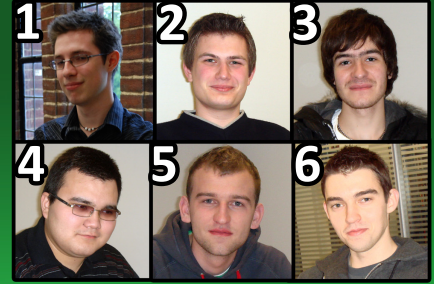


# Ethical and economical perspectives of OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARE

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### Abstract

This poster aims to present a balanced overview of various economical and ethical issues surrounding open source software.

The group concluded that open source holds a lot of potential for a positive global shift in the marketplace. However, this may come at the cost of businesses losing a substantial proportion of their customer base, or being forced to overhaul their fundamental business strategy.

### Introduction

The objective of this poster is to demonstrate the differing aspects found within open source including the advantages and disadvantages, and the potential adverse effects upon major corporations. Based on the current trends found, the group predicted what would happen to open source projects in the future.

### Method

The research process began by assessing the many aspects of open source software. We deduced that the question of open source covered several vast information topics. It was decided that the most effective and detailed method of critically evaluating each aspect of open source aspects, would be to divide the areas and assign each team member an individual aspect to research. In this way each area can be assessed in a detailed manner and from alternating points of view.

Each team member utilised a vast selection of sources covering from academic documents to videos. The resultant information gathered was combined together to form an accurate snapshot of the key issues involving both open source software and the corporate entities involved.

### Background

Open source software is software that has the source code available to the general public so that, potentially, it can be modified. While open source and free sharing of technologies existed long before computers, the decision to use the label 'open source' was decided January 1998 in reaction to Netscape's decision to release source code for Navigator.

### Copyleft

Open source software has its source code published by the developer(s), allowing other developers to contribute to the efficiency and functionality of the software. Open source software is governed by the "Copyleft" license, which gives more freedoms to the end user, rather than more freedom to the creator.

Licensing software with the "General Public License" ensures that the software can be used and changed freely, but also requires that software based on the original must have the same freedoms.

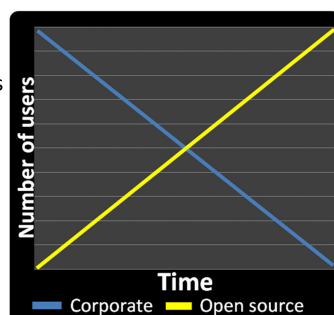
### Ethics

The ethics of being involved with open source software have a balanced set of pro's and con's, for instance:

**PRO** – The quality of software will increase as companies are pushed to produce better software to stay in the market

**CON** – Companies may lose money, have to charge more for their software, lose business and possibly go out of business.

The graph to the right shows how the balance of people using open source and proprietary software is likely to occur.



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Some common misconceptions related to open source software include:

- There is no guarantee that development will happen.
- There may be significant problems connected to intellectual property
- It is sometimes difficult to know that a project exist, and its current status

### Advantages

More reliable software is typically produced due to less financial constraints on the software vendors than that of proprietary software, who are looking to making as much profit as possible.

Thousands of independent developers with different styles working on the same piece of source code without needing to meet multiple customer requirements and can focus on more innovative technical functionality. Open Source software reduces customers dependence on certain major software vendors such as Microsoft and Apple.

### Economic advantages

In this section, the term "economics" is used concerning individual and social costs and benefits. The foremost benefits for participating in OSS processes are firstly to improve the developer's skills. Secondly, developers may have a vested interest in making software work. Thirdly, a regular contributor to a project will likely receive help quicker when they have a problem to solve. Finally, all of the aforementioned factors may lead to better job prospects.

OSS has made several impacts on society: Software has become more accessible for smaller organisations and poorer individuals. OSS has allowed the public to have more of a say in what functionality software should have. Some commercial companies such as Microsoft have altered their organisational structure in reaction to the successes of the open source model. However, the question "Can the model be transferred to any industry" has not yet been fully answered.

### Recent news

Recently one company which utilizes Open Source software a lot to benefit themselves in several different markets is Google, for example their new phone Google Android.

However, Google has been facing stiff competition from Apple and Nokia who have started to produce new open source software through their phones.

### The future of open source software

The future is bright for Open Source Software; businesses such as Apple and Microsoft will need to adapt to open source to stay competitive.

If the government is able to re-direct the millions of pounds they pay in their expenditure on software research to open source software, it can have the potential to finally end Microsoft's monopoly of the market.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, it was apparent that the balance between advantages and disadvantages within open source were perceived to be equal. For example, open source could in theory speed up the development of new programming functions and better efficiency. But in contrast, major corporations selling software could lose out on goodwill, and the technical support for users is likely to diminish.

In essence therefore, one could say that there is no right or wrong answer to the question of whether open source software will benefit or hinder the current economic climate.

### References:

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**Keywords:** Open source, software, information provider, social changes, community, information culture, business model, Google, proprietary, property rights, Copyleft, Linux, ethics