



Workshop 201: Proprietary Influences in Free and Open Source Software: Lessons to Open and Universal Internet Standards – A Developing Country Perspective



What are the fundamental issues facing the Free and Open Source Movement in the developing world?



“I think that if the developing country is serious about not just seeing ICT as a cost centre, but as a requirement for national development, the real advantage of open source ends up being able to build up your own knowledge base. And that is not cheap in itself – you’ll likely pay as much for that as you’d pay for a proprietary software solution. The difference being that with the proprietary solution, you’ll never catch up, and you’ll have to pay forever, without ever learning anything yourself” - Linus Torvalds, 2004

What are the fundamental issues facing the Free and Open Source Movement in the developing world?

- Continuing lack of adoption by large enterprises/governments for a myriad of reasons
- Inability of FOSS to effectively compete on a resource level against deep pockets of major Proprietary Software entities
- Increasing commoditization of global FOSS successes through acquisitions and resulting attempts at commercialization



Are there steps that can be taken to address these issues in the short to medium term?

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1. Governments/Countries/Nation-States can and should summon the political will to bring a wider appreciation of FOSS through internal adoption as a matter of public policy (in the public interest)
2. In parallel, Governments/Countries/Nation-States should work (globally) with major Proprietary Software entities to encourage and incent the development of “Open” versions of traditional closed products
3. As a consequence of (1) and (2), Universities and other TLIs in developing countries should serve as incubators of FOSS development, focusing on saleable skills (as opposed to licensing)

Successful FOSS adoption

1. Brazil (Government)
2. Austria (Vienna – city only)
3. Germany (Munich -



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