

6 Myths About Open Source

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In every poker game, there comes a moment of truth - when one opponent calls another's bluff. Everyone lays down their hand and a winner is declared based on the cards they hold.

Well, we think it is time now to call the bluff on closed-source vendors, which have long argued that open source is a niche IT option, unable to support mission-critical applications, and that any update to the code is unregulated. It is time to tell the truth about today's open source software.

1. "Open source is a niche IT sector"

Perhaps this was a fair comment when Linux and Apache were in their infancy, but now open source has established a firm foothold in the data centre, and this statement could not be further from the truth.

2. "Open source cannot support mission-critical applications"

Many opponents to open source fuel the idea that open source is not reliable enough to run mission-critical applications, and that the quality of open-source products is poor. Yet open-source products are subjected to the same levels of performance, stress, functional, security and regression tests that closed source products are. In addition, an advantage of the open source development model is that it enables collaboration with the end-user very early in the development cycle, allowing bugs and design flaws to be identified early.

3. "Open source companies do not own their intellectual property"

This is a misconception. The truth is that open source software is subject to the same copyright laws as closed-source software, but open source software suppliers choose to share their IP with others.

As a result, products are brought to market faster, open source software cannot be monopolized, no one organization can control the price for support and services for open source solutions, and the competition to provide support services at an attractive price-point makes it more cost-effective for customers.

4. "Open source technology does not offer professional level support"

Today, open source providers offer professional support, and make it possible for the software to run mission-critical applications for major, global companies. Indeed, the business model for most open source software providers depends on customers buying support and services.

5. "Open source is unregulated and anyone can contribute code"

Some opponents of open source propagate the myth that anyone can access and change open-source code, which makes it unsecured and unreliable. However, the truth is that access to open source code is controlled, and any changes to the source must either address a problem, or enhance the product.

6. "Open Source software is not secure"

A common misunderstanding is that open source software is more vulnerable to exploitation than closed-source software, simply because code that is exposed is more likely to be hacked. Open source software is secure by design and uses standard software development methodologies and secure coding techniques. All source code changes are subjected to rigorous peer review before acceptance.

Because of this review, more proactive checking for vulnerabilities occurs, bringing to light any exploits in the code, and providing built-in security from the ground up.

Summary

The open-source market has evolved and grown in leaps and bounds. Open-source is a viable option for large enterprises and small businesses alike, and this realization poses a real threat to the bottom line of closed-source providers.

What the closed-source players lack is the recognition that the open source movement is a result of years of collaboration with the customer, involving them in every step of development, and delivering premier class support and services - a completely different business model to what they are accustomed to. So today, the open source providers like Ingres, who have over 30 years relational database heritage, are set to be the disruptive technology of the future.

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