

Open Sourcing and What it Means for Corporations

The advent of the internet has been the cause for limitless new learning opportunities. Fields that were previously exclusive to people with higher education and the funds to support that lifestyle have are now increasingly available to anyone with computer and internet access.

Open source is a type of software where the source code is free and is allowed to be distributed and modified. It encourages collaboration freely, which has led to innovation in the technology field. Instead of patents blocking off new technologies, open source allows for new ideas to be pushed and questioned. User participation in software development can help developers fix bugs and inconveniences more efficiently and with more accuracy. The Open Source Initiative (OSI) was founded in 1998, and while its founders focused on the business innovation possibilities, open source software was controversial. Large corporations like Microsoft felt threatened by the wide access, going so far as to call open source an “intellectual property damager.” Recently, Microsoft adopted a more balanced approach, acknowledging the possibilities open source presents for great change. The fact remains, however, that open source poses a tangible threat to large corporations by unlimited access to influence coding.

In 2018, over 30% of software engineers used online learning tools, such as free sourcing, to teach themselves new and valuable skills. Learning from others through the internet is common, and for those who are dedicated enough, it’s possible to learn enough skills to become successful entirely by self-teaching online. This alleviates some barriers for low-income workers who may not be able to access formal education because of financial barriers but want to start a career in technology. For instance, in 2000, a conference on software engineering looked at how much formal education was ideal for new engineers to undertake, and at minimum they asked for a complete bachelor's degree, with an appreciation for those who pursued a master’s degree. The engineering and development field has since become more accepting of those who are willing to teach themselves proficiently online.

By Rebecca Fox '22, Clarke Forum Student Project Manager

Works cited:

Charney, Ben (2002, January). “Microsoft Raps Open Source Approach” Retrieved February 19, 2021 from <https://www.cnet.com/news/microsoft-raps-open-source-approach/>

Hughes, Matthew (2018, December). “Over 65% of New Developers are Self Taught and I’m Surprised It’s Not 100%.” Retrieved February 19, 2021 from <https://thenextweb.com/dd/2018/12/11/over-65-percent-of-new-developers-are-self-taught-im-surprised-its-not-100-percent/>

Lindman, Juho & Rajala, Risto (2012, January). How Open Source Has Changed the Software Industry: Perspectives from Open Source Entrepreneurs. *Technology Innovation Management Review*, 2(1): 5-11. Retrieved February 20, 2021 from <https://timreview.ca/article/510>

Tower-Clark, Charles (2019, September). “Why is Open Source So Important? Part One: Principles and Parity.” Retrieved February 19, 2021, from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/charlestowersclark/2019/09/24/why-is-open-source-so-important-part-one-principles-and-parity/>