

## Open source software in Further Education in the UK

Ross Gardler

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<http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk>

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## Table of contents

- OSS Watch
- Open source software
- Why should you care?
- State of OSS in UK FE
- Conclusions and references



# OSS Watch



## OSS Watch

## We are...

- National innovation centre supporting open source in Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE)
- Free of charge for FE and HE
- JISC-funded since 2003 (4<sup>th</sup> period of funding)
- Who: Ross Gardler, 5 staff, 4 contractors
- Where: Oxford University Computing Services

## What we do

- Advice on all things open
  - Procurement, engagement, development, legal
- Services
  - Consultancy, events, presentations, community
- Publications
  - Briefing notes, surveys, case studies, slides  
<http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/resources/>

## What we don't do

- Advocacy
- Lawyer-like legal advice
- Teach programming
- Develop software for others
- Recommend specific software



## Open source software



## It starts with a licence

- Software released under an OSI approved licence



- In practice, approx. same as free software (FSF)



## Open source definition

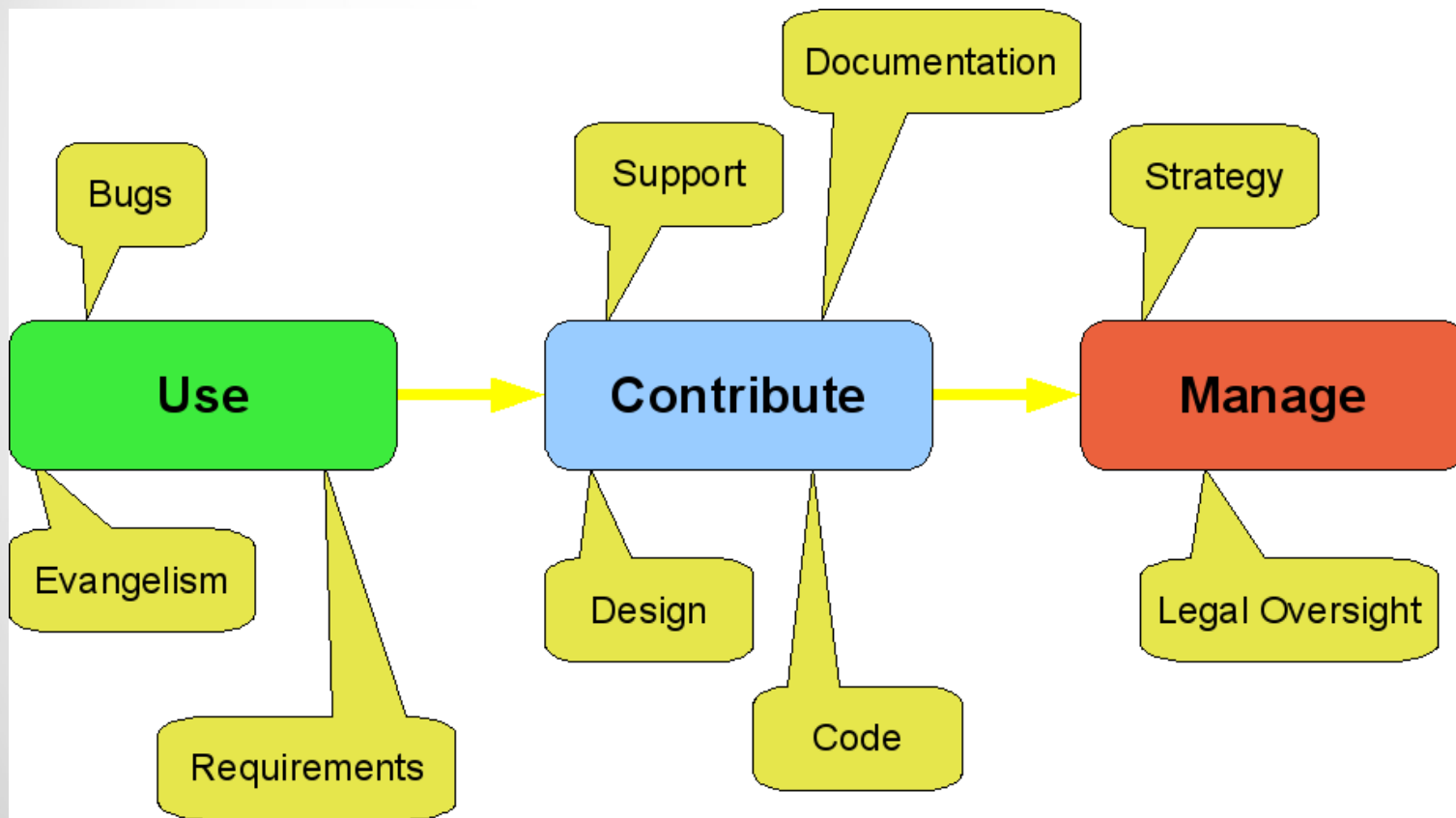
- Free redistribution
- Source code
- Derived works
- Integrity of the author's work
- No discrimination against persons or groups
- etc. <http://www.opensource.org/docs/definition.php>

## But it's much more than a licence

- “The real value of open source software is that it allows communities to work together and solve problems” [7] I. Wladawsky-Berger, IBM
- Sustainable communities
- Open formats and standards
- Open development



## A project community



## Some myths (1)

- Myth
  - Anarchic projects managed by volunteers
- Facts
  - Linux Foundation board: Novell, Oracle, Fujitsu, Intel, IBM, Hitachi, HP, AMD, NEC, Texas Instruments, Motorola
  - Sun: 34+ projects. Mozilla: AOL, Google
  - UK Open source consortium: 56 members

## Some myths (2)

- Myth
  - Free (as in free beer)
- Facts
  - Costs: staff, support, training...
  - 50% companies deploying more than 25 open source products, > 20% savings in IT budget [1]  
InfoWorld
  - 1% companies costs went up [1]

## Some myths (3)

- Myth
  - You can't generate income from OSS
- Facts
  - Worldwide revenue \$1.8bn in 2006 rising to \$5.8bn in 2011 [5] IDC report

## Some myths (4)

- Myth
  - You have to engage with the project if you use open source
- Facts
  - You can outsource all support and development services if you want to



## OSS always right? (1)

- No
  - Consider open source alongside closed source and make an informed decision
- Some key pitfalls with open source
  - You need the right person or company to administer and support it
  - Open source projects sometimes lack support mechanisms and/or resources (docs, communities, etc.)



## OSS always right? (2)

- Sometimes open source is just a marketing tool
  - Crippled open source version, all features in closed source version
  - Closed development methodology



**Why should you care?**

## Official guidelines

- **UK Government** will consider OSS solutions alongside proprietary ones in IT procurements. Contracts will be awarded on a value for money basis [2]
- The **[EC]** will consider OSS solutions the same way as proprietary ones in IT procurements. Contracts will be awarded on a *value for money* basis [3]
- **JISC**-funded projects must not discriminate between open source and closed source software, unless the purpose of the projects or services specifically requires it [4]

## Market reality

- “Open source is the most significant all-encompassing and long-term trend that the software industry has seen since the early 1980s” [5] IDC report
- “By 2012, more than 90 percent of enterprises will use open source in direct or embedded forms” [6] Gartner report

## Your needs?

- Flexibility
- Interoperability
  - Do you consider this to be “single-vendor”?
- Avoidance of lock-in
- Viable alternatives
- More potential for students to learn software



## State of OSS in UK FE

## National survey 2008

- ICT Directors from
  - 454 FE/FE+HE institutions
  - 161 HE institutions
- 19% response rate

## Limited resources in FE

- Typical FE ICT departments employ between 7 and 10 staff
- 7 times larger in HE
- FE staff lower technical qualifications on average
- Traditionally, FE less open source friendly than HE, but now you are catching up



## Policy vs. practice

- Policy
  - In 2006, 30% institutions mentioned open source
  - In 2008, 57%
  - Staff contributions regulated in only 14%
- Practice
  - In 2006, 77% considered open source
  - In 2008, 87% (but only 15% equally to closed source!)

## Servers increasingly open

- All or almost all closed source
  - Reducing from 56% (2006) to 40% (2008)
- Mostly closed source
  - Increasing from 20% (2006) to 44% (2008)
- Half open and half closed source
  - Increasing from 3% (2008) to 11% (future)
- Similar trend on desktops

## Criteria for procurement in FE

- Top criteria
  - Performance, interoperability with other products, familiarity and TCO (servers)
  - Performance and avoid lock-ins, TCO (desktops)
- Bottom criteria
  - Ideological reasons and migration costs (servers)
  - Migration costs and legal issues (desktops)

## Reasons to reject OSS given by FE

- Top reasons on servers
  - Lack of staff expertise and support
  - Poor quality
- Top reasons on desktops
  - Not what users want
  - Lack of staff expertise
  - No solution for our need
  - Lack of support



## Conclusions and references

## Conclusions

- OSS Watch is here to help you [info@oss-watch.ac.uk](mailto:info@oss-watch.ac.uk)
- Open source starts with a licence, but works thanks to the community and development practices
- Volunteers, small and big businesses... but are they reaching FE?
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## References (1)

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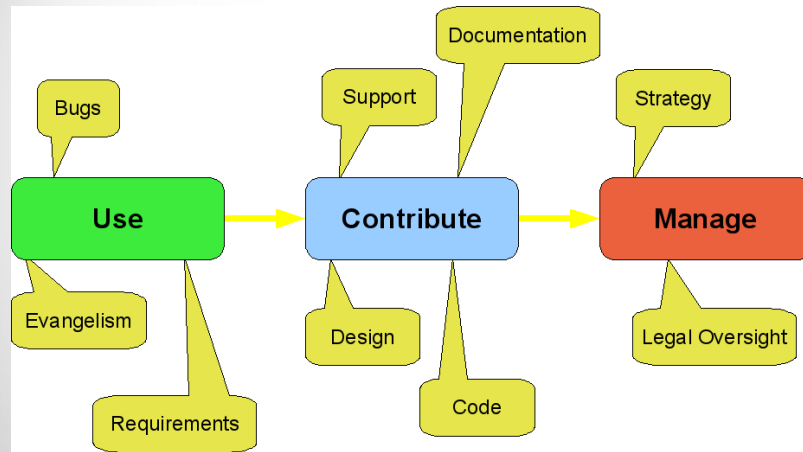
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