

Network Operators and Open Source Software Study

OSS projects with appeal

Leslie Daigle

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This document is one subsection of the Network Operators and Open Source Software project report. Full report available from <https://possie.techark.org/>

Making OSS Projects Appealing

You can legitimately claim to have made Open Source Software by simply posting your software source code somewhere publicly accessible. However, if you want your software to be adopted, there are some key expectations of potential users and contributors that are important to address.

For OSS project owners, making the right choices will determine the likelihood of uptake of the OSS itself, and willingness of others to contribute. The survey identified key project characteristics that were potential “buzzkills” — things that could turn operators away from using or contributing to projects, in spite of initial excitement in the prospect.

Buzzkills for OSS use

To get serious interest from operators (beyond a buzz of discussion), OSS projects have to provide a tool that solves an operational need (imperative), and it should be readily integrated with their vendor hardware/ecosystem.

Even with those conditions met, respondents identified the top things to avoid if you want network operators to pick up and use your software as:

- Missing, outdated, or otherwise unhelpful documentation
- Project staleness — if it looks like a project is abandoned or not responsive to requests, operators will avoid it. It also helps to ensure that the roadmap for future development of the project is accessible and clear
- Availability of support — though active support discussion groups appear to be more important, overall, than availability of paid support

Those are all features that are within the scope of an individual project owner to address and improve.

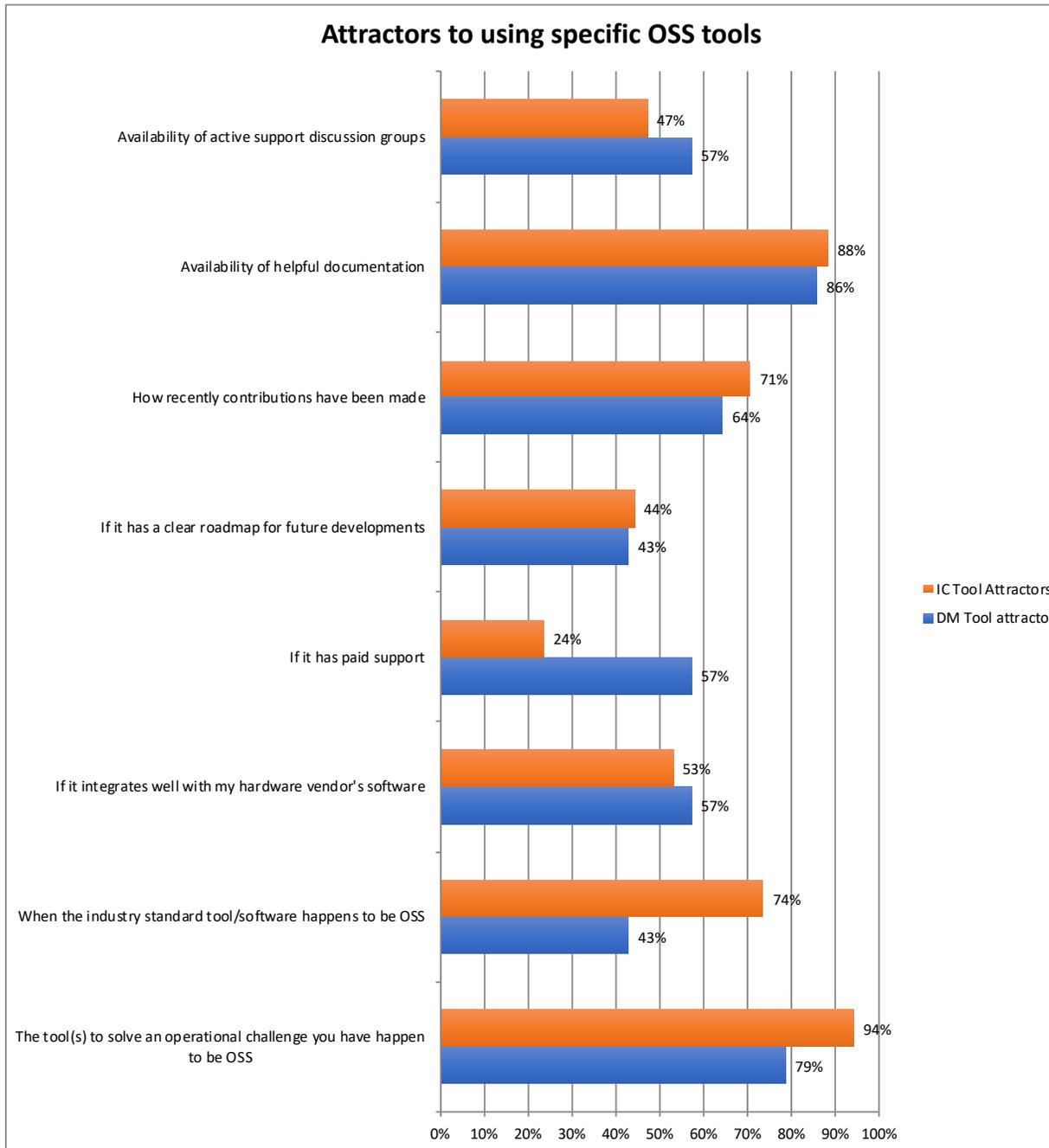


Chart OSS Appeal-1

Improving chances of contribution

The question of whether or not operators will contribute staff time to OSS projects is chiefly a matter of internal corporate choice. However, survey responses

revealed that there are things that OSS project owners can do to improve the likelihood of contributions.

Chief among these are:

- Ensuring the governance structure for the project is open and clear enough to work for potential contributors
- Avoiding staleness — continuous contributions to the project; having and sticking to a clear roadmap for future directions
- Ensuring the licensing framework is acceptable to potential contributors

OSS project owners might also consider the other two impediments (time to tailor, lack of skilled resources) when selecting software coding languages and frameworks. The more common the development environment, the more likely other entities will have skilled resources, for example.

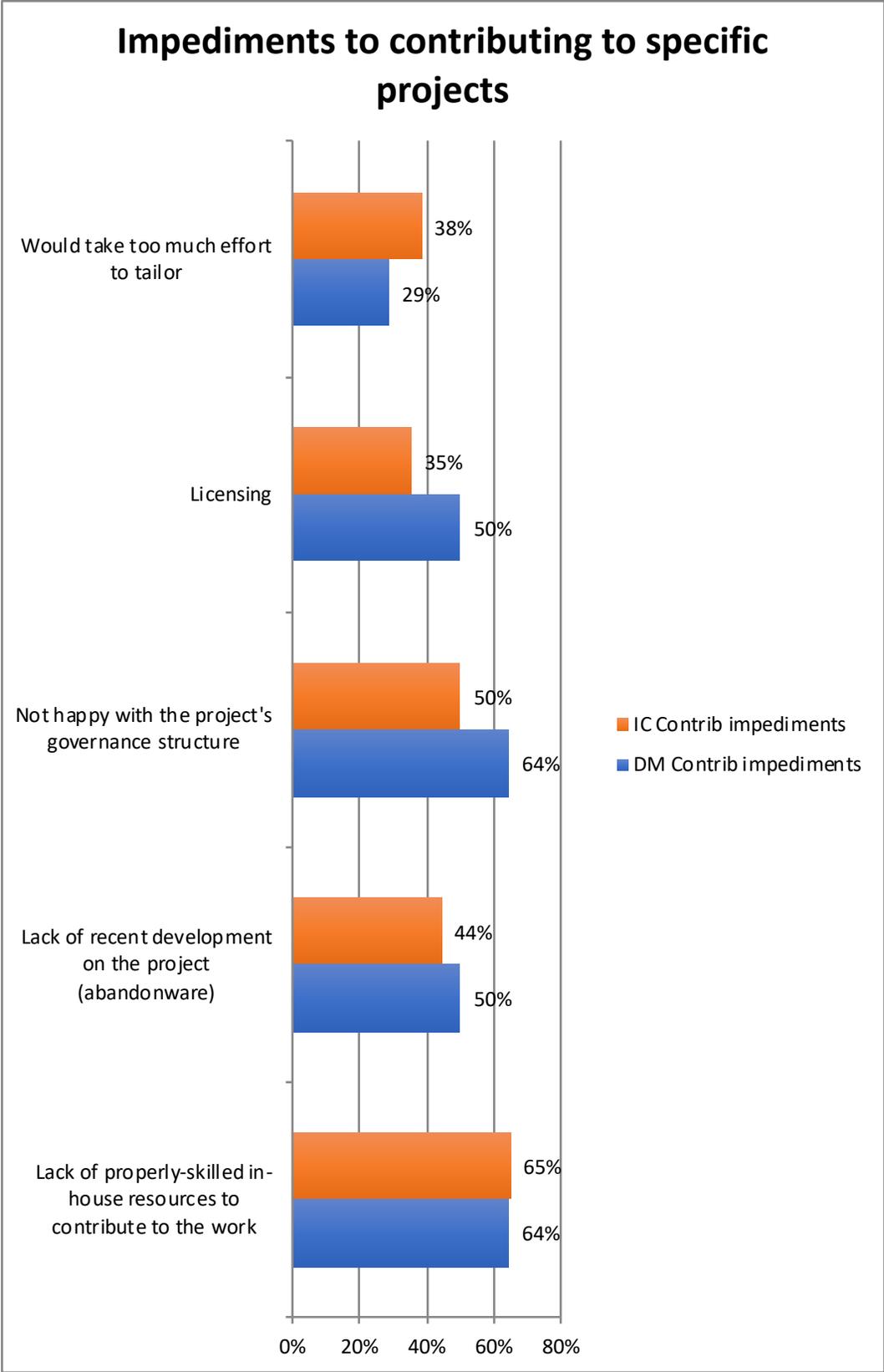


Chart OSSAppeal-2

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