



FLORA Community Consulting

Open Source Solutions Showcase
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example of a small business
(sole proprietor)



Non-distributed vs Distributed Software (1)

- **Private/in-house development**
- "empirical evidence that approximately 95% of code is still written in-house"
(The Manufacturing Delusion - The Cathedral & the Bazaar, Chapter 5 - The Magic Cauldron)
- **'software as a service'** businesses, such as an ASP
(Application Service Provider) may use private or distributed software
- even if software is not distributed, software may be a derivative of Open Source software and can benefit from Open Source methods



Non-distributed vs Distributed Software (2)

- **Distributed Software**
- "Software Manufacturing" - propriety software using '**selling licenses**' as their primary business model
- Open Source/Free Software - includes many business models, including '**servicing software**'
- should more of this 5% be open source to facilitate a more competitive services market?



FLORA.ca is an example of a Free Software business (1)

- treat software as a services based business rather than manufacturing
- use "copyleft" rather than "copyright" in the works I author
- copyleft involves retaining "moral rights", but relinquishing monopoly rights (ability to restrict copying)
- consider the GNU General Public License to be a vaccine, not a virus
- consider it important to retain copyright for exposure, advertising (distributed resume) - not interested in "work for hire" arrangements
- highly competitive market without vendor lock in
- customer has freedom in choosing alternate vendors for future projects



FLORA.ca is an example of a Free Software business (2)

- small businesses can offer full services to customer, rather than primarily being a reseller of third party products
- many businesses create and/or use a combination of Open Source/Free Software and proprietary software
- "flagship" companies focused on software manufacturing tend to be very large and visible.
- we need to focus on competitive markets including a diversity of sizes of vendors, not focus on "superstars"



Virtual Companies (1)

Create right-sized groups to match project

- **FLORA.ca**
 - consulting
 - creating/customizing/configuring software
 - hosting websites, acting as ISP
 - system administration
 - etc ("If it has a wire, and can be opened up, I will work on it")
reject the concept of "no user serviceable parts inside"



Virtual Companies (2)

- **OpenConcept.ca**
 - reselling FLORA.ca hosting services
 - content management system (CMS) used on hosted MP websites such as billblaikie.ca, patmartin.ca, ...
 - bidding on larger projects
- **PLCOM.net**
 - Open Source based tools for media monitoring service



Example Projects (1)

- **Forestry Canada (1997)**
 - PERL based CGI feedback scripts for National Forestry Database Program
- **Canadian Heritage Information Network (CHIN - 1998)**
 - PHP2/PERL/Postgres95 for on-line subscription system



Example Projects (2)

- **Netshooter (Delhi, India -1999+)**
 - system administration of co-located server
 - script authoring/exchange
- **many clients (primarily NGO)**
 - Linux based LAN server for file/print sharing
 - Linux based firewall, email server
 - integration of Linux server(s) with Microsoft Windows clients
 - managing full IT needs



Other Projects (1)

- **actively involved in Community Networking movement.**
 - host many community sites under FLORA.org and other domains
- **promoting the legal use of software**
 - stay-legal.org promotes Open Source as a way to simplify legal and licensing issues
 - started as a response to the Canadian Alliance Against Software Theft (CAAST) "truce" campaign



Other Projects (2)

- **promoting use of public knowledge in public education**
 - more critical than lower financial costs is the ability to learn from review of blueprints (source code)
 - ability to legally share documents and tools between school and home environment
 - public/peer review in Open Source software is similar to peer review in science



Potential Problems? (1)

- **competitors in Open Source are allies, not threats**
 - need more "full service" providers, rather than resellers
 - large and small vendors help each other to set up competitive marketplace such that the right sized vendor can bid on the right sized job
 - provide linux-consult@flora.org email list to share contract potentials with other small open source businesses



Potential Problems? (2)

- Has government have been listening primarily to old-economy players?
- **software manufacturing**
 - must begin to deal with conflicts with competition and procurement policy vs. intellectual "property" policy
- **entertainment industries**
 - movie and music industries wish to accept benefits of new ICT tools, but wish to regulate/legislate away any risk

<http://www.digital-copyright.ca/>



Summary

- move to fully scalable service-based software industry from "software manufacturing" which favors larger companies
- 95% of software market, and rest of knowledge economy, would benefit if more of remaining 5% were Open Source
 - similar to public roads and other transportation infrastructure in industrial economy
- Canadian government has already adopted and/or contributed to Open Source projects
- Canadian government needs to be more aware of market as it moves forward on related public policy