

Not quite Open Source

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Open Source

Free Software

Free Software is usually defined by the four freedoms:

- use
- study
- share
- improve

FSFE: Four Freedoms

Open Source Definition

10 aspects that define Open Source

Open Source Definition

Free Software and Open Source are just different ways
of looking at the same thing

Using the term "Free Software" emphasizes user freedom, while Open Source emphasizes technical and business aspects

A license or a software that qualifies as "Free Software" also qualifies as "Open Source" and vice versa

Sometimes people use "FOSS" or "FLOSS" as inclusive terms

There are different flavors of FOSS

- Copyleft licenses (GPL, AGPL)
- Permissive licenses (BSD, MIT)
- Public domain declarations (CC0)

Some things are neither Open Source nor Free Software.

- Software that provides code, but does not allow changes to the code
- Software that does not allow software to be used for certain things or by certain people

FOSS is very successful in many areas



FOSS has advantages for the user

No restrictions telling what you can and cannot do
with the software

A technically savvy user can change FOSS software and adapt it

A not technically savvy user can ask or pay others to adapt it

FOSS is more resilient to change

If the company developing a proprietary software ceases to exist or loses interest then the software usually goes away

If the company developing a FOSS software ceases to exist then others can pick it up

If you use a FOSS software service you usually have the opportunity to go to a competitor if you are not satisfied

FOSS can also have advantages for the developer or publisher

Free Software and Open Source have a good
reputation

Publishing software as FOSS can invite community contributions

Some users won't use your software if it's not FOSS

Some software distribution channels only accept FOSS
(e.g. Debian)

But there are also things you cannot do with FOSS

You cannot control what people do with your software

You cannot control who uses your software

You can sell your software, but once it's out you can't
stop people from getting it for free

You can sell support for your software, but you can't stop others from offering better, cheaper or more convenient support for your software

You can sell services based on your software, but you can't stop others from selling services based on your software

Sometimes people want to have the good reputation of FOSS, but they don't want to accept the things they can't do with it

What shall they do?

One option is lying

Another option is causing confusion

The Cloud





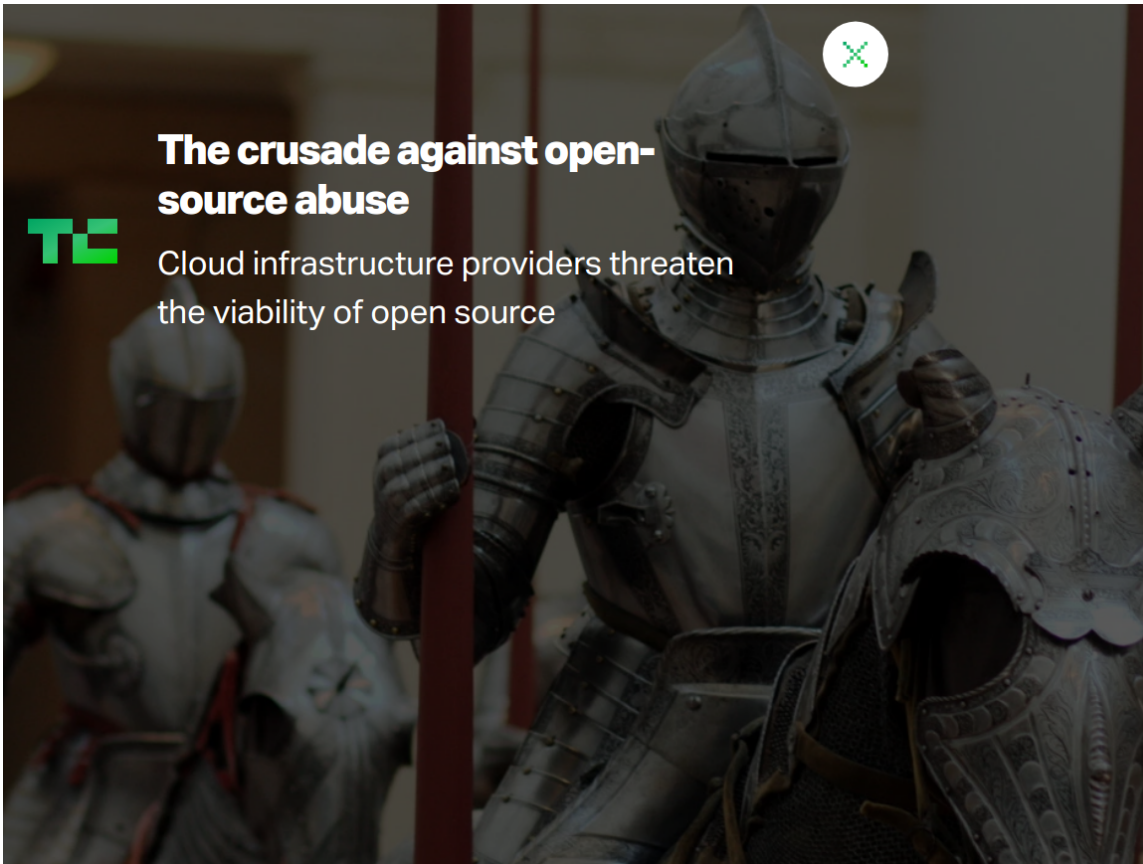
Cloud providers sell services based on FOSS

The screenshot shows the AWS Marketplace homepage. On the left, there's a sidebar with 'Categories' (Infrastructure Software, Developer Tools, Business Software, Machine Learning, IoT) and 'Vendors' (Bitnami, Jetware, Amazon Web Services, NVIDIA, NUVYN, Canonical Group Limited, Cloudwick, Intuz, Persistent Systems, Instat AI). The main area displays 'All Categories (856 results)' with a list of products. The first product is 'CentOS 7 (x86_64) - with Updates' by CentOS, described as the official HVM image. Below it is 'WordPress Certified by Bitnami' by Bitnami, described as the world's most popular blogging platform. Further down is 'CentOS 6 (x86_64) - with Updates' by CentOS, described as the official HVM image. Below that is 'Debian GNU/Linux 9 (Stretch)' by Debian, described as a computer operating system composed of software packages released as free and open source software primarily under the GNU General Public License. At the bottom is 'Debian GNU/Linux 8 (Jessie)' by Debian, described as a computer operating system composed of software packages released as free and open source software primarily under the GNU General Public License. The bottom product is 'Ubuntu 16.04 LTS - Xenial (HVM)' by Canonical Group Limited, described as a lean, fast and powerful Ubuntu Server delivering services reliably, predictably and economically. It is the perfect base on which to build your instances. Ubuntu is free and...

The screenshot shows the Microsoft Azure App Services 'Web' page. It features a search bar and filters for Pricing, Operating System, and Publisher. The main content area is divided into several sections: 'Web Apps' (Web App, Web App + SQL, App Service Environment, WordPress, Sitecore Experience Cloud Sitecore, Function App), 'Blogs + CMSs' (Joomla!, Orchard CMS, MonoX, Drupal on Linux Web App with Drupal, Wordpress LEMP? Max Performance Jetware, LAMP Certified by Bitnami), 'Starter web apps' (ASP.NET Empty Web App, ASP.NET Starter Web App, HTML5 Empty Web App, PHP Empty Web App, Node JS Empty Web App, Kentico Cloud Sample Website - Kentico), 'Ecommerce' (nopCommerce, Virtocommerce, Kentico CMS), and 'Web app frameworks' (Kentico). Each section contains icons and brief descriptions of the available templates.

The screenshot shows the Google Cloud Platform 'Search for solutions' page. It features a search bar and filters for TYPE, CATEGORY, PRICE, and 100 results. The main content area is divided into several sections: 'Featured' (MongoDB Atlas, Couchbase Enterprise Edition, DataStax Enterprise), '100 results' (Secured Postgresql on Windows 2012 R2, Aerospike Enterprise Edition for GKE, Aiven Elasticsearch, Aiven Redis, Apache Solr by SearchStax, BigQuery, Cassandra 3, Cassandra Certified by Bitnami, Cassandra Click to Deploy), and 'Type Virtual machines' (Aiven Elasticsearch, Aiven Redis, Apache Solr by SearchStax, BigQuery, Cassandra 3, Cassandra Certified by Bitnami, Cassandra Click to Deploy). Each section contains icons and brief descriptions of the available services.

You could say this is perfectly normal and expected



The crusade against open-source abuse

Cloud infrastructure providers threaten the viability of open source

Techcrunch

Lately some companies have announced license changes to protect them from this "abuse"

Part 1: Commons Clause

Without limiting other conditions in the License, the grant of rights under the License will not include, and the License does not grant to you, the right to Sell the Software.

In August 2018 Redis adopted the Commons Clause for
some of their modules

(Redis itself is still under BSD license)

Part 2: Server Side Public License (SSPL)

MongoDB has announced to adopt this

They claim that it's Open Source and even asked OSI
to approve it

If you make the functionality of the Program or a modified version available to third parties as a service, you must make the Service Source Code available via network download to everyone at no charge, under the terms of this License. [...]

“Service Source Code” means the Corresponding Source for the Program or the modified version, and the Corresponding Source for all programs that you use to make the Program or modified version available as a service, including, without limitation, management software, user interfaces, application program interfaces, automation software, monitoring software, backup software, storage software and hosting software, all such that a user could run an instance of the service using the Service Source Code you make available. ([SSPL](#))

This may sound like a strong version of Copyleft, but it goes much further

The only intention is to make offering a service based on MongoDB completely impractical

SSPL says you can't offer a service with SSPL software
that runs on Linux

Linux is released under GPL-2, which is itself a Copyleft license

Essentially this is an attempt to "hack" the Open
Source Definition

Part 3: Confluent Community License

For purposes of this Agreement, “Excluded Purpose” means making available any software-as-a-service, platform-as-a-service, infrastructure-as-a-service or other similar online service that competes with Confluent products or services that provide the Software.

Confluent Community License

Ultimately what all these companies want:
Amazon, Google and Microsoft shall not be allowed to
compete with our services

This alone wouldn't be a problem, they could put that in their licenses, but it wouldn't be Open Source anymore

But these companies want their software still be recognized as Open Source, which is fundamentally incompatible

Their solution: Confusion, deception, lying

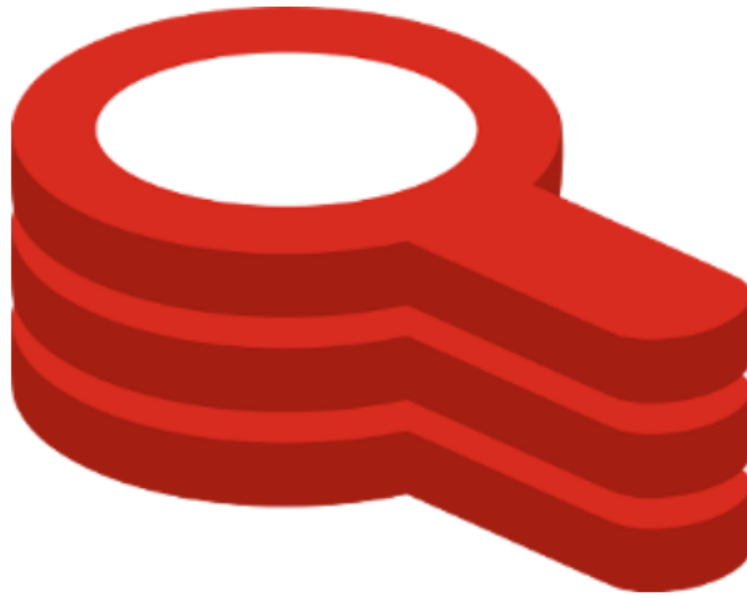
They're not always lying

Is this “Open Source”?

No.

Commons Clause FAQ

That's clear and honest



RediSearch - Redis Powered Search Engine

RediSearch is a an open-source Full-Text and Secondary Index engine over Redis, developed by [Redis Labs](#).

That's a lie

Initiated by a coalition of top infrastructure software companies to protect their rights, Commons Clause is a condition added to existing open source software licenses to create a new, combined software license. The combined license maintains all conditions of the underlying open source license, but limits commercial sale of the software. ([Redis Labs](#))

Sorry, that doesn't make any sense

The logo features the word "FOSSA" in a bold, gold-colored, sans-serif font. It is centered within a dark blue rectangular area that has a subtle topographic map pattern of concentric, wavy lines. Below the word, the text "Modern open source management_" is written in a white, sans-serif font.

FOSSA

Modern open source management_

You probably wouldn't think that
"Modern open source management"
is a way of saying
*"We help Open Source Software to change their license
to be no longer Open Source"*

For those who aren't commercial cloud providers, i.e. 99.9999% of the users of these projects, this adds no meaningful restriction on what they can do with the software, while allowing us to continue investing heavily in its creation. (Confluent)

This is interesting, because it's trying to tell you that none of this is relevant for you unless you are a cloud provider

Yet it's bogus: You may not be a cloud provider, but
you may very well be a customer

Even if you run the software yourself this may still be relevant: You may want to keep your options open for the future

This isn't a mere technicality that's irrelevant for most users, this is a core aspect of what FOSS is supposed to be

But developers have to make money somehow






The funding of FOSS is often problematic and a legitimate issue

But is this really a debate about developer funding?

1D 5D 1M 6M YTD 1Y 5Y Max |   Full screen



MongoDB stock, Yahoo Finance

Announced Date	Transaction Name	Number of Investors	Money Raised	Lead Investors
Aug 21, 2017	 Series D - Redis Labs	4	\$44M	Goldman Sachs
Jul 21, 2016	 Series C - Redis Labs	5	\$14M	Bain Capital Ventures , Viola Ventures
Jun 25, 2015	 Series B - Redis Labs	4	\$15M	Bain Capital Ventures , Viola Ventures
Nov 5, 2013	 Series A - Redis Labs	3	\$9M	Bain Capital Ventures , Viola Ventures
Aug 8, 2012	 Seed Round - Redis Labs	2	\$4M	—

Redis Labs funding, Crunchbase

Is this about funding development or investor expectations?

[MongoDB] management said customers were interested in utilizing features across all of the large, multiple public cloud providers. In addition to preventing customer lock-in, management explained that many customers wanted to take advantage of the different unique features each large cloud company provides. In that respect, MongoDB's "cloud-neutral" positioning continues to be an advantage, even as it competes with the very same cloud companies that have their own database offerings.

Did their management just say an advantage of MongoDB is the exact thing they want to prevent with their new license?

Is there a threat to Open Source?

Cloud infrastructure providers threaten the viability of open source ([Salil Deshpande, Techcrunch](#))

Open Source is doing fine



Evil Big Cloud

This debate tries to ride upon the general unpopularity of large corporations, we should reject that framing, because it doesn't matter

Whether you like Google or Amazon is irrelevant for the discussion about the definition of "Open Source"

Conclusions

We should demand clarity and reject confusion about the terms "Free Software" and "Open Source"

Companies can decide to be no longer part of the FOSS community, but they can't have it both ways

We should talk about better funding options for FOSS

"Not publishing FOSS any more" is not a funding option for FOSS

Free and Open Source Software is doing fine

If your business is not doing fine that's not the problem of the FOSS community