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BRUCE PERENS — OPEN SOURCE — POST OPEN

Open Source pioneer Perens says it's time to contemplate a Post-Open world

Open Source may have won, but it has also failed, says Open Source
Initiative founder

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One of the architects of the open source ecosystem has sai
reimagine a "post open" world, as the current one just isn't w

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developers or users.

[Bruce Perens](), who created the open source definition and co-founded the Open Source Initiative in 1998, spelt out his "Post-Open" vision at the State of Open Con in London today.

He declared himself, "not a happy speaker. Everyone else is going to tell you how great open source has been. I'm gonna tell you how we failed."

Open source had taken over the business software world, he said, at least for a particular set of applications. But in many areas, and certainly outside of the business world, it is not nearly as successful.

Moreover, he said, "We have a great corporate welfare programme. Our users are the richest companies in the world. Indeed, we've enabled companies like Google to be created."

Open source developers, on the other hand, were often uncompensated unless they were working for those companies. Other than the likes of Google, the organisations making money were those – like IBM – who offered support.

The current open source licensing system isn't working either, he said, with a third of Linux systems being sold "with a GPL circumvention prohibiting redistribution of source code. That's billions of dollars in business." Meanwhile, companies that wanted to follow the rules of open source were spending millions on compliance.

"Can't we give them something better to do with that money?" he asked.

Perens said it was time for a different paradigm, "That addresses some of the problems with open source. Open source will continue, must continue.

What I'm suggesting was never called open source.”

He described his proposition as "Post-Open" and said it was a way to compensate individuals and small entities doing open source work.

The aim is to "compensate developers fairly for their work [and] motivate developers to write for the common person by paying them.”

At the same time, he said, "compliance must be a once and done for the year process.”

"What we're doing is developing a Post-Open Source Collection, which would all be under one licence, one payment, you get this the whole thing.”

This would offer "One license, one contract for paid users, one operating agreement for developers." Entities over a certain size, Perens suggested $5m, or which wanted to keep their modifications private, would pay a fraction of end user revenue. They would also have to annually audit what software they use and redistribute.

There would be a small number of companies that collect money and distribute it to developers.

Payments would be decided by instrumenting git depositories to determine the contributions of individual developers. "Some developers, architects, janitors would have to account for hours to be compensated fairly.”

"If we do this, we can operate support as one entity for all Post-Open developers, and provide the user with one throat to choke.”

The cash lavished on support under the current system, would instead flow to developers, with some earmarked for development of user software, enforcement, lobbying, education and the like."

As well as more stable, better maintained software, user companies would get easier compliance, he said. And presumably pay less overall.

Perens said he made grant applications for $100,000 for legal work to support the project, and allowed half for year of his own work to develop polices and processes. If the grants don't come through, there were companies willing to fund it, he said, though independence is imperative.

Peter Zaitsev, co-founder of Percona and investor in numerous other open source projects, said Perens' proposal went beyond a slight improvement to open source. "This is a completely different approach."

As an entrepreneur, he said "I love the idea of trying something else then see if that works."

But, Zaitsev continued, "The problem with this approach is how it is not very compatible with existing open source as it is."

He cited Spotify as an analogy, where song writers get a little bit of money every time a song is played. But with open source – and even closed source with open source components – "a single piece of software usually is going to include so many components."

Perens admitted his proposal was "A big stretch compared to open source. But when we started open source, if I had told you about it, I would have thought I was just as crazy as you might today."

He added, "I'm not building a fiefdom. I'm 66 years old, I've had cancer for 30 years, I still feel great but I won't be around to run this. And so you will be."

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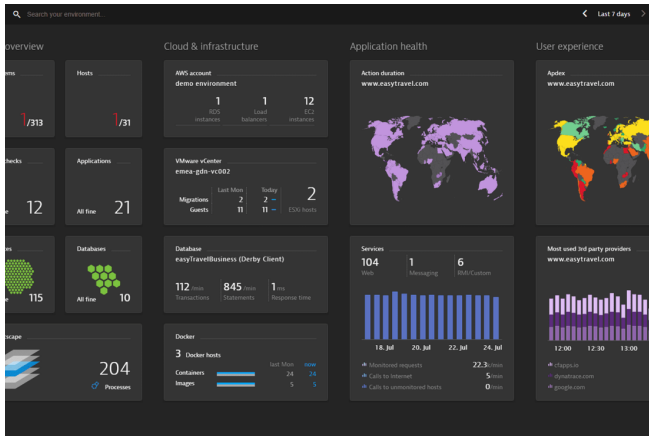
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