The Evolution of the Open Source Software Foundation

SCaLE11x

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FOSS Foundations are essential 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

- IBM selling solutions
- Intel selling chips
- Red Hat selling servers
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

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Corporate Projects
Corporate Projects

- openSUSE
- fedora
- JBoss
- MySQL
- SYMBIAN
- openstack
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
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.)
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 communities in the long term.
Questions?

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