

AI / OPEN SOURCE

Is Open Source under Threat or Primed to Go to the Next Level?

From economic shifts to new regulation and the growing adoption of AI, we are at a pivotal juncture as a society, and open source will play a critical role.

Mar 6th, 2024 9:00am by [Matt Barker](#)



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I don't use an AI coding assistant.

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I've been an active advocate and member of the open source community for most of my career. I've seen firsthand the multiplying effect of people all over the world contributing and collaborating on projects that change the way we work and live. Open source today is so pervasive — nestled in every bank transaction, online purchase and communication we make. The community has spurred technological advancement at a rate that would not have otherwise been impossible, democratizing innovation by letting small startups bring big ideas to life.

Yet several factors are now colliding that may change the **future of open source**. From shifts in the economy to new regulation and the growing adoption of AI, we are at a pivotal juncture as a society, and **open source can and will have a critical** role to play. As 2024 gets under way, here are some of the key things that are on my mind.

Open Source and AI Will Drive Explosion in Creativity and Productivity

One of the critiques of AI is that it concentrates power into too few hands. It takes huge levels of investment and skill to create **large language models**, which need to be trained on vast swaths of data. Yet while many of the major visible breakthroughs in AI have come from proprietary models, open source is foundational to the way they run. Kubernetes, for example, **underpins OpenAI**.

Moreover, I question if a single company can compete against millions of



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Capabilities in a matter of months using LLaMA.

Moreover, open source code itself is going to get an efficiency boost thanks to the application of AI to help build and optimize it. Just look at the power of applying **Copilot** by GitHub to coding, or **k8sgpt** to Kubernetes clusters. This is just the beginning.



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The EU Cyber Resilience Act Could Have a Chilling Effect on Innovation

The speed at which software is being developed and put to market is scarily fast, messy and prone to error. Companies and developers aren't being held to any proper standards. So it's a good thing the European Union is considering how to raise standards. However, **the Cyber Resilience Act** is not fit for purpose in its current state. Regulators are trying to treat software like any other product, but software *is* different from other products — particularly open source.

The act's wording around liability for data breaches and open source is worrying.



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assessing this: who is paying for it? How will they standardize? Ultimately, it's likely to have a chilling effect, slowing down software deployment and increasing costs — potentially pushing innovation out of the EU unless there is more clarity in the language around liability.

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Commercialization of Vendor-Led Open Source Projects Will Increase

The wonder of open source is that it allows people to stand on the shoulders of giants, using the building blocks to create something totally unique. However, it's not all roses. Maintaining communities and running open source projects take time — believe me, I know! The garden needs to be tended and that takes work and dedication, or the weeds will soon creep in. Vendors often act as these guardians, sometimes through a genuine desire to spur uptake and innovation. However, using a code derived from vendor-led projects does come with a certain amount of risk. In commercial organizations, priorities change — that vendor might not always be around to tend the garden.

Tough market conditions have led many vendors, such as [HashiCorp](#) and Docker, to more aggressively commercialize their [open source projects](#) through [license changes and updates to their business models](#). This growing trend means organizations that rely heavily on vendor-led open source projects will need to consider the impact this might have on their operating models. This could drive more robust assessments of the open source projects being used throughout businesses, and a move toward those projects protected by a foundation like the CNCF.



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to changes, whether they're enforced by emerging technologies, regulators or licensing. There's no doubt that the future of open source is under threat. But we've shown resilience in the past, overcoming issues like the [Log4j vulnerability](#), which cast doubt over the entire sector.

While the next few months will come with their fair share of difficulties, I've no doubt that the open source community will continue to work together and fight back, as it always has.

To learn more about Kubernetes and the cloud native ecosystem, join us at KubeCon + CloudNativeCon Europe in Paris, from March 19-22.

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Matt Barker is global head of cloud native services at Venafi. Matt started his career helping Asian computer manufacturers pre-install Ubuntu Linux before moving to NoSQL database company MongoDB. There, he saw the company grow from a few millions of...

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HashiCorp is a sponsor of The New Stack.

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