The future of Open Source

A Webanywhere Free Guide

'Open' when applied to online technology has different meanings to different people and therefore the definition has mixed interpretation. In 2009 Jonathan Rosenberg, who was then Google's SVP of Product Management, proposed two prongs of 'open':

Open technology

Including open source, meaning we (Google) release and actively support code that helps grow the Internet, and open standards, meaning we adhere to accepted standards and, if none exist, work to create standards that improve the entire Internet.

Open information

meaning that when we have information about users we use it to provide something that is valuable to them, we are transparent about what information we have about them, and we give them ultimate control over their information'.

Rosenberg goes to list three technical trends that are driving the open concept, which have evolved at an astonishing rate. These are:

1. The internet
2. Mobile capability
3. Cloud computing

With open source taking off as quickly as it has, it is now a critical business imperative for achieving product excellence and scale. Chrome and Android exemplify this principle and strive to work with an open culture - "more hands working on a product will only improve it." Today Chrome is seven times faster than when it launched 4 years ago, with the new code available for all to see as it's developed. By working in such an open manner it means there's more pressure to get it right, do it wrong and a global audience of developers will spot it instantly. An open ecosystem encourages a flood of ideas, however in this fast paced environment its harder know which ideas will be successful.

Alternatively, companies can choose a more closed approach, similarly to Apple, exercising complete control over all elements. This type of approach again requires speed, but this is more essential as product excellence and innovation has to be sourced internally within the company.

According to Rosenberg both approaches can be successful, but from experience, going 'open' is far more rewarding. This can be illustrated with the speed in which Android has taken over the market. Three years ago they only represented 5% of the mobile market, whilst now they own over half (51%). This is similar to the e-learning market, with the sudden boom in companies adopting learning platforms for employee learning and training.

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This final quote sums up Rosenberg's thoughts of an 'open' future:

> *"The future of government is transparency. The future of commerce is information symmetry. The future of culture is freedom. The future of science and medicine is collaboration. The future of entertainment is participation. Each of these futures depends on open internet."*

As an Authorised Google App Reseller, Webanywhere emulate the same ethos of Google, following the latest innovations and advocates of open technology, such as Moodle and Totara.

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The future of course management

Webanywhere specialises in learning technologies that enable the concepts described in this paper, and stretch the learning potential of an organisation's most important asset - its people. To discuss social learning, multi tenancy or the effective implementation of a learning management system in your organisation, contact our workplace learning team on 01535 604026, or email workplace@webanywhere.co.uk.

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