

Microsoft: we were wrong about open source ⁴¹

Microsoft has embraced open source and even Linux in recent years

By Tom Warren | @tomwarren | May 18, 2020, 8:26am EDT

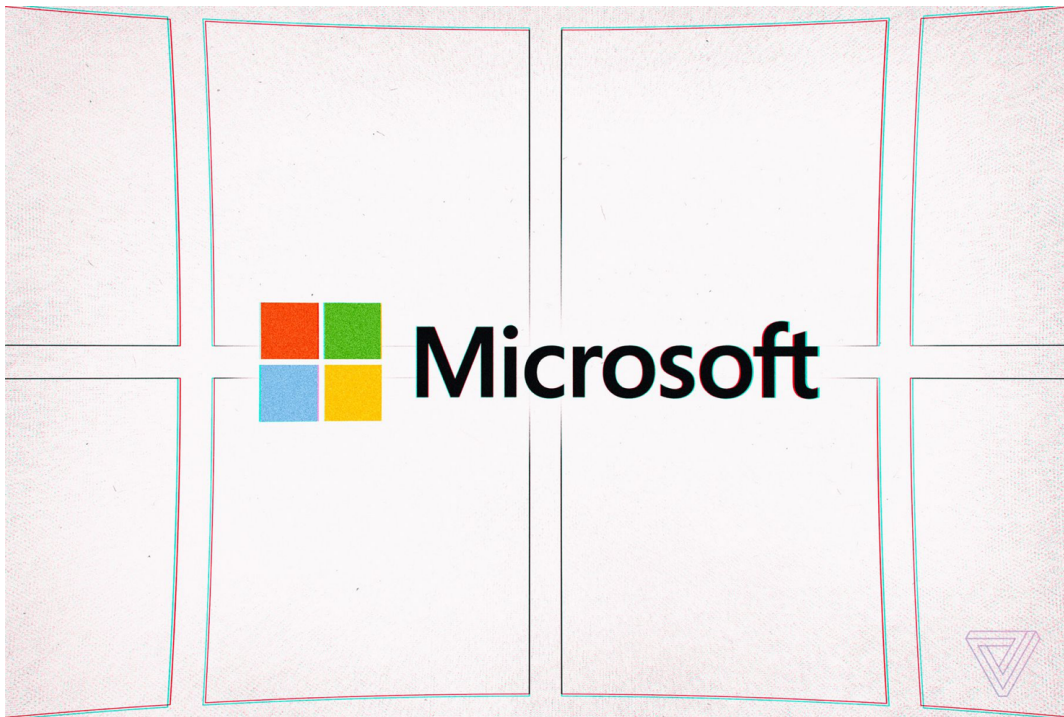


Image by Alex Castro / The Verge

Microsoft has admitted it was wrong about open source, after the company battled it and Linux for years at the height of its desktop domination. Former Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer famously branded Linux “a cancer that attaches itself in an intellectual property sense to everything it touches” back in 2001.

Microsoft president Brad Smith now believes the company was wrong about open source. “Microsoft was on the wrong side of history when open source exploded at the beginning of the century, and I can say that about me personally,” said Smith in a [recent MIT event](#). Smith has been at Microsoft for more than 25 years and was one of the company’s senior lawyers during its battles with open-source software.

“The good news is that, if life is long enough, you can learn ... that you need to change,” [added Smith](#). Microsoft has certainly changed since the days of branding Linux a cancer. The software giant is now the single largest contributor to open-source projects in the world, beating Facebook, Docker, Google, Apache, and many others.

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Microsoft has gradually been adopting open source in recent years, including open-sourcing [PowerShell](#), [Visual Studio Code](#), and even Microsoft Edge’s original [JavaScript engine](#). Microsoft has also partnered with Canonical to bring [Ubuntu to Windows 10](#), and it [acquired Xamarin](#) to aid mobile app development and [GitHub](#) to maintain the popular code repository for developers.

Microsoft is even [shipping a full Linux kernel](#) in a Windows 10 update that will release later this month, and it [moved to the Chromium browser engine](#) for Edge last year. Microsoft is also collaborating with open-source communities to [create PowerToys for Windows 10](#), and the company’s new [open design philosophy](#) may mean we’ll see a lot more open-source efforts in Windows in the years to come.



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