

# OPEN SOURCE AND EFFECTIVE SERVICE INTEGRATION

Getronics

a KPN company

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## TEN YEARS OF OPEN SOURCE

It is now around ten years since open source software first appeared on the professional IT landscape. A lot has happened since then. From the beginning, open source represented a clear desire to exploit mass-collaboration as a means to democratise software – increasing accessibility, creating new models for quality, and changing traditional ideas of acquisition and ownership<sup>1</sup>.

Since then, most significantly, open source software has changed position – moving from the margin to the mainstream, it has become an established constituent in ICT for both the public and private sectors. In the public sector, the preference for open source is particularly evident – as long as the case for cost and quality is made clear.

Over the last ten years, Getronics itself has also been through some significant changes. While maintaining a respected position as an ICT service provider with clients in central and local government, industry and financial services, we are now coming to be regarded as a service integrator rather than simply as a provider of point services. This is thanks, in part, to our position within the KPN Group and our adoption of a collaborative partnership model for international service delivery.

In this role, it becomes particularly important for Getronics to be able to provide clear and substantiated advice to its clients on the three specific service domains on which we focus:

- workspace
- connectivity
- datacenter.

And it is from this perspective that we reflect on the current status of open source and on how it affects the service strategies for our customers in both public and private sector enterprises.

## 'OPEN' HAS BECOME THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE

For enterprise IT decision-makers, the commitment to 'open' is nothing new. If we look at 'open' in a wider context, all successful enterprises relentlessly pursue the most direct and effective route to standardisation – and invariably, this has meant choosing in favour of open industry standards and best practice and from this perspective, open source is just one step further along the path.

Whereas ten years ago, we frequently had to fight against the 'not invented here' syndrome, today we find that it is our clients who are actively seeking to reward and encourage open and standard behaviours. In the past, for example, we had to sell the benefits of ITIL or TOGAF – whereas today our clients themselves formally insist on adherence to these industry standards and best practices in their own contract specifications.

With open source software, we find enterprises generally fall into one of three categories:

- The **committed** – organisations which have formally chosen in favour of open source, and for whom it has become the default choice – this position is still most frequently found in the public sector.
- The **interested** – those who are willing to consider the benefits of open source but who have made no widespread commitment to it as yet.
- The **neutral** – these organisations neither reject nor accept open source – they simply buy into functionality and remain indifferent to the underlying technology. With SaaS and utility models on the increase, we expect more and more organisations to take this position.

For clients in the first category, open source and open standards are a necessary and logical component of transparency and interoperability policy. As a service integrator, Getronics has been striving to design, implement and manage the service scenario which best fits the client's agreed policies. Getronics is also active in helping these clients undertake the necessary systems integration resulting from the adoption of open source platforms. The business case provided in the boxed text is a good example.

## BUSINESS CHANGE TRIGGERS OPEN SOURCE DECISION

The triggers for the adoption of open source are various. They can be technical – the current platform, for example, may be nearing the end of its useful life. They can also be driven by business change or new regulations.

Getronics consultants have been deeply involved for the last two years in helping a leading airline adopt Linux as its core platform. The background is interesting. A major merger left the airline with two semi-compatible Unix platforms and, rather than deciding to adopt one in favour of the other, the airline took the decision to migrate both to Linux.

<sup>1</sup> See the Dutch government initiative NOIV (Nederland Open in Verbinding) – this aims to increase public sector independence of established vendors and improve data accessibility between government and citizen.

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It was a bold decision, but the timing was right. An increasing number of service providers and application developers were beginning to support Linux, and the incentives for an open source platform were already apparent.

Most notable among these were the dual opportunities to change the licensing model and dramatically reduce lock-in to existing suppliers. In addition, the move to Linux also provided the airline a pathway to a highly standardised environment.

Getronics was engaged initially to advise on how best to develop and operate the new platform and also to handle a complex series of integration issues. Typical of the complex integration challenges addressed by Getronics was ensuring that the airline's existing Storage Area Network model could be reliably used with the new platform, for example.

The airline selected Getronics because of its depth and quality of knowledge, which became increasingly valuable as the project progressed. The airline wanted to do more than migrate to a new open platform – it wanted to ensure that the initiative took it to another level in terms of:

- **Cost reduction**
- **Reliability, and**
- **Flexibility/responsiveness**

In each of these areas, benefits are already beginning to accrue. In terms of quick wins, the most notable was in the area of license management, where costs have been dramatically reduced, with the added benefit of reducing lock-in with incumbent hardware suppliers.

The initiative was also interesting with regard to the mix of open source and Microsoft: although the chosen underlying platform is Linux, the majority of desktops currently run standard Microsoft business productivity tools. This mix may change in the future, but for now the combination is cost-effective and reliable. From the start, there was a conscious decision to avoid any big-bang changes.

The adoption of Linux has already begun to show some interesting benefits and developments. Although license costs have been reduced, there was a concern that this would be offset by a corresponding increase in ongoing management and support costs. In reality, this has not materialised.

Indeed, in the new open source environment, the client has actually increased buying power, by being able to invite service from a broader spectrum of suppliers.

It does, however, make overall supplier management more complex, and Getronics hopes to be able to adopt a role of service aggregator as the relationship develops. This will play to Getronics strengths, and will allow the IT professionals within the airline to focus their energies on delivering business value.

For clients in the second category, where there is a predisposition to open source but no definite commitment, we are more often required to help envision and examine alternative scenarios in advance of the decision to adopt or reject open source software.

Clients in the third category are rather different. They demand a wider range of service integration and expect their service providers to assume overall responsibility while delivering on business function and performance. Analysts<sup>2</sup> reckon that between 2012 and 2014, between 80-90% of all enterprises will be using some degree of open-source software according to this model. In many organisations, adoption already surpasses these predictions: open source infrastructure in Dutch government ministries, for example, is already running at around 90% adoption.

## OPEN SOURCE AND THE SERVICE CONTEXT

Getronics is a service integrator, and in that role it anticipates and embraces **all mainstream** trends that affect the market and its clients – and in this respect, it has a clear and positive stance on open source.

Enterprise customers are showing increased interest in open source and are keen to understand what it can deliver in terms of business benefit. This interest tends to be rooted in software development, where the pressure to respond in an agile manner to changing business requirement is continuously increasing. We observe, however, that interest is tempered with caution when it comes to the challenge of ongoing application management.

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<sup>2</sup> Forrester Research, Enterprise Open Source Use in 2007

When we examine the issues and opportunities surrounding open source software, we do so not as a developer but as a service integrator focused on:

- **Workspace** – how can our clients balance personal performance and business results with acceptable workspace management costs, and what contribution can open source software make?
- **Connectivity** – how does open source impact essential connectivity from both a user and an enterprise management perspective? On popular mobile platforms, for example, we see the massive growth in application choice being built largely on open source while in communications management, open source is beginning to emerge as an option for rudimentary PBX functions.
- **Datacenter** – how do we ensure that all hosted services are managed effectively, paying all due attention to security, availability and compliance – irrespective of the underlying application technology and platform?

In each of these specialist areas, there are many aspects of service delivery **which are largely unaffected** when our clients adopt open source. In data-centre and workspace management services, for example, the majority of services delivered are platform-agnostic.

From the data centre, we deliver services which exploit both proprietary and open source platforms. Backup, disaster recovery and monitoring, for example, are all independent of the platform. The processes we use to deliver these services for proprietary applications remain unaffected by a shift to open source. Even in an area such as release management, where much is made of the culture of continuous improvement in the open source world, as long as the rules are defined – the core process remains unchanged.

Similarly in the workspace, whether the client organisation adopts open source or proprietary software for the desktop toolset is completely transparent when it comes to service delivery. When an enterprise is considering their choice of service provider for the workspace, connectivity or data-center domain, as long as the provider has the support processes in place, the choice in favour of open source developed software does not affect the mechanics or processes of service delivery.

Getronics has provided integrated IT service to clients using both open source and proprietary software at an application level since the earliest adoptions of open source. As a recent example, we can look at work undertaken with the Dutch Ministry of Finance.

As part of a wider initiative to deliver best-value and high-access service to the citizen, the Ministry specified open source for maximum vendor-independence. Specifically, they sought to use the Open Document Format as standard and to provide their workforce with the Open Source Office suite. Getronics is implementing this workspace across the Ministry, using its own design, transition and management processes, and applying them to the stated open source requirements.

#### THE PLATFORM ITSELF: OPEN SOURCE AND MICROSOFT

When we get to the platform itself – rather than the applications which run on it – the choice of core technology can have a significant impact. Specifically we need to consider open source and Microsoft software platforms.

When we talk about platform, we are speaking about the underlying operating systems and not about the application software which the workforce uses to perform their business tasks: Linux or Windows, for example, as opposed to Microsoft Office or Open Office. Today, Microsoft still accounts for 96% of desktop operating systems in the corporate market.

Getronics does not promote or support one approach over the other. We do not take a partisan stance: we are interested in ensuring that we are best positioned to respond to the business reality in which our clients operate.

The business reality today is that most of our corporate clients have a hybrid architecture which can reflect a mix of XP, Vista, Windows 7, Macintosh, Unix and Linux platforms. Some of these are 'open', and some 'proprietary'. Both choices are valid, and the champions in both camps each recognise the need for interoperability and the reality of co-existence. Research shows that in some cases open source platforms can be adopted for 20% of the workforce. As a service integrator, Getronics is able to manage all major trends influencing our clients' ICT decisions and this means being equally comfortable in both open source and proprietary environments.

#### MEETING EXPECTATIONS

When Getronics agrees with a client to provide and manage an enterprise-wide workspace environment, it does so with firm commitments with regard to cost and performance. To achieve the best trade-off between cost, performance and business functionality, we have rigorously blueprinted all underlying technology and service components.

This proposition is best expressed as our Future-Ready Workspace. This is an architecture and services blueprint that enables efficiencies and delivers infrastructure support cost savings. It can be seen as a library of components which fit together seamlessly as an end-to-end solution or can be integrated into a legacy environment. The library evolves with new services and technologies, providing a clear migration path. Getronics goes to market to enable business productivity through personal performance - the seamless ICT infrastructure of the Future-Ready Workspace enables this.

The quantifiable delivery of benefit and pre-defined cost-ceilings combines openness with the principle of 'Microsoft unless'. This means that we will certify Microsoft products for use within the Future-Ready Workspace unless alternatives provide functions which Microsoft does not offer or which represent a more cost-effective option. In this respect, the design principles of the Future-Ready Workspace are essentially open.

#### FROM TECHNOLOGY TO BEST-PRACTICE

The Future-Ready Workspace is just one expression of Getronics' approach to enterprise workspace environment. In addition to the definition of the technology blueprint, the Future-Ready Workspace is also a repository for knowledge and process in service delivery and best-practice.

In this respect, the principles of the Future-Ready Workspace are used as a guiding framework in a broad range of engagements. In government and public sector engagements, for example, where open-source is increasingly adopted as the standard, the Future-Ready Workspace framework acts as a valuable launch point for the definition of both environment and associated services.

Our clients benefit from using this framework approach, both because it helps accelerate the design process for technology and service use and because it also helps maintain critical focus on end-user productivity.

#### THE BUSINESS CONTEXT

So far, we have looked at the technical and service architecture issues surrounding the adoption of open source and at some of the practicalities of combining open source and proprietary elements within the enterprise.

Whether public or private sector, national or international in scope, major enterprises face challenges and responsibilities. IT decisions are not taken in a vacuum: every decision must also be considered in terms of corporate behaviour. In particular, we need to consider how decisions regarding open source impact security and compliance, and how they affect the way our workforces perform.

#### SECURITY AND COMPLIANCE

Security and compliance are essential elements in any engagement. With all enterprise clients, Getronics needs to be able to ensure that whatever it proposes meets security and compliance requirements.


In this respect, any single component of a workspace management, connectivity or data-center engagement must be seen in relation to the whole. Any organization looking at adoption of open source needs to take this into serious consideration. Both security and compliance are rapidly coming to maturity in open source, and we should not underestimate this achievement. It is prudent, however, to examine the implications of pursuing either a pure or (as is more likely) hybrid open source strategy.

#### CULTURE AND COST

Getronics is obsessed with personal performance and business results within the enterprise, and this focus underpins all workspace, connectivity and data-center engagements. This focus remains unchanged when considering the combination of open source and proprietary environments.

The push to open source can come from policy-makers as a decision of principle or from the application development community as an aid to development speed and responsiveness. Wherever the incentive originates, successful management of adoption and change will hinge on maintaining effective dialogue between:

- Human Resource management – who guide the behavioural profile of the workforce
- IT decision-makers – who are the overall guardians of the technologies used within the enterprise
- Facilities management – who have traditionally held the relationship with the providers of telecommunications services, and whose profile is now changing to embrace new models of converged communications



These three entities are under pressure to manage major cultural change extremely quickly in the professional lives of their workforces – the rapid coming together of private and business technologies, for example, has a significant impact on how employees use personal devices for business and vice-versa.

Getronics has got no hang-ups about change.

But there is a 'but'.

We do ask our clients to consider the impact of significant behavioural change. Inside many enterprises, the world of Microsoft has become synonymous with the world of work. This does not mean that it has to stay like that – and Microsoft themselves are certainly not complacent about this – but organisations do need to consider what change means for the workforce and how it will be managed without compromising business continuity or performance.


The good news is that the gulf between open and proprietary is already beginning to close. As all providers of technology services shift their emphasis to internet-based and pay-as-you-go delivery models, we may find that open source and proprietary environments come to share increasingly common ground.

The choice need not be 'either/or' but 'and'.

## SIGNING OFF

Getronics is excited about the crossover of open source software as a mainstream influence in enterprise IT culture. We recognise that in many organisations it has already achieved a high degree of maturity.

As a pro-active service integrator, we are keen to explore the implications of open source adoption in the broader overall context of the workspace, connectivity and data-center domains. We ourselves have already moved a long way in our own adoption of open source: we are currently exploring, for example, opportunities to use open source for our own service management functions.



Our reputation at Getronics is built on operational excellence, and for that reason we are careful to avoid anything which compromises our ability to deliver on expectation. We are particularly keen to explore open source strategies with our clients, and to address a number of specific questions:

- How does the choice of platform (open/proprietary) impact your service decisions – and to what extent can we ensure that processes are platform-independent?
- What is the true cost of ownership of a wholly open or hybrid open/proprietary environment – and how can this be effectively monitored and optimised?
- Will the adoption of open source at application level impact workforce performance and how best can we help ensure continuity during transition?
- What are the legal or regulatory issues arising from open source adoption which impact overall service provision, and how can we ensure that they are met?
- What is the maturity state of current systems – where is change clearly on the horizon and how can we use this as an opportunity to improve business function, value and compliance?
- How will open source affect our own IT resources – do we have the skills we need, and how best do we re-focus existing resources on the new environment?
- What are the risks associated with open source, and how do we ensure that these are effectively mitigated?
- Buying power – in a tough climate, the enterprise has more leverage than ever as a purchaser – how can we help exploit that increased buying power to get the best return in a world in which open source and proprietary worlds compete head-to-head?

## More information

If you would like to talk to Getronics, please contact [maps@getronics.com](mailto:maps@getronics.com).

