

These are not the sources we're looking for

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A few comments I made a couple of weeks ago where brought to the fore again this week. The comments related to getting OpenSource applications used within a corporate environment, or lack thereof. A prime example of this happened just yesterday. I'm in the middle of documenting a few things for some work I've completed on a validated system. Following the old adage of a picture paints a thousand words I needed to insert a diagram. My desktop in the office is win2k, installed with the default SMS deployed desktop. Unfortunately there is a lack of diagram software and the process to get stuff installed is so convoluted, I'd be filling in requisition forms and trying to get the necessary access to use the ordering software till Christmas... 2010. I installed Dia, knocked out my diagram, export to jpeg, insert, job done. Or so I thought.

?This is a validated document,? says Mr Document Reviewer, ?we need access to the original format?

Before I venture any further I have to point out that I am a contracted resource for company B. Company B is the outsourcing provider for company A. On my contracted days I work onsite at an office in company A. With me so far? Well, there are politics here, who pays for what, who is responsible for this, who's job is that. The usual corporate quagmire sucking in the productive time and spewing out endless, senseless debates about the most trivial things.

?Well?, I tell the reviewer, ?the original diagram was done with Dia and it is available on the file server?

Immediately there are a flurry of emails being bantered around. Which is the approved tool for diagrams? Company B doesn't mind, a diagram is a diagram is a diagram and if they are footing the software bill then free is good. It is a completely different story from company A. ?Visio is the tool that is used and you should only use this tool?. The diagrams should be embedded and not inserted as images. Post architect review they say that the application is very good, it would do everything they need, well put together but... and this but is bigger than the rear end of a blue whale with an over-eating disorder. But... it may disappear from the scene and we'd be left with all our documents in that format with nothing to edit them with. At this point I threw in my tuppence worth. I remarked that by taking the source longevity was assured. The return argument reverted to cost support in that case. Hmmm, I reply, 70 odd quid a pop for Visio, times by what? 1000+ users? 70k? For this version, plus upgrades and maintenance? Now compare that to free and open with the benefit that you can tailor it to your specific needs, in a programming language in which most of your in-house developers are fluent? How can it disappear? Plus, if this was developed in-house you would support it till eternity, you have the source, same thing don't you think? The reply made me give up.

It's not Microsoft and our preferred supplier of this kind of software is Microsoft. It's the company standard.

Company standard indeed.

And that was for one application that works very well at its assigned job. More than capable.

It is going to be a long battle and a major uphill struggle to get OpenSource into the big corps no matter how polished the application is.

Instead I used my energies elsewhere, screaming at the TV screen as Russia scored the second and England were scattered after snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. I sat in dismay and waited the inevitable text message coming from my other half, visiting her parents in Moscow.

Look, feel the source.

Source URL: <http://www.tuxmachines.org/node/21123>