

Has Apache lost its way?

By *srlinuxx*

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Since its inception, the Apache Software Foundation has had a profound impact in shaping the open source movement and the tech industry at large.

Founded by the developers of the Apache HTTP server and incorporated as a nonprofit in 1999, the ASF has served as an incubator and support structure to dozens of projects that range from the modest to the massive. Subversion, OpenOffice, Tomcat, newcomers Cassandra, Lucene, Hadoop -- all have come of age under the aegis of the ASF and its core principles, informally known as "the Apache Way."

But tensions within the ASF and grumbling throughout the open source community have called into question whether the Apache Way is well suited to sponsoring the development of open source projects in today's software world. Changing attitudes toward open source licensing, conflicts with the GPL, concerns about technical innovation under the Way, fallout from the foundation's handling of specific projects in recent years -- the ASF may soon find itself passed over by the kinds of projects that have helped make it such a central fixture in open source, thanks in some measure to the way the new wave of bootstrapped, decentralized projects on GitHub don't require a foundationlike atmosphere to keep them vibrant or relevant.

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