

Network Operators and Open Source Software Study

Finding Support for OSS Internally

Leslie Daigle

December 2020

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

Pitching OSS within organizations

There is a common conception that OSS is just “free software”, or something you reach for when you don’t have the budget to pay for slick, well-packaged, proprietary solutions. Whether or not that was ever a complete or accurate characterization of OSS, survey respondents made it clear that the lack of a purchase price for the software was one of the least considerations in choosing to use OSS.

In today’s reality, there are business-compelling reasons to use, and contribute to, open source software projects. It is important to be mindful of why and when to engage in them. The flipside is that there are compelling arguments to use if you are trying to persuade your management to be supportive.

Top reasons for using OSS

Instead of price tag, respondents (both individual contributors (IC) and decision makers (DM)) indicated that their top reasons for using OSS were centred on the codebase itself.

- *Extensible codebase:* with OSS, an organization can modify or extend the code to tailor the software to their particular needs, without having to do an entire custom software build.
- *Inspectable codebase:* even if an organization is not intending to extend the capabilities of the software, being able to inspect the codebase (for security reasons, among others) is perceived as a valuable feature.
- *Community and self-support for the code:* with community-supported OSS, features and bugs are addressed based on the priorities of organizations that are using the software, not product development for a vendor company.

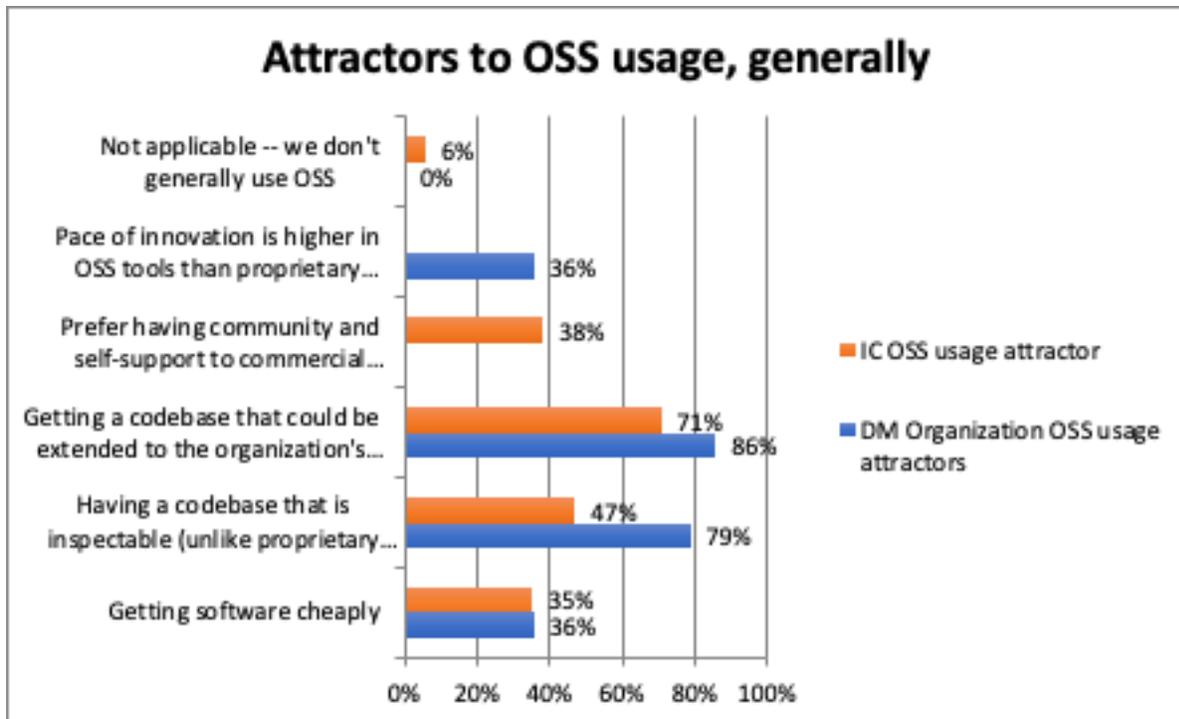


Chart PitchingOSS-1

Contributing to OSS yields more positives

The business of network operators is networking, not software development. Contributing to OSS projects provides a way for network operators to help shape the software they need, as described above, and keep up with industry trends. It also allows for individual contributors to engage with others that share common problems (and may have different insights), and broaden their skillsets beyond the range of opportunities the network operator organization could offer in-house.

- *Increased skillset:* the majority of respondents said that contributing to OSS projects increased their skillset and value as professionals.
- *Software shaping:* 21 of 25 who have contributed said contributing has been beneficial in getting the software needed for their jobs.
- *Gathering intelligence:* About half who have contributed said it has been beneficial for keeping an eye on developments even when not actively contributing

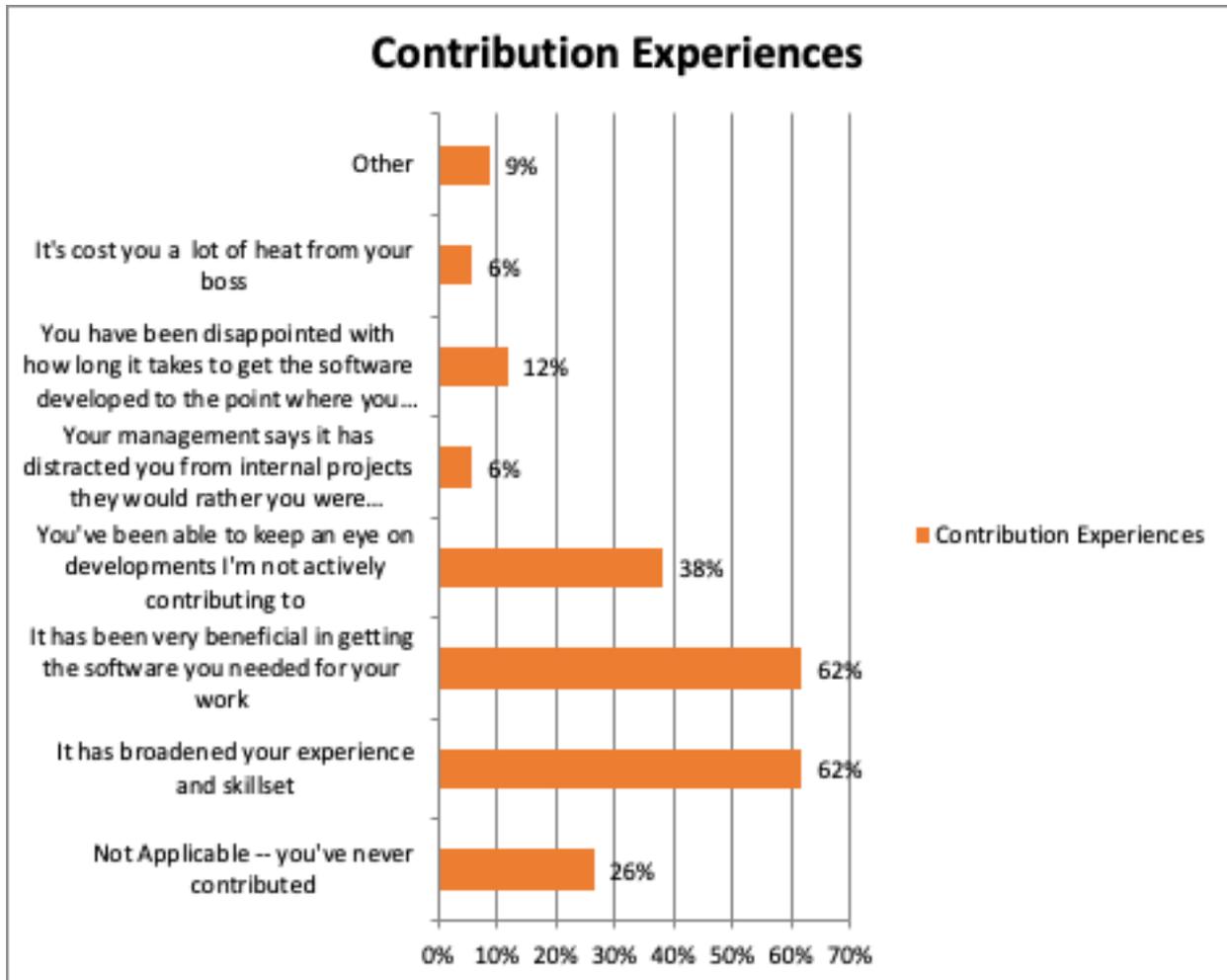


Chart PitchingOSS-2

Full report available at <https://possie.techark.org>

Leslie Daigle

December 2020

Full report available from <https://possie.techark.org/>