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Online newsletter available at  
▶ <http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/newsletters/april2010.pdf>

The theme of this month's newsletter is the importance of establishing a governance model for your project. We often hear people say that 'It's too early' to formally describe your project's governance at project start up but that is actually the perfect time to draw up a governance model. Detailing responsibilities and describing how decisions are made does not lead to a situation where a project team loses control, quite the opposite, it enables the project team to clearly set out the way in which the project will operate. It also helps to develop an engaged and open community where everyone knows what is going on and potential contributors know exactly what to expect.

You can find out more about governance models through this month's featured article and the selected blog pieces and if you'd like any help in drafting your own governance model then do get in touch, we're here to help.

Elena Blanco, Content Editor, OSS Watch ▶ [info@oss-watch.ac.uk](mailto:info@oss-watch.ac.uk)

# News from OSS Watch

## Open source developers pick Android over iPhone

While the Apple iPhone remains the undisputed king of mobile app downloads, Android has been winning converts among open source developers since its inception. Now, according to new research, Android has made enough of a splash that it can claim more open source developers than the iPhone.

▶ <http://www.internetnews.com/dev-news/article.php/3870986/Open+Source+Developers+Pick+Android+Over+iPhone.htm>

## CodePlex Foundation announces appointment of permanent board members

The CodePlex Foundation, a not-for-profit foundation formed with the mission of enabling the exchange of code and understanding among software companies and open source communities, has announced the appointment of four members to its permanent Board of Directors. New appointees include Jim Jagielski, Chief Architect at SpringSource, a division of VMware, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Apache Software Foundation and an Advisory Board Member at Open Source Software Institute, and Tony Hey, Corporate Vice President of External Research for Microsoft Corporation.

▶ <http://www.pr-inside.com/the-codeplex-foundation-announces-appointment-r1764899.htm>

## Google announces accepted projects for sixth Google Summer of Code

Google has announced the list of accepted mentoring organisations for Google Summer of Code 2010. Just over 365 applications were narrowed down to 150 FOSS projects.

▶ [http://socghop.appspot.com/gsoc/program/accepted\\_orgs/google/gsoc2010](http://socghop.appspot.com/gsoc/program/accepted_orgs/google/gsoc2010)

## ULCC migrates 15,000 students onto Moodle

University of London Computer Centre (ULCC) has won a tender to provide and support a hosted Virtual Learning Environment, using the open source Moodle software for the University of Exeter. ULCC has already begun work to ensure the smooth transition of 15,000 students from Exeter's current learning platform, WebCT, to Moodle by September 2010.

▶ <http://oss.ly/1p>

## FSF announces Free Software Awards winners

The Free Software Foundation (FSF) has announced the winners of this year's Free Software Awards. The annual awards recognise an individual and one project for their contributions to the progress and development of free software.

▶ <http://www.h-online.com/open/news/item/FSF-announces-Free-Software-Awards-winners-962900.html>

## GNOME teams take top rankings in Code for a Cause competition

GNOME teams working on GNOME Caribou have taken top rankings in the Code for a Cause competition hosted by Project:Possibility. SS12 is a programming competition run jointly by Project:Possibility and local Association of Computing Machinery chapters, where teams of students compete to develop open source software for people with disabilities over the course of a weekend.

▶ <http://www.gnome.org/press/releases/2010-03-ss12-code-for-a-cause.html>



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# Governance models

Full article can be found at <http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/resources/governanceModels.xml>

A governance model describes the roles that project participants can take on and the process for decision making within the project. In addition, it describes the ground rules for participation in the project and the processes for communicating and sharing within the project team and community. It is the governance model that prevents an open source project from descending into chaos. This document explains why a governance model is necessary, considers some of the challenges associated with adopting a governance model in open source projects, and looks at the key areas such a model needs to cover. It also describes how to encapsulate your governance model in a governance document.

**“ The development and communication of a clear and concise governance model is one of the most important steps a project can take towards sustainability through open development. ”**

## 1. Why does a project need a governance model?

There are almost as many variations of open source management strategies as there are open source projects. It is therefore critical that a project clearly communicates its policies and strategies to potential users and developers of the project's outputs. A clear governance model also allows potential contributors to understand how they should engage with the project, what is expected of them and what protections are provided to ensure that their contributions will always be available to them. In addition, it describes the quality control processes that help to assure potential users of the viability of the project. The development and communication of a clear and concise governance model is one of the most important steps a project can take towards sustainability through open development.

Governance models range from centralised control by a single individual or organisation (benevolent dictatorship) to distributed control awarded in recognition of contributions (meritocracy). You can find governance models at any point along this spectrum; it is also possible for a project's chosen governance model to move along this spectrum as the project matures.

### 1.1. Governance models in use

Let's look at some example governance models. First, consider the [Ubuntu governance model](#). This model focuses on describing the structure of the community and the responsibilities associated with each component of that structure. It also outlines the decision-making processes found within the project. The Ubuntu project has opted to separate developer information from the structural information found in their governance document, but the technical

management processes are also clearly documented.

The Apache Software Foundation has two sets of governance documents for each project. The first concerns the foundation's governance, which sets out the structure of the organisation as a whole. The foundation also provides a set of documents on key processes found within its projects, such as decision making. However, since each project is free, within certain constraints, to define its own variations of these processes, many projects have their own governance documentation. See the [Apache Forrest](#) governance description for an example.

Our third and final example of a governance model

in practice is found in the [Taverna](#) project. This is an example of an open source project that has grown within the academic community and so demonstrates a model that has been found to work in the academic environment. The Taverna model, like the Ubuntu and ASF models, focuses on project structure and management processes.

## 2. Barriers to adopting a governance model

In spite of the importance of defining a governance model at the outset, many projects fail to do so. There are a number of possible reasons for this. Among the most common are:

- the process is perceived as 'red tape'
- there is a concern that the project will lose its sense of direction
- it is felt that control of the project's strategy will be lost
- the project is thought to be too young or too small to attract active users or developers

Although each of the first three concerns is potentially valid, these fears are easily dispelled by using an appropriate governance model. However, the final concern, regarding the age of the project, is never valid. This is because any potential contributor to the project needs to know how to contribute efficiently and effectively, and how their contribution will be handled. Without clear guidance on these matters, most people will walk away rather than join an immature project. But if those early adopters are shown that they can help to guide the project as it matures, they may decide to stay. A single external contributor may well have a major effect on the sustainability of a project, so project initiators can simply not afford to risk losing that contributor as a result of trying to save a small amount of effort in the early stages.

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# GNOME and Project:Possibility: collaboration in open source accessibility

Published by Steve Lee on March 14, 2010

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In my last post I mentioned how satisfying it is to watch the results of making introductions between people or groups. Recently I was involved in a link up between students and GNOME accessibility and though I'd explain how events panned out, as well my hopes.

[Project:Possibility](#) organise team coding competitions for computer science students. The the goal of these [SS12](#) events is to create accessibility software that will be of benefit to real users. These weekend 'code-a-thons' bring the students together with a mentor from industry and provide an exciting chance to learn something about accessibility, while creating open source software. Thus students get exposure to topics and skills that are still sadly absent from many computer science courses. Plus they get to have fun and win prizes.

Project:Possibility was set up by Chris Leung while he was at USC so it is fitting that the latest SS12 was a face off between USC and rivals UCLA. This added an extra element of competition, and the winning team from each campus have been invited to present their work at the [25th CSUN conference](#) (#csun10) next week. They also get the opportunity to explore the conference, getting a flavour of the many accessibility offerings. CSUN have been very supportive of Project:Possibility and are keen to see students learn about accessibility and take the knowledge along with them as they start their careers.

The Project:Possibility board decided to concentrate our energy on the weekend competitions, at least for the short term. While accessibility is clearly a key feature of the events, I felt the experience of open source is less compelling. The code is given a open source licence and placed on Google Code but there is not much opportunity to provide an in depth experience of open development or to support subsequent maturing of the new software. OSS Watch are very aware that employers are seeking open source development experience, and yet there is a [shortage of skills](#) as they are not often being taught in computer science course. This further influenced my thinking.

I have previously worked with the friendly and hard working [GNOME accessibility community](#), so I therefore proposed that we offer students the opportunity to work with them. The idea was to support students in adding features to existing GNOME accessibility projects, working with community members. This would introduce students to the project, hopefully exposing them to best practices. My hope was also that this introduction will lead to longer term engagement with GNOME accessibility or other projects and continuing contributions. Some concern was voiced that students would not want to climb the extra learning curve while competing in a weekend event. The GNOME team, however, were supportive of the idea and we all hoped the right students might be 'up for' the greater challenge and potentially greater

rewards. We came up with a few coding ideas and I'm pleased to say a team from each of USC and UCLA chose to work on [GNOME Caribou](#), the new GNOME on screen keyboard that provides operation for non keyboard users (via pointer, switch or other devices).

Ben Konrath, the Caribou lead, was available on IRC during the competition and answered questions from the students, helping them to get up to speed. With his help, both sets of students got through to the finals and came 2nd and 3rd place overall. Ben will now help the students go through the submit and review process and hopefully commit their code into Caribou. From there it will be part of GNOME and so will appear in many Linux distributions. Something the students can rightly be proud of.

If you are interested in seeing what the USC students have done with Caribou then you can meet the teams at CSUN next week on 26th and 27th. There is already considerable interest in the students work, including from Microsoft. CSUN have promoted their attendance in conference announcements, and this has also raised GNOME accessibility profile, not bad seeing it is their first year at the conference. If you would like to find out more about GNOME open accessibility [the team are there](#) all week at the booth.

I'm really looking forward to the conference, catching up again with GNOME (and Mozilla), meeting the students and, hopefully, hacking a little on Caribou. I hope to see you there.

▶ <http://osswatch.jiscinvolve.org/2010/03/14/gnome-and-projectpossibility-collaboration-in-opensource-accessibility/>

## Governance Models - everything you wanted to know but where afraid to ask

Published by Steve Lee on February 18, 2010

After an extensive gestation period, OSS Watch are pleased to have jointly published 3 documents on the important subject of Governance Models for open source projects. That is excellent value for your money.

The documents on our web site undergo a rigorous quality assurance process that ensure they are technically correct and well scribed. The result in this case is an comprehensive introduction to a topic that can be over looked by projects, or may cause confusion and uncertainty.

I have on several occasions heard lead developers say that if they make their code open source they fear they will lose control and anyone can update their source, leading to chaos. As you read these documents you will see that this clearly should not be the case. The project leaders remain in control, in fact they make the decisions on who the leaders are and how the project is controlled. The governance model describes how this happens.

Having a governance model in place is one of the clear marks of an open source project that practices [open development](#). That is, it marks a project that positively encourages community engagement.

[Governance models](#) provides an introduction to the what, why and wherefore of managing an open source project.

A governance model describes the roles that project participants can take on and the process for decision making within the project. In addition, it describes the ground rules for participation in the project and the processes for communicating and sharing within the project team and community. It is

the governance model that prevents an open source project from descending into chaos. This document explains why a governance model is necessary, considers some of the challenges associated with adopting a governance model in open source projects, and looks at the key areas such a model needs to cover. It also describes how to encapsulate your governance model in a governance document.

[Meritocratic governance model](#) provides a detailed insight into this common model that is lead by an elected leadership team or 'board'. A template is provided for use by projects interested in applying this model.

The meritocratic governance model is a commonly found model in which participants gain influence over a project through the recognition of their contributions. [The Apache Software Foundation \(ASF\)](#) is perhaps the most famous example of a large-scale meritocratic community. The foundation operates with an almost completely 'flat' structure, which means that anyone willing to contribute can engage with their projects at any level.

[Benevolent dictator governance model](#) describes another popular model where one person leads the project and has a final say in decisions. Again a template is provided for projects wanting to use this model.

A benevolent dictatorship is a project controlled by a single leader. Perhaps the most commonly cited example of the benevolent dictator model is the [Linux Kernel](#) project, which is run under the direct decision making leadership of Linus Torvalds. Being a benevolent dictator is not an easy job. It requires



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diplomacy and community building skills, in-depth technical knowledge of all aspects of the project, and exceptional levels of commitment and dedication. However, as the Linux Kernel project illustrates, it can be very effective.

With any project, good leadership or management are vital, and these documents will help you install the

basics with little overhead. If your project already has a governance model in place then these documents could help you refine it, perhaps by making it explicit. If you don't yet have one, then these document will help you decide what model best suits your style, and quickly get it into operation.

And you can do it all without any sign of [pointy hair](#).

► <http://osswatch.jiscinvolve.org/2010/02/18/governance-models-everything-you-wanted-to-know-but-where-afraid-to-ask/>



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## Events

Apr

12-13

### JISC Conference 2010, London, 12-13 April 2010

JISC's 8th annual conference will take place at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in London starting on the evening of 12 April followed by a full day on 13 April 2010. The event will showcase JISC's expertise and knowledge on technology in education to over 750 academics, IT experts, library professionals, policy makers, research staff, senior managers, students and teachers from across education within the UK and internationally. OSS Watch will be there with two different exhibition stands so please do drop in and say hello.

► <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/jisc10>

Apr

13-14

### MoodleMoot UK, London, 13-14 April 2010

The University of London will be hosting the next MoodleMoot UK to take place 13-14 April 2009 at Senate House, University of London. The conference will be of interest to anyone using or planning to use Moodle for delivering e-learning and training. It will provide a forum to share experiences and sessions will range from something for those just starting out as well as those who have been using Moodle for years.

► <http://moodlemootuk2010.org/>

Apr

14-16

### Linux Foundation Collaboration Summit, San Francisco, California, 14-16 April 2010

The Linux Foundation's 4th Annual Linux Foundation Collaboration Summit is taking place in San Francisco, California on 14-16 April 2010. This event is for key stakeholders spanning the developer, end user and vendor communities to come together to collaborate and advance the Linux platform. Registration is now open.

► <http://events.linuxfoundation.org/events/collaboration-summi/>

Apr

29

### Alfresco meetup, London, 29 April 2010

Alfresco is planning another series of 'Alfresco Meetups', with the London event set to take place on 29 April. The meetups cover a range of open source topics, and are designed to inform and educate the community on all the latest company news.

► <http://www.alfresco.com/about/events/2010/04/ukmeetup/>

## Frequently Asked Questions



**Q Do I need internal IT staff to benefit from open source software?**



**A** No, you do not need internal IT staff. Your reliance on staff is largely the same as it would be for a closed source solution. To customise an open source solution you need either internal or contracted staff. In the case of closed source you only have the option of contracted staff for many customisations.



**Q Can you advise on how to license software created in an HE institution? Will you include commercial models?**



**A** We provide advice on open source licensing of software. It is important to note that open source is not the opposite of commercial, it is the opposite of closed source. In addition to open source licensing advice we also provide advice on business models applicable to open source software. If we can be of assistance in understanding these models as they apply to your project please don't hesitate to contact us.

For more answers to your questions visit: <http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/about/faq.xml>

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