

Open Source Software

Understanding the Legal Implications

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Open Source Software (OSS) has arrived. Everyone has heard, but I believe most people still don't understand that a fundamental paradigm shift has occurred that can't be understood by our previous software experience. He who will not understand this major upheaval, will not prosper.

Some points that this lecture will address are:

1. The societal (social) aspects of OSS.
2. OSS is distributed under a very wide spectrum of different licences. These licenses grant varied rights and assert restrictions on how they can be used, modified or distributed. Examples of different licenses will be given. OSS licenses do not restrict freedom of use, but rather try to maximize it, with varying degrees of success.
3. Copyright law provides the legal basis of OSS licensing. A novel use of copyright law is the "GNU Public License" (GPL), sometimes called the "copyleft". The "copyleft" (GPL) license does not restrict use, as do most copyright licenses, but rather uses copyright to widen the use of the GPL'ed licensed software.
4. Legal challenges to OSS.
5. Paradigm changes create opportunities for those who can recognize them. This talk will explain why OSS will generate business opportunities that are not available in the world of proprietary software.

Biography

Joel Isaacson has worked as a independent consultant at the cutting edge of high technology for over 30 years. He concentrates his efforts on consulting and actively developing software. He has been promoting open software solutions for over 15 years. For the last 20 years, he has taught various advanced computer science courses at Bar-Ilan University and has advised tens of students in their advance degree theses. He has a Ph.D. degree in theoretical Physics from the University of Pennsylvania.