

The Art of Open Source War

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Open Source Software

- Benefits
 - Low-cost software
 - Social communities
 - Anyone can use or modify
 - Free-flow of knowledge
 - Gain knowledge and learn skills
 - Develop reputation
- Challenges
 - Product differentiation
 - Commoditization

Corporate Motivation

- Generate Revenue
 - Sell software or enhanced version of software
 - Sell value-add above or below
 - Sell hardware that runs software
 - Sell support
- Create affinity with proprietary product
- Create standards
- Marketing / public relations
- Reduce development costs
- Inject competition to distract or undermine competitor

Minor detail

Participate in Community

Method

- How?
 - Assign employees to community
 - Hire developers from community
 - Contract members of the community
 - Contract third-party companies
- Why?
 - Product
 - Business Plan
 - Deliverables

"I don't f*cking want innovation. You're not smarter than your competitor. Just copy what they do until you get their numbers."
- Mark Pincus, CEO Zynga

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Maximize shareholder value.

Competitive cooperation

- Don't trust Open Source in general
- Don't trust community
- Don't trust community leaders
- Don't like license
 - Inhibits business plan
 - Inhibits freedom of action

Attack vectors

- Gatekeepers
- Governance
- Project members

- Technical arguments
- Social arguments

Dominate project

- Employees dominate community
- Governance rules give company special privileges
- Gatekeepers
 - Control access
 - Control pace and direction of changes
 - Set tone for community
 - Hostile to developers outside company

Campaign for developers

- Attract developers
 - Equipment loans
 - Special events with travel grants
 - Access to advanced software technology
 - Professional support
 - well-maintained website
 - bug report triage
 - technical documentation
 - Enhanced responsiveness
 - Sponsoring user groups, provide speakers
 - Garner professional awards and appearance of success

Note: SG&A, not R&D budgets!

Promote competing project

- Divisiveness
 - Use cult recruiting techniques
 - Developers who do not feel appreciated elsewhere
 - Sense of belonging and identity
 - Acquire discipline
 - Acquire special knowledge
 - Gain some power
- Superiority
 - Create aura of exclusivity in project
 - Some ideas can be questioned and others are dogma
- Boost self esteem of developers
 - Recognition: titles, low-level authority, rewards, praise

Divide and Conquer

- Stress underdog status
- Portray competition as oppressive, unresponsive
 - Competition unredeemable and not worth fixing
- Validate complaints about competition
 - Grass is always greener on the other side
- Utilize "openness" to invade other project
 - Promote competition using resources of original project
- Generate waves of complaints about original project
 - Force community to question itself
 - Make unforced errors
- Gestures of humility from other project are signs of weakness
 - Conciliatory actions are insufficient
 - Lack of cooperation is abuse of dominant position

Undermine leadership

- Pick the target, Freeze it, Personalize it, Polarize it
- Attack leadership
 - Caricature, scapegoat
 - Strawman arguments
 - Transform technical disagreements to philosophical disputes
 - Ridicule
 - Generate animosity to prevent cooperation
 - Diminish respect within competing community
- Do not humanize competition

Defenses

- Induce discussions about unexplored doctrine
- Encourage dissension
 - External attacks appear as normal infighting or trolling
- Maintain vitality of original project
- Undermine corporate sponsor of attacking project
- Evolve into diverse, complex social organism
 - Homogeneous population is more vulnerable

Successful companies do not play the game for the sporting challenge.

They play to win.

- Open Source is a campaign for developers
 - Limited resource
- Competition spurs ...
 - Innovation
 - Adaptation
 - Extinction
- Ideas come from connections and networks and inspiration
- Too much divisiveness splinters the network

"If you know your enemies and
know yourself, you will not be
imperiled in a hundred battles...."
- Sun-Tzu, The Art of War