THE CHANNEL CO.
computing

Database dust-up: Are Redis users switching to Valkey?

Redis 'playing bait-and-switch'. Valkey is 'the Death Star'

John Leonard

🕒 12 September 2024 • 3 min read

SHARE 🐦 in ✉ f 📱

A report by database-as-a-service provider Percona has found that 70% of users of the Redis database are looking to move to alternatives, following Redis' move away from the open source model.

In March, the company behind popular Redis database project announced that it was to cease licensing its code with the open source BSD-3 licence in favour of more restrictive "source available" licences, which are not recognised by the Open Source Institute (OSI), in order to prevent big cloud providers from profiting from the database without contributing enough back.

Several other former open source projects, including MongoDB, have pursued a similar path, and for the same stated reason.

Under the new licensing regime, cloud service providers hosting Redis solutions are required to enter into commercial agreements with the company.

These include Percona, whose CEO, Ann Schlemmer, who accused Redis of using bait-and-switch tactics: "We don't take issue with any organisation that chooses to distribute its software using proprietary licences. The Redis problem isn't open source versus proprietary; it's a matter of transparency versus deception."

Valkey, a Redis fork

As a direct result of the licensing switch, the Redis codebase was forked to create a new open souce project Valkey, licensed under BSD-3. Valkey is supported by the Linux Foundation with contributions from Amazon Web Services (AWS), Google Cloud, Oracle, Ericsson, Percona and others.

According to the report - which it should be noted was commissioned by Valkey contributor Percona - 75% of Redis users are either testing, considering, or have already adopted Valkey. The study of 151 database and IT managers also found that 7% were currently using Valkey, compared with 67% who use Redis as their main caching or key-value store.

Vadim Tkachenko, technology fellow and co-founder of Percona, told *Computing* he was surprised by the early momentum, particularly in view of the fact that Redis, the industry-standard key-value store, often supports "always on" systems, and is thus not easily replaced. "That is an amazing shift, and it shows how much work the community has done to get the project up off the ground, and how important it is to have the backing of multiple companies and a foundation for these kinds of projects."

Tkachenko added: "What has been a great surprise is how committed the community is, and how it has coalesced around this project so quickly."

Amanda Brock, CEO at OpenUK, described as "significant" the fact that so many organisations are apparently considering Redis alternatives.

"The audience used for this report could be biased as the research is conducted by Percona who are a participant in the Valkey fork, but acknowledging that, what is really significant here is the figure of 70% of the users of Redis looking to shift to an alternative, and what better alternative could there be to software than a fork."

Brock continued: "For the users, the ability of a community - or even the user - to fork is a significant advantage of open source. Of course, some will argue loudly that the users don't care. Whilst companies may continue to seem economically successful despite licence shifts, this report would indicate that the users do care."

Redis responds

Redis' chief marketing officer Keith Messick insisted that most customers have been nonplussed about the licensing change in March. "It does not affect anyone who uses Redis unless they're packaging it up and reselling it as their own cloud service. We tell customers that, they say great, and that's been it."

Messick denied there has been any move away from his company's database, arguing that adopting Valkey could be a retrograde step. It is "essentially an outdated version of Redis, so there's not a lot of incentive for companies to go backwards," he told *Computing*.

In a further dig at Valkey, Messick said the Redis rival is supported by the same "big CSPs" that caused Redis to change its licensing terms in the first place.

"You'd think Valkey was this scrappy band of rebels when in fact it's the Death Star. A project backed by AWS, Google et al, built off code created over the last decade plus by Redis and the community, so that they can continue to use their superior monopolistic advantages to make money off it."

Percona said it would publish its report, a draft of which it shared with *Computing*, on its website shortly.

SHARE

Related Topics

Open Source | Databases | Redis | hard fork | percona

You may also like

OPEN SOURCE

Elastic returns to the open source fold

Bounces back to OSI-recognised licensing

🕐 30 August 2024 • 4 min read

OPEN SOURCE

Redis shifts to dual source-available licensing model

CSPs hosting Redis solutions will now be required to enter into commercial agreements

🕐 22 March 2024 • 3 min read