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.NET Core is a cross platform, open source re-implementation of the .NET Framework. It is actively maintained by Microsoft and a huge community of developers over on GitHub.

That's right, Microsoft have embraced open source. Back in 2016, Microsoft bought Xamarin and began integrating it into the Microsoft developer tool set.

Microsoft's end goal is not to replace .NET Framework with .NET Core, but to add it to the .NET ecosystem as an alternative for developers who need to build cross platform applications.

Let's say that you are a Linux (or even MacOS) based developer and you want to try out this C# and .NET business but don't have a Windows licence.

Let's say that you're looking to write a micro service, but don't want to use Node.js or any of the other JavaScript-on-the-server frameworks.

Let's say that you want to take a pre-existing MVC application written in .NET Framework and run it on a Linux box (for cheaper hosting).