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The first use of the phrase â€œfree open source softwareâ€• on Usenet (internet user group) was in a posting on 18 March 1998, just a month after the term â€œopen sourceâ€• itself was introduced. â€œFree software is a matter of liberty, not price. To understand the concept, you should think of 'free' as in free speech, not as in 'free beerâ€• had said Richard Stallman. But with the gradual passage of time, using the term "free software" was commonly confused with the no-charge connotation, which obviously made business organizations uneasy. Free software is a philosophical concept that aims to convey the idea of software that can be used, studied and modified without any restriction. It does not refer to price, but liberty. This software can be freely distributed.

Coming back to open source software development, based on the fact that open source software is free and can be seen by everyone has great advantages. But the fact that it is being developed by a non-profit community has some disadvantages as well. So it becomes imperative that we discuss the pros and cons of open source software maintenance and development.

Open source software has lower monetary costs as development, support and license costs are fairly minimal when compared to proprietary software. This does tempt many organizations to use open source software in their business model. In fact many companies do business with open source, IBM being one of them. For example, IBM offers a quality service with the Linux operating system. Another company, RedHat is selling the Linux operating system with support services.

However, open source software development has its disadvantages as well. Open source software has been focused to provide solutions to servers rather than to desktop computers. As a result, adoption in the desktop arena is much slower. For example, Linux desktops are still not used as much as Microsoft Windows. In addition, the software is not yet compatible with open source. When a user chooses a Linux desktop he has to remove several software that are not supported on Linux, or in some cases, there is no similar nor viable open source application. A good example is the gaming industry, which is still very focused on Windows. Excluding companies that sell open source combined with technical support; proprietary software offers better service and support. The quality and availability of assistance in an open source project is proportional to the interest and use of the program by the community. An open source tool with few users can be poorly documented and have almost no means to help you understand it.

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