

OpenOffice is great alternative to Microsoft

By *srlinuxx*

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The biggest coup of open-source software isn't that it's (usually) free for the downloading. No, it's one of the few remaining incubators for truly great apps. Freed from commercial expectations, it starts with a good idea and steadily keeps on evolving as hundreds of developers keep adding features and improvements until, after years of commitment, the good idea finally emerges as a great app.

Witness the success of the Firefox browser. Many companies had the guts to challenge Internet Explorer, but did any of them have the resources and the commitment to stick with it for five or six years? No, not even as a tax dodge. Saying "We spent \$740,000 trying to unseat a product with 83 percent market share" is a rocketship to an audit. But years of steady, relentless progress led inevitably to the debut of Firefox as a real, honest-to-goodness app and a browser that makes Explorer seem pointless and silly.

Now it's OpenOffice's turn. An official, "stable" release of OpenOffice 2.0 will be available for download in a few days from www.openoffice.org. And with this ambitious new edition of the venerable alternative to Microsoft Office, OpenOffice has officially been FireFoxed. That is, you won't use it because you hate Microsoft or because you don't like tying your whole office's (or your government's) ability to function to the proprietary whims of one single company. Maybe you won't even use it just because it'll cost you \$0 to Microsoft Office's \$365. You'll use it because OpenOffice 2.0 is an attractive and compelling suite of office apps in its own right.

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