

Open Source in Software Value Chains

Sloan Foundation Software Industries Center Project

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As open source projects enter software value chains, forward-looking corporations have moved quickly to adopt new business models that leverage open source products and communities to create value in new ways. We are examining these business models and the adjustments in organizational structure and work practices they require.

We have identified several companies that work closely with open source communities. We plan to conduct interviews at each company with executives, strategic planners, managers, and developers. We will also be conducting interviews with open source software community members to get their perspective on relationships with corporations and day-to-day interactions with corporate employees.

We hope to develop a broad perspective regarding:

- How open source is adding value to the software industry
 - How are firms benefiting from interaction with OSS communities?
 - What are the business models that allow them to appropriate benefits?
 - To appropriate benefit from OSS, how much additional work must be done in-house? What are the characteristics of the in-house efforts that are subsequently shared vs. not shared with the community?
- How is participation in open source causing firms to adjust the methods by which they manage projects?
 - How do communities and firms interact? What governance structures are used to structure the relationships?
 - When disagreements or conflicts arise, how are they settled?
- How is the decision to collaborate with OSS communities causing corporate developers to change their work practices and styles?
 - How are firm employees who work with OSS communities trained and managed? How do they feel about their work?
 - What “work patterns” do corporate developers have to learn to be effective community members and employees?
 - How is the effectiveness of corporate OS developers assessed by the firm?
 - How do corporate developers manage the task of working with the community and meeting the organization’s goals? What do they do when both objectives can not be met?

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