

Are Large Software Companies Bound to Adopt the Free Software Model?

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 - Definition
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What is free software?

- Distributed with its source code

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- Modifiable

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- Distributed with its source code
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- Redistributable

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Free software \neq open source

What is free software?

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Free software \neq open source

Free software \neq free of charge

Historically speaking...

1950s

Softwares are academic, sharing is the norm.

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1970s - Today

Softwares are commercial products.

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1970s - Today

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Near future

?

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Advantages



Advantages

- Reputation



Advantages



- Reputation
- Trust

Advantages



- Reputation
- Trust
- Less patenting fees

Advantages



- Reputation
- Trust
- Less patenting fees
- Less legal fees

Advantages



- Reputation
- Trust
- Less patenting fees
- Less legal fees
- User contribution

Disadvantages

—

Disadvantages

- Intimidating to the user

—

Disadvantages

- Intimidating to the user
- “Potentially free = not as good”

—

Disadvantages

—

- Intimidating to the user
- “Potentially free = not as good”
- No secret

Free software seems to be a solid option

Many advantages

- Less costs
- User contribution
- Good image

Free software seems to be a solid option

Many advantages

- Less costs
- User contribution
- Good image

But...

Is it economically viable?

Canonical - Ubuntu

Their product

A Linux-based operating system

- $\approx 20\text{M}$ users
- ≈ 400 employees



Canonical - Ubuntu

Their product

A Linux-based operating system

- \approx 20M users
- \approx 400 employees



They sell support:

- Deployment
- Maintenance
- Training

Mozilla - Firefox

Their product

An internet browser

- \approx 300M users
- \approx 600 employees



Mozilla - Firefox

Their product

An internet browser

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- Donations

Mozilla - Firefox

Their product

An internet browser

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- Donations
- Google partnership (\approx 84%)

Google - Chromium

Their product

An internet browser

- \approx 200M users
- Reputed for its speed



Google - Chromium

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- Zero revenue

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- Zero revenue
- The real product is advertising

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- Zero revenue
- The real product is advertising
- Chromium lets people access Google more easily

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Present state

In theory

- Many advantages
- Economically viable

In practice

Present state

In theory

- Many advantages
- Economically viable

In practice

- Every company publicly endorses FS

Present state

In theory

- Many advantages
- Economically viable

In practice

- Every company publicly endorses FS
- But definitions differ...

The reluctant ones

Who?

Microsoft

- Proprietary with closed licences
- At best, partial openness for interoperability
- Do not share the innovation

The conflicted ones

Who?

Apple, Oracle

- Mostly based on FSs
- Actively participate to FS projects
- Aggressively protect their core products

The adopters

Who?

Red Hat, Canonical, Google, Intel

- Sell or offer free software
- Sell support
- Offer free tools related to their main products

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Conclusion

Are large software companies bound to adopt the free software model?

- FS will never totally overthrow PS
- More and more open-source initiatives, some free
- Globally, growing user implication