

Open Source Software Position Briefing

Prepared by Olliance Consulting Group for OSSI

January 15, 2003

Open Source Software Institute

The Open Source Software Institute (OSSI) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote the development and implementation of open-source software solutions within Federal, state and municipal government agencies and academic entities.

OSSI has prepared the **Open Source Software Position Briefing** to answer some of the basic questions regarding open source technology, where it is used, and why it plays an important role in our economy, national security and the continued development of the IT marketplace.

Position Statement

Open Source provides an engine for creating wealth, jobs and economic growth while ensuring technological freedom of choice.

Open Source gives companies cost-effective tools to modernize operations, develop new products and services and compete more effectively in the world market.

Open-Source software improves the delivery and quality of government services to citizens at reduced taxpayer expense.

What is Open Source

Open Source is collaboratively developed software created by corporations, academic institutions and individuals. **Originally created to run the Internet infrastructure, it now powers computing systems in financial institutions, Fortune 100 corporations, government agencies and many small businesses.**

From risk analysis to weather prediction, Open Source has become a critical part of the nation's infrastructure. Open Source is a highly secure and reliable alternative to single-source technologies.

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How it works

The Open Source development process allows a wide variety of organizations and individuals to influence and contribute to software that will form the base of their technology infrastructure. This is possible because the underlying blueprints (commonly known as ‘source code’) of Open Source software are available to all organizations and individuals. **This accessibility allows the customization of software to particular tasks and business processes, and encourages a strict review process, making it some of the most efficient software developed.**

Using the Internet, this peer-review process harnesses thousands of highly trained individuals to test and review all existing and new ‘blueprints’ to insure a very high level of security, quality and reliability.

By providing a robust, secure and reliable technology base, **Open Source allows companies to reduce costs while customizing their technology infrastructure**, enabling them to focus on developing new products and services without being reliant on single-source technologies.

Key Advantages

Open Source technologies deliver more control and flexibility, higher security and reliability, faster problem resolution and continuous product innovation.

Security

In Open Source, everyone has access to the source code. **This allows the peer-review process to audit and discover any potential security issues.** In Open Source, it is not unusual to find security flaws corrected within hours of discovery, a direct result of active participation by thousands of technologists in the peer-review process.

Innovation

The open, peer-review process combines the talents of thousands of technologists to be used to advance the state of the art. **This results in innovation so rapid that no single computer company in the world can match it.** It is precisely this rapid innovation that converted the Internet from a research network to a commercial force in less than a decade.

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Standards

The collaborative process used in creating Open Source software requires that information be open and accessible to others. As a result, there is a strong effort to conform and create new standards where they are needed. These standards are reflected in the infrastructure that powers the Internet and drives the integrated communications and business systems currently being developed.

Open Source provides a common foundation for innovation in business and government, improved organizational efficiencies, multiple sources of technology infrastructure, and lower software cost.

Successes

The greatest single success of Open Source is the Internet itself. The entire infrastructure of the Internet was built using Open Source software, based on open standards. **Open Source powers more than 65 percent of web servers and transmits 70 percent of all email.**

Many key financial institutions, including **Credit Suisse First Boston, Morgan Stanley, Salomon Smith Barney and E-Trade**, have discovered that Open Source makes a strong addition to their computing arsenal. These organizations are creating new decision support capabilities to manage funds and investments, increasing wealth for both corporations and investors.

Open Source has become big news in Hollywood, as most movie studios are now using Linux systems to produce today's special-effects-laden motion pictures. From **Lord of the Rings** to **Shrek** and **Titanic**, the motion picture industry relies heavily on Open Source powered systems to deliver quality films.

Other key business innovators such as **Amazon** and **Google** rely on Open Source, while **84 percent of Fortune 100 companies rely on Open Source as a critical component of their infrastructure.**

Today, **Open Source is a \$5 billion industry** supported by key technology companies such as **IBM, Oracle, Dell, Computer Associates, Intel, HP and Sun** and is **growing at 35 percent a year.**

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Open Source and the Federal Government

The Pentagon and virtually every Armed Service utilizes Open Source effectively to increase their mission readiness. Open Source is used in numerous Federal agencies and State and Local governments to deliver more comprehensive services, faster and at reduced taxpayer expense to America's citizens. Creating a "level" playing field for Open Source in the US Government is essential to maintaining US technology and economic leadership.

Governments in South America, Europe, and Asia are already actively pursuing large-scale Open Source efforts. With Open Source, the US Government has an opportunity to ensure a more effective government and foster renewed technology-based prosperity for American companies and the economy.

Conclusion

Open Source fuels economic growth by allowing innovative companies to compete more effectively in the global marketplace. It provides technology users with multiple suppliers of key technology infrastructure while creating new opportunities for companies of all sizes to cooperate and compete within a free market economy. Open Source is truly of the people, by the people, and for the people.

For more information on Open-Source Software and the Open Source Software Institute, please visit the OSSI web site at <http://www.oss-institute.org>.

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