lifted straight from the Open Source model. For any business organisation assessing a move to Open Source across its enterprise, here are a few of the major benefits to consider:-

<ul style="list-style-type: none">● No license cost per user● No vendor lock in (under GPL license)● Huge development community with thousands of free plugins● Freedom and flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Reliability● Scalability● Audibility● Stability
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‘Pay as you Go’ Software Development

Rather than re-skilling internal teams or employing contractors trained in proprietary systems (and thereby limited in terms of skill set), many organisations are now looking for partner Open Source expertise to work with. These vendors provide the infrastructure and SaaS (software as a service) so that business managers can focus on value creation and innovation.

In today’s enterprise environment, more than ever companies are looking for best value and service. Open source creates flexibility and a truly open business model that enables ongoing customisations, plugin extensions and integration of the core platform with other applications. Solutions can even be trialled on a ‘try before you buy’ basis before any investment decision is taken.

Open source vendors enable your enterprise developers to access a managed environment and adapt the code to fit your exact needs. Partnering with an open source specialist enables a cost effective platform through the no-license fee model, and lets you benefit from a ‘pay as you go’ approach to application development.

In a closed platform this flexibility and risk-free approach to design and integrate software with other enterprise systems is simply not possible without substantial investment to change proprietary code.

Intellectual Property

The next section considers the issue of intellectual property (IP). Again, a definition is provided below:-

Intellectual Property is a term referring to a number of distinct types of creations of the mind for which a set of exclusive rights are recognized—and the corresponding fields of law.[1] While these rights are not actually property rights, the term "Property" is used because they resemble property rights in many ways. Under intellectual property law, owners are granted certain exclusive rights to a variety of intangible assets, such as musical, literary, and artistic works; discoveries and inventions; and words, phrases, symbols, and designs. Common types of intellectual property include copyrights, trademarks, patents, industrial design rights and trade secrets in some jurisdictions.

In our context of web software development, IP refers to the source code that is used to create websites, online portals, learning management systems and integration tools. In the vast majority of cases, proprietary vendors own the IP to their source code (see above). This also means they have the ability to arbitrarily change pricing models, agreements, product development roadmap and more.

In direct contrast, in the Open Source model the user community drives the changes, the

development roadmap and YOU have a say in all of this - a much better deal for customers! Ownership of the software IP creates a future proof model that enables your enterprise software to grow and integrate with the needs of your business, rather than being constrained by a proliferation of proprietary software.

With Open Source software, your team can focus on innovation rather than wasting time and money to create, renew or revise the contractual agreements you've signed up to.

Consider the following:-

- **Who owns your software? Your supplier or their 3rd partner parent company?**
- **Will they change their pricing model in the future?**
- **What happens if the company goes bankrupt?**
- **How much will it cost for customisation, further development?**
- **Where is your software hosted? Can this be set up inside your firewall?**
- **What is your support agreement?**

Open Source means Open for Business

Open Source software has a global and democratic community of developers adding to source code and listening to user advice. This means vital issues like accessibility and usability are seriously considered. The Open Source model IS NOT DRIVEN BY PROFIT!

Many Open Source communities have adopted a partner programme to support the roll out of particular software products. This means the community will often appoint specialist Open Source vendors to work within specific regions to ensure that end users of the software receive the help and support they need. These appointed vendors provide managed services that ensure the source code is hosted securely and can be developed and managed for updates/upgrades. This delivers enterprise-wide reliability. You're in safe hands.

Moodle, the world's #1 open source learning management system

In the corporate training and L&D space, Open Source learning software is one disruptive technology that is becoming familiar to managers. The most widely-adopted open source learning platform is Moodle, a learning management system (LMS) with a global community of over 35 million users in over 40 countries (and translatable in over 70 languages). Moodle has thousands of free modules, from virtual classroom training functionality and MI dashboards, to social media and marketing

applications. Moodle has appointed global partners to ensure the platform is correctly supported and sufficiently robust for education and business users in large-scale organisations.

Moodle is currently being used for training programmes across organisations such as Nike, McDonalds, Pepsico, NSPCC, the Ministry of Justice, Morgan McKinley, Tesco, M&S, British Airways, Apple, Nikon, Cable & Wireless, Dominos Pizza and many more. Figures are available that demonstrate the savings from using the Moodle open source LMS:

- Marks & Spencer - £500k savings, 20% of customers satisfaction increase;
- Tesco - £1M savings in year 1 through open source LMS;
- McDonalds - £1M savings and profit increase.

TotaraLMS - a custom distribution of Moodle for corporates

TotaraLMS is a newly-released distribution of Moodle designed specifically for the corporate business sector. TotaraLMS has additional functionality from the standard Moodle installation including:

- Competency structure to which you can link roles and learning resources and courses
- Management hierarchy allowing managers to review and manage their team's learning
- Individual development plans to manage staff performance and development
- Full classroom management and self-service
- Sophisticated reporting and a dashboard for management reporting
- Enhanced theme branding to ensure you can fully reflect any brand



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Webanywhere Limited is a UK based web 2.0 technology solutions provider. We specialise in delivering online e-learning portals and content development using the Moodle Learning Management System used by Tesco, Apple, Marks & Spencer, the Open University, Nikon and many others.

Webanywhere is an official partner of Moodle, which gives us the rights to provide Moodle code development, training and consultancy. We are also partners of TotaraLMS, the custom distribution of Moodle for corporates.

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