Embracing Open Source Software by IBM and Linux

IBM operates as a business in providing customers with the best solutions to technical problems. In addition, to manufacturing and marketing computer hardware, the company has invested considerably in hosting and nanotechnologies. Linux, on the other hand, is a software developer of operating system that helps computer hardware receive and relay information in computer different parts. The essay will majorly focus on how the two companies can work together despite their differences for their mutual benefits.

Self-management of OSS community

Initially, the concept of OOS refers to software projects operated by common groups in public forums. Since late 90s, the idea has changed to include private parties to create a varied model of hybrid governance. Earlier, OSS was community-based. Now, OSS developments do not rely on community governance model. The term is now more elastic and inclusive. OSS community now has a group of representatives that make decisions on community’s behalf. Also, the community’s interests are now governed by a non-profit foundation. Open source governance models are now more defined with OSS projects producing commercial grade codes with a diversified approach to software development (Neteler et al., 361).

Difference between the OSS development model and IBM traditional propriety model

The traditional propriety IBM model was more conservative in nature. The company’s propriety approach embraced individualistic strategies with tighter restrictions on its product and services to end users. End User License Agreements (EULAs) were long and complicated contracts. IBM owned and controlled some operating system source code like AIX, HP-UX, and QNX. Users were restricted on numbers of computers to use and a number of allowed copies. IBM manufactured or purchased operating system and restricted authorized users. On the other hand, the OSS development model is an open source model that continually improves code quality. The open source model encourages the development of new independent features (Capek, and Peter et al., 253). Any developer is allowed to build on any new feature and come up with a competitive product. Also, any developer can work with any new code. Lastly, OSS encourages openness throughout the code development process. Developers submit their codes mailing for public viewing particularly when a given feature appears to appeal to many people. The process involves feedback, review, and tests to improve functionality to catch bugs (Baldwin et al., 5).

IBM and Linux alliance is an attractive move

Both Linux and IBM are global players with reputable brands in information technology. IBM is a leading hardware developer with a share in software development too. Linux is also a giant player in OSS distribution. IBM initiative to support open source efforts will increase its market segment to test giant players like Microsoft. The two companies working together will provide mutual benefits and double their market share in a span of a few years (Dittrich et al., 1501).

What IBM could not have achieved on its own without Linux

IBM strategic alliance with Linux would see the company achieving more than it would do on its own. Linux exhibits high market penetration rates than ever before. Linux is an open stage and IBM software can operate on Linux without posing any threat to other corporation software. The two companies will together offer big data services, cloud computing, and
virtualization and mobile processing (Singh, and Anju, 710). In addition, IBM will further enable programs like MongoDB, PostgreSQL, Apache Sparks, and Node.js made available to clients with open-source and flexibility to be used for hybrid cloud rollouts. Combining Mainframe with Linux will boost the market share as customers would prefer a free package installed in their devices by the time they buy them. Such availability was not possible before as IBM operated on the restricted mainframe code operating system. The alliance will also lure others like SUSE in supporting KVM hypervisor which will further boost marketing strategies. The move will further increase customers’ choice by bringing benefits that best suit customers and developers alike (Baentsch, and Michael, 8)

**What makes IBM attractive to the Linux development community?**

First, IBM has contributed significantly in resources for testing Linux products before they are released for its customers. Also, IBM ensures all associated technologies in hardware and software technologies of both companies work uninterrupted. IBM work together with others in the community to ensure that is a lively platform by backing Linux with 24/7 support in a wide range of services. With such an extensive commitment to Linux and the open source community, IBM is a premier partner in providing Linux open source solutions (Baldwin et al., 9)

**Benefits and risks associated with IBM collaboration with Linux**

From the point of view of IBM, the alliance will be beneficial in the following ways. Linux is the best company that match IBM recent initiative to embrace open standards. Linux being a neutral programme can facilitate IBM software to run on Linux without causing any inconsistency with other corporation. Secondly, Linux is on a path of positive growth and high market penetration rate in PC and previously ignored server markets. High satisfaction rate associated with high speed and reliability has increased popularity rate to almost that of Windows NT. Finally, Linux source code is open and available to anyone and can be modified by the purchaser without violating any owner’s copyright. Flexibility in changing source will lower costs significantly for both users and system integrators.

On the contrary, there are several disadvantages to this alliance. First, the long-term sustainability of Linux is not guaranteed. Linux software development was done in a hurry with no proper plans for long-term survival. Secondly, Linux lack defined customer support services. For example, users depended much on temporary Linux programmers for bug fixes or developed an in-house programme using open and flexible code. Secondly, Linux exercises a policy of less control on the operating system. IBM has to adopt a degree of control because computer architecture needs a point of control in an operating system for it to be successful. In addition, Linux management systems are not definite and one or a group of people can dominate decisions that may hinder IBM mutual beneficial strategies. Another, challenge awaiting IBM is to justify how propriety code will run on Linux operating software. It will be hard for IBM to agree on all General Public Licence (GPL) terms and conditions which operate on a principle that anyone can access every line of code (Baldwin et al., 12).

**Standing barriers for the mutual successful beneficial relationship between the two companies**

Linux is not an established brand all over the world. Linux represents 3% of the total client operating system market. It will be hard for clients accustomed to Microsoft or AIX operating systems to suddenly change to a Linux operating system. Also, it will be hard for IBM to convince its critics, competitors’ customers and all categories of people affiliated to propriety operating systems that Linux and IBM are now working together for the interest of the customer. Thirdly, customers of Microsoft have a long history of distrust towards IBM basing their critics that it is IBM strategy to extinct Microsoft out of the world market. The
question of whether IBM and Linux collaboration will be widely accepted all over the world is not yet known. The fourth barrier to the alliance is a greater challenge to IBM to bring together different opinionated Linux developers to a common goal of working together for the benefit of the two companies. The probability of unity of Linux public developers towards supporting or rejecting IBM alliance with Linux is still in question (Masek, and Pavel, 227).

Recommendation on how IBM approaches Linux development community
IBM needs to approach the Linux development community with the agenda of mutual responsibility of putting the customer first. Secondly, IBM to emphasize the need for collaboration for a long time survival and growth of the two companies and make the two agendas understood by the community. The best strategy is for IBM to use its global influence to gather all Linux community developers from across the world, emphasize on the two agendas, and made them understand how Linux is set to benefit from the alliance.

An Action Plan
- IBM intentions to be made clear on every Linux Community member
- Set a meeting for both representatives
- Set agendas to be discussed from both sides
- Hold a meeting and look for solutions to differences
- Define means of dealing with disagreement in future

Policies and strategies that need to change for IBM to rhyme with OSS communities.
- IBM to relax its control policies on its software to a flexible degree.
- IBM to start developing its software and middleware in collaboration with OSS communities
- The two companies to work together to reduce Microsoft dominance rather than adopting a sole approach. The move will see Linux increase its market share in the world market.
- IBM to boldly champion for a Linux defined management system so that both can settle deals from the same level base
- Agree on IBM level of control to prevent IBM hardware and middleware.
- IBM to embrace a bipartisan approach and collaborate in raising Open source software development and customer support in bug fixes.

Conclusion
The two companies have shown great efforts of working together in the future. Their joint vision of putting their customers first is one big step to iron out their differences for the benefit of all.

Works Cited
Baldwin, Carliss Y., Siobhan O'Mahony, and James Quinn. "IBM and Linux (A)." (2003).
