The Evolution of the Open Source Software Foundation
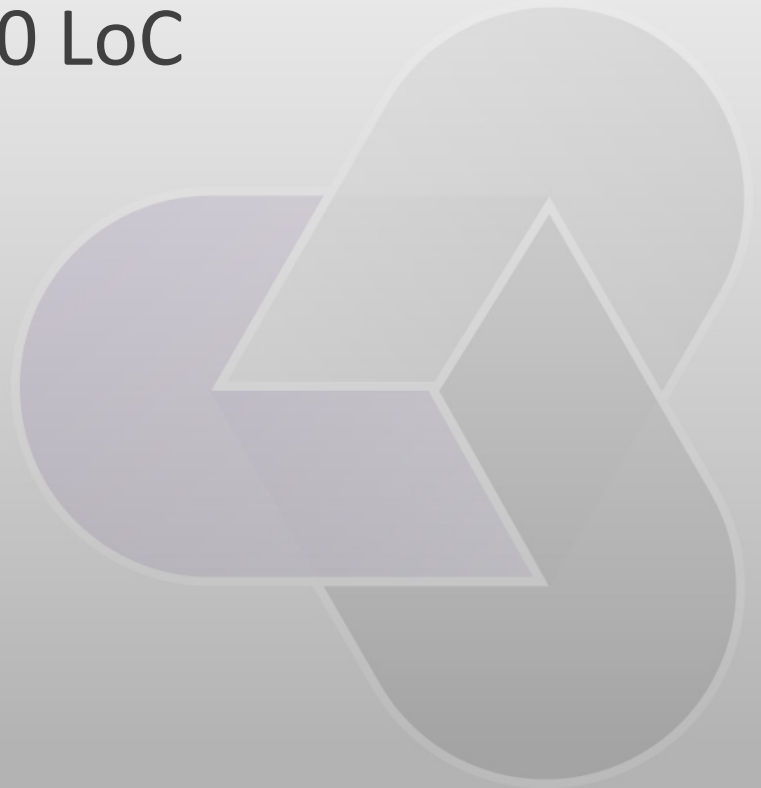## *SCaLE11x*

Stephen R. Walli

February 2013

The Thesis

FOSS Foundations are <u>essential</u> to enabling the growth of FOSS Projects when companies want to participate, contribute and adopt.

Two Ratios

~20 LoC/day

1 bug : 1000 LoC

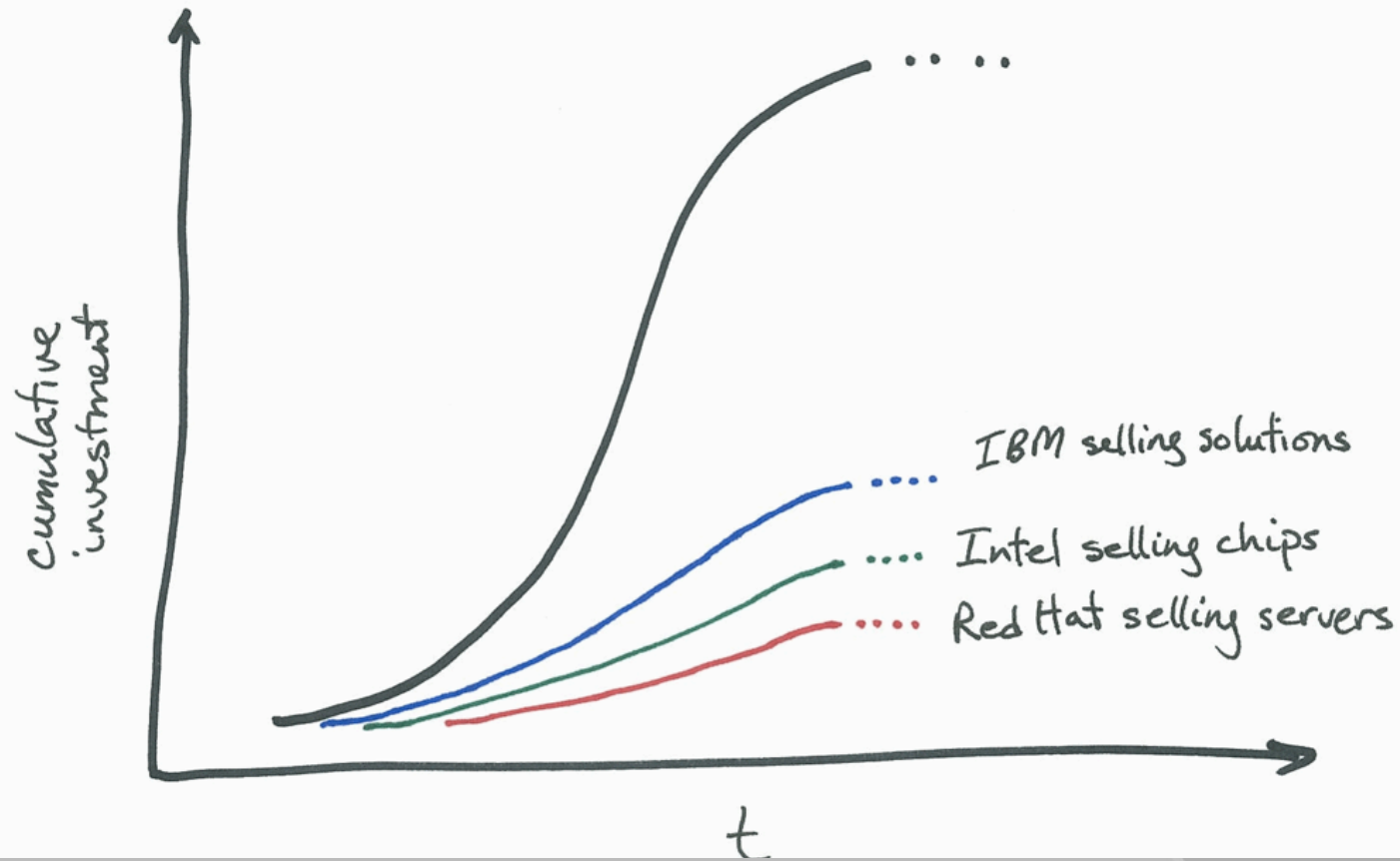# Software Economics

Writing good software is hard work

Re-use is everything

We have shared software since we wrote it.

Liberally-licensed collaboratively developed software is the best re-use strategy.

The Economics of Shared Development

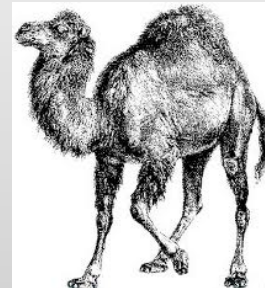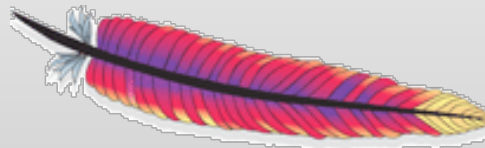# The Economics of Companies Collaborating

Foundations as IP Management Machines

- This is the history of the FSF, the ASF, the OSDL/Linux Foundation, and the Eclipse Foundation

- Regardless of what each foundation represents to its members and constituencies, what they "do" is IP management.
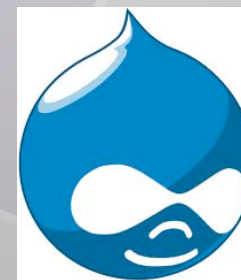
Henrik Ingo's Observations

Henrik Ingo determined that the 9 largest most vibrant projects are governed independently by foundations (http://bit.ly/f3O34M)

The tenth largest (is company supported) is an order of magnitude smaller

Neutrality and Ownership

"**There appears to be a glass ceiling for single vendor projects** prohibiting their growth from the Large category upwards. "

— Henrik Ingo

An Organic Project Life-Cycle

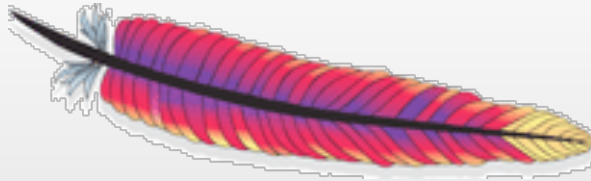# What is a FOSS Foundation?

Foundations are non-profits* that provide:

Legal Structure

Business Operations

Technical Services

* But they are still businesses

Foundations

* But they are still businesses

Corporate Projects

Corporate Projects

Why does it matter?

Neutrality encourages contribution

Clean IP encourages adoption

Foundations act as community centre-of-gravity

Neutrality Encourages Contribution (Inbound)

Neutrality and Ownership

- Successful Projects Grow and Evolve until ...
  - Apache Software Foundation
  - OSDL/Linux Foundation
  - Eclipse Foundation

Clean IP Encourages Adoption (Outbound)

Legal Structures are Important

- License (inbound/outbound)

- Assignments and Contribution Licenses

- Provenance tracking

- Liability and risk management

- Committer indemnification

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Foundation as Community Centre-of-Gravity

Creating Strong Communities

- Support an Architecture of Participation
- Make it easy to join the conversation
- Support and grow committers
- Support lines of communications
- Provide technical services + infrastructure (forges, code signing, etc.)

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Conclusions

While liberally licensed shared collaborative software development may represent the best software re-use strategy we have, FOSS Foundations are essential to the participation of companies that can grow and sustain FOSS projects and their communitiesn long term

Questions?

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