

Closing Open-Source Gaps by Developing a Policy

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Open-source software is becoming ubiquitous, but companies need to be aware that its use must be carefully managed. Even Microsoft has admitted the attractiveness of this business model through its engagement with open-source companies such as SugarCRM Inc. and Zend Inc. Problems can arise because many open-source licenses require that users who incorporate open-source code in their software must make their code available for free (at reproduction cost), permit modifications of the software and permit redistribution without charging a fee.

These obligations could dramatically decrease the value of commercial software that incorporates open source. And the scope of these obligations is both extensive and unclear. For example, basic license terms in the General Public License (GPL), the most commonly used open-source license, such as derivative work and collective work, are not well defined for software. Another major concern is that the GPL terminates immediately upon any breach of its terms rather than the more common contract approach of providing a period to solve any such breach.

Failure to understand and address these issues can be expensive.

[Full Story](#) [2].

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