

The Open Source Philosophy

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There has been a lot of discussion recently on the Open Source Definition, and the use (and abuse) of the term "Open Source." One of the things that has been missing from this discussion is a higher-level overview of where the friction between "open source" and so-called "fauxpen source" comes from: intent.

The Open Source Definition arose out of the ambiguity of the word "free" in "Free Software," as defined by the Free Software Foundation." In the English language, "free" is a loaded term that has two meanings: "freedom", and "costing nothing." It was created to get rid of some of the emotional baggage that came with the intense philosophical point of view of the FSF, but just because the OSD is more "business-friendly" does not mean that it doesn't have the philosophy and intent of openness behind it.

This friction comes from two very different approaches to open source that I think have been missing from a lot of the discussion regarding how open source applies to business models. I'm going to call these "community value" and "monetary value."

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