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Online newsletter available at
▶ <http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/newsletters/october2010.pdf>

Welcome to the October issue of the OSS Watch newsletter. In this issue, as well as bringing you all the latest news from the open source community, we also bring you a conference report on the [TransferSummit](#) written by Sam Jordison, a guest author. If you couldn't make it to the TransferSummit this is a great way to catch up on what happened. Following on from the report and the theme of the conference itself, Sander van der Waal blogs about open innovation tactics and incentives applied to software.

We finish with another blog post from Sander inviting everybody active in Higher or Further Education in the UK to take part in our [National Software Survey for 2010](#). Please contribute to our survey, all responses are welcome and will be invaluable. If you have any queries about the survey then please do get in touch at info@oss-watch.ac.uk.

Elena Blanco, Content Editor, OSS Watch ▶ info@oss-watch.ac.uk

News from OSS Watch



OpenOffice.org community announces Document Foundation

The community of volunteers that develops and promotes OpenOffice.org, the leading free office software, has announced a major change in the project's structure. After 10 years' successful growth with Sun Microsystems as founding and principal sponsor, the project has launched an independent foundation called the Document Foundation, to fulfil the promise of independence written in the original charter.

▶ http://www.documentfoundation.org/contact/tdf_release.html

CodePlex Foundation renamed Outercurve Foundation

The CodePlex Foundation, the open source foundation launched with support from Microsoft in 2009, has announced that it has rebranded and adopted a new name: the Outercurve Foundation. The rebranding has been undertaken to reduce confusion and differentiate the not-for-profit foundation from the Microsoft-owned and operated forge CodePlex.com.

▶ <http://www.prnnews.com/news-releases/the-codeplex-foundation-rebrands-renamed-outercurve-foundation-103911878.html>

Gartner predicts FOSS will dominate mobile devices by 2014

Open source mobile operating systems Android and Symbian will be installed on 60% of mobile devices in use by 2014, industry analysts have predicted. Market share for competing closed source operating systems by Research In Motion and Apple will stall at their current levels of approximately 30% combined, the report from Gartner added.

▶ <http://edition.cnn.com/2010/TECH/mobile/09/13/cnet.symbian.android/index.html>

Pre-registration for MoodleMoot 2011 now open

It's never too early to pencil in an event as popular as the annual MoodleMoot and so Moodle users will be interested to know that ULCC has announced the date of next year's MoodleMoot. It will take place 19-20 April

2011 at Senate House in London and pre-registration is now open to ensure that you are the first to hear about tickets and MoodleMoot news. The conference website and call for papers is expected in October.

▶ <http://bit.ly/MOOPreReg>

Google Code now accepting all OSI-approved licences

Google has announced that its open source Google Code project-hosting service now supports any Open Source Initiative (OSI) approved licence. To support this change, the Google Code team has added an option to the licence selector; project developers can now select 'other open source' and indicate what licence they are using.

▶ <http://www.h-online.com/open/news/item/Google-Code-now-accepting-all-OSI-approved-licences-1077813.html>

EU releases open source software tools to access digitally stored data

The EU has released the open source CASPAR (Cultural, Artistic and Scientific knowledge for Preservation, Access and Retrieval) project to sort and make accessible the mounds of data stored in EU archives. Funded by a £7.3m grant from the EC's Sixth Framework Programme, the £12.5m CASPAR software will see formerly inaccessible old data in different formats being rescued, viewed and used by the state and private sectors. CASPAR will also be used to preserve the EU's digital data for posterity.

▶ <http://www.v3.co.uk/computing/news/2269371/eu-makes-digital-access-open>

UK government IT chief backs open source, small business

The UK government's deputy chief information officer has outlined plans to hand over public sector IT contracts to small businesses and suppliers of open-source and cloud-based solutions in an attempt to balance the books.

▶ <http://www.thinq.co.uk/2010/9/22/uk-gov-it-chief-backs-open-source-small-business/>

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TransferSummit conference, Oxford, 24-25 June 2010

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

A report from the OSS Watch TransferSummit, held at Keble College, Oxford, 24-25 June 2010, by Sam Jordison.

Open source software (OSS) has come a long way in recent years. Even the most secretive and commercially sensitive organisations like mobile phone companies and NASA have started to understand its benefits. It is now widely used in the commercial and higher education sector and it touches the lives of millions if not billions around the world. As a number of delegates pointed out during the conference, the old cliché that 'you use Linux 10 or 15 times a day and don't realise it' could just as easily be transposed to a wide number of OSS projects.

At [TransferSummit](#), this growing acceptance of OSS – and the principle of open innovation – was most clearly demonstrated by an absence. There was hardly any debate about whether OSS is a good way forward. That was pretty much taken as understood. Yes, there were involved discussions about its benefits and how best to make it work. Yes, most speakers and delegates were keen to explain how and why it has helped them. Yes, there was also informed debate about the limits of open innovation and acknowledgement that it might not be the best fit for all people in all circumstances. But this debate was mainly about how to make it work best, not whether it should be used at all.

That's not to say that there aren't still arguments to be had and people to be convinced. It's also probably true that there would be little point in going into too much basic detail at a conference with such a well-informed set of delegates. But the fact that so many high-achieving business-people, developers and academic facilitators are on roughly the same page when it comes to the benefits of OSS, could perhaps be taken as a demonstration of how far OSS has come in recent years. As [Steven Pemberton](#) said in his keynote speech, 'we are through the first stage' in getting open innovation technology accepted and now the main task is to make it better.

That said, one of the many nuggets of background passed on about open innovation during the course of the two days is that it isn't really such a recent concept. In his talk about the Codeplex Foundation (not to be confused with codeplex.com), [Stephen Walli](#) provided a useful reminder of how this kind of open innovation has worked in the past. 'I remember that in the late 70s and early 80s there

was DECUS where you got a tape packed with software that everyone was able to share,' he said. 'Even in the 1950s (and running up to the 1980s) there were IBM SHARE conferences. In the 1940s there was the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton University.' He also noted that at IAS, the world's first stored-program computer was running 24 hours a day and all sorts of people were able to use it and shared software. 'The bottom line is that we have shared software since we have written software,' he said.

1. The economic benefits of open innovation: value for money

Given the economic climate and budget cuts faced by projects across the education, public and commercial sectors, it was natural that a great deal of thought

should be given to the cost benefits of open innovation and how to generate growth and save money across the board. The most clear economic benefit of open innovation to emerge over the course of the conference was the simple fact that it works. It delivers results - and does so in a cost-effective way.

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One of the points that was often made during the two days was that although open source doesn't necessarily mean 'free', it does generally mean cheaper, and often more effective. It enables access to reservoirs of talent that couldn't otherwise be tapped and allows a kind of economy of scale to build up. Steven Pemberton gave the famous example of the free-at-source Wikipedia compared to the old *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and how 'little things' can join together 'to make a big thing better and better'.

Mark Taylor (CEO of the Sirius Corporation), speaking about FOSS business models, emphasised that OSS brings costs down. He noted that just as the cost of hardware like PCs and laptops has plummeted, been commoditised and become a marginal expense in production, so open source is making software ever cheaper. 'It brings the cost towards zero,' he said. In a talk where there was much to-and-fro between the floor and active engagement about OSS business models, Mark was also asked about how OSS business models compare to the Cloud. His reply was interesting: 'I personally think, long term, very little. Economics will inexorably push all Cloud providers to base their offerings entirely upon open source. That's to say, the Cloud will be driven by open source technologies.'

▶ Full article continues at <http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/resources/TransferSummitReport.xml>

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Contribute to the OSS Watch National Survey 2010

Published by Sander van der Waal on September 10, 2010



Here at OSS Watch we have just started our National Software Survey for 2010 and we are in the data collecting phase. Everybody active in Higher or Further Education in the UK is invited to take part. This survey, commissioned by JISC for the fourth time, will assess the state of software policies and usage in Further and Higher Education.

In previous years this survey has been sent out to ICT directors across FE and HE institutions in the UK. This year, however, we have decided to expand the survey, in order to gain a broader view of the state of open and closed source software in FE and HE. Therefore, if you work in the UK HE/FE sector, we encourage you to contribute. Your data will provide invaluable background on the status of open source use as depicted by ICT directors, and will make an important contribution to the future planning of ICT procurement and support by FE/HE institutions and the JISC.

Please access this year's survey at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Osswatch2010b>.

We appreciate that you may not know the answers to all of the questions as you may not be dealing with all aspects of policy planning and implementation. We would, however, appreciate any information you can provide, so please don't hesitate to give this survey a go.

The previous survey, conducted in 2008, found that there awareness and usage of open source software has increased significantly, although closed source software remained more popular than open source in both HE and FE institutions. The survey pinpointed the main obstacles to engaging with open source software as being a perception of difficulty and a need for more resources and highly skilled staff, as well as a perception that open source software is not supported.

On the OSS Watch website you can read the detailed findings from [the 2008 report](#) (pdf) and the [2006 report](#).

<http://osswatch.jiscinvolve.org/wp/2010/09/10/contribute-to-the-oss-watch-national-survey-2010/>



Open innovation tactics and incentives applied to software

Published by Sander van der Waal on August 27, 2010

A very interesting [blog post](#) was published on the 100% Open website about 7 tactics and incentives for open innovation. It struck me how well these all apply to open source software projects. So I'll discuss all 7 of them from the perspective of open source, but make sure you'll also read the original post for the original, more generally applicable view on these tactics and incentives.

1. Share both Risks and Rewards

When participating in an open source project you are largely in the same boat as all the other contributors to the project, therefore sharing the risks among each other. If a release is delayed or major bugs are introduced in the software, everybody suffers. However, some open source licences allow you to add your own private rewards by building your own customization of the software without contributing it back to the project. It is a bad idea to do so because when you let your code deviate from the project's code you always end up with more complex migration paths which makes it harder to keep profiting from the efforts of the community.

2. Tap into Intrinsic Incentives

Intrinsic incentives are extremely important for open source software projects. There is still a widespread misconception that open source software is being developed by hobbyists where there is no money involved. This is not the case, because a large majority of the code in open source software projects is being developed by people who are paid by their employers to do so. This is also true in the educational sector in the UK, where software projects are being fund by the likes of JISC and the research councils. Nevertheless, for any sustainable open source community intrinsic incentives are very important. For example in the Apache Software Foundation, when a contributor becomes a committer to an ASF project they personally become one and never as an employee of some company X. Being part of a community that builds cool software is just great and having a culture within the project that feeds into that is therefore extremely important. A nice illustration of this Dan Plink's TED talk on [motivation](#). He shows in a very powerful way that highly skilled people are not mainly motivated by money, but by being challenged and by the opportunity to develop a mastery.

3. Don't Expect Something for Nothing

For an open source software project to be truly sustainable, external contributions and engagement from new participants are extremely important. Usually, a public mailing list or forum is the first entry point for potential contributors. Although it is likely that people first ask questions on these lists rather than answering them, in a healthy project all participants help out each other. This makes the project scalable and is one of the reasons why it does not necessarily takes a lot of time to open up a software projects to the outside: if you manage to engage new people they will help out others and that way a truly sustainable community can develop.

“Being part of a community that builds cool software is just great and having a culture within the project... is therefore extremely important”

4. Ask Engaging Questions

People or companies that are involved in open source projects never have completely overlapping problems and therefore it is not always clear which solution is the most appropriate for all of them. Moreover, if you encounter a project that provides a lot of the functionality you need but not all of it, there are very effective mechanisms to discuss the features of the project. Mailing lists and forums are used widely to engage in discussion and find ways of merging features different people need. Of course, if you require a specific piece of functionality, it is up to you to build it and contribute it to the project. But discussing the requirements and problems of different people can lead to interesting insights that can be valuable to the whole project. Due to the distributed nature of open source software projects people with very different backgrounds will bring their own viewpoints, which can lead to more creative solutions and spark new ideas.



<http://osswatch.jiscinvolve.org/wp/2010/08/27/open-innovation-tactics-and-incentives-applied-to-software/>

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5. Build Business Empathy

Open source projects can thrive or be damaged by reputation just like businesses. The plea in the original post for an honest and human approach is very well applicable to open source projects. But in many cases it comes more natural to open source projects to have that approach because, as mentioned earlier, there is already a focus on individual contributions incorporated in the dna of many projects. For new projects or projects that are working towards sustainability it is important to define processes that support this approach and to fix it in a [governance model document](#), so it is clear to everybody what they can expect from the project, thereby providing a more level playing field.

6. Target Quantity before Quality

This tactic is well-known in software where it is more commonly known as the [‘Release early, release often’](#) mantra. If you are active in a young open source software project that is still in its infancy, getting a release out is a very effective way of engaging new contributors and is therefore a huge opportunity to let your project grow to become sustainable. Releasing early makes the

barrier to entry lower for new users, albeit that the first few releases will be of lower quality and contain less features. As long as this is clearly communicated to the (prospective) this need not be a problem but can help the project as a whole move forward more quickly.

7. Find Your Top 1%

In the original [post](#) the 100% open team explains that out of 100 users, there are usually only 10 who are really engaged and just 1 who will provide a substantial contribution. Although the percentages may vary, also in open source software projects it is very important to identify the users of today that are most likely to become the contributors of tomorrow. It is essential for any open source project to engage those users and try to have them contribute to the project and perhaps even become a committer to help achieving sustainability in the long run.

OSS Watch community development manager Gabriel Hanganu published an excellent [briefing note](#) recently, in which he explains how the sustainability lessons can be applied to research infrastructure. Gabriel’s analysis shows that a lot of the tactics and incentives for open innovation are also important in that space.



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Events

- Oct

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JISC event: The future of Research? - London, 19 October 2010

JISC is running a one day conference entitled ‘The future of Research?’ at the Congress Centre in London on 19 October 2010. The event will examine three major challenges facing education institutions involved in research today: institutional reputation; efficiency and effectiveness; and collaboration in a competitive environment. The programme is aimed at vice chancellors, pro vice chancellors and senior managers in education institutions involved in research today.

▶ <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/Home/events/2010/10/futureofresearch.aspx>
- Oct

25-31

Plone Conference 2010, Bristol, 25-31 October 2010

Find out about new developments in Plone, and learn about new techniques and products from some of the most experienced people globally within the Plone community.

▶ <http://www.ploneconf2010.org/the-event>
- Oct

27

Developing for the mobile web, Bristol, 27 October 2010

This is a free one-day workshop focussing on the mobile web. It is aimed at developers, web developers and systems administrators and explores how web content can be reused and created so that it works on a variety of mobile devices, using cascading style sheets, HTML 5, Javascript and related tools.

▶ http://www.ukoln.ac.uk/events/devcsi/mobile_web/

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Frequently Asked Questions

- Q** Can OSS Watch advise me on matters relating to open standards?
- A** Open standards can certainly help to improve interoperability but OSS Watch does not track standards development and adoption. We therefore suggest that you get in touch with a complimentary JISC innovation support centre, [JISC CETIS](#) (Centre for Educational Technology and Interoperability Standards), for further information on open standards.

Find answers to your questions at: <http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/about/faq.xml>

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