

Fit For the Future with Open Source

Five arguments to consider in your company's software evaluation process.

WHITE PAPER

„IN THE BEGINNING ALL SOFTWARE WAS FREE“
– GEORG GREVE

Experiencing a renaissance, open source software enjoys increasing popularity amongst all kinds of companies and organisations. However, the surge in popularity is not even all that new, back when the first mainframe computers were sold in the 1950s and 1960s it was common practice to only sell hardware, including the software and its source code. This way the customer could adjust and expand the programme as seen fit.

For many of you, the first association might concern the cost reduction due to eliminating license costs; for others the appeal lies especially within the option to individually design and develop applications to precisely match individual requirements. In the following, we will elaborate on the five most convincing arguments for the adaption of open source software to support you in your decision-making process.

FREE, OPEN, AND STANDARD COMPATIBLE

Open source software uses open standards, i.e. the IETF protocols. Generally, they are publicly available and can be used by everyone without worrying about potential copy right infringement

or licensing costs. This enables software developers to create new solutions directly tailored to available standards, which in turn means overall higher interoperability levels between different software solutions. Therefore, open standards also ensure vendor independence of your company in the long run.

INDIVIDUAL, FLEXIBLE, ENABLING SOVEREIGNTY

The possibility to directly access and view the source code allows you to customise open source software to precisely match the needs of your company: additional features can easily be developed exactly for the software, or new interfaces to other applications can be implemented for the seamless integration of the new software into your infrastructure. This and much more is possible with open source products. Open source software enables you to proactively and independently tackle necessary optimisation measures. In addition to data protection, the sovereign, i.e. self-determined, handling of digitisation therefore requires open source software. This kind of freedom in designing your software can even be the one decisive advantage over your competition.

FASTER PROGRESS WITH OPEN INNOVATION

The future viability of your company is determined, among other things, by important factors such as access to innovations, the use of modern technology, or ideal adjustment to different business areas. Whereas the development of proprietary software usually only includes employees in the development process, open source software includes the public and hence, the potential input of smaller as well as bigger communities. The transparency thus created allows valuable external knowledge to flow into the development process and vastly thereby increasing the scope of innovation.

SECURE

Just as for proprietary software there is no 100% security guarantee for open source software. In the past, open source software was also affected by hidden security breaches which were discovered later. Nonetheless, open source software generally is particularly secure. Potential vulnerabilities are usually detected in no time. The strategic advantage of the community principle also affects all security related issues. At all times, there are many eyes on the look-out for coding errors, and security leaks. They will also communicate and solve them collaboratively or request the main-developers to eliminate the problem. In a way, the public access ensures constant and repeated tests of the software by independent entities, which also ensures the code is always updated. Consequently, any open source product comes with an above-average security level based on state-of-the-art developments; something that proprietary vendors, more often than not, cannot achieve to the same extent.

Moreover, open source platforms have the up-to-date code readily available to download for free and provide access to a comprehensive, publicly accessible documentation.

RESOURCE- AND COST-EFFICIENT

The aforementioned points prove there are more factors than just cost to take into consideration when evaluating open source software. Nonetheless, the cost argument can be the deciding one. Hence, it is well worth it to do a little review of how the already mentioned benefits contribute to the cost-efficiency of open source software:

- **royalty free** – download and use are free of charge
- **individual** – you will only be charged for functions you actually need
- **innovative** – goals can be accomplished faster and more efficiently thanks to knowledge sharing
- **secure** – early identification of security breaches will reduce subsequent costs

Additionally, most open source companies usually offer very flexible rates for the support of their offered solutions. Since there are no specific vendor guidelines to be considered you are able to freely select your preferred IT service provider and compare different rates.

CONCLUSION

As open source software generally is very flexible, it is very versatile and individual in its application possibilities. Moreover, the collaborative development process as well as the aspiration to standard compatibility makes open source software particularly resource-saving and efficient. Vendor independence further ensures a maximum of autonomy in decision-making and lets you stay in control at all time.

In this way, companies that opt for open source solutions benefit from crucial advantages in terms of future business viability and competitiveness, while supporting a model, which with open standards and the possibility of unrestricted use, creates the foundation for the digital sovereignty for users.