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CodePlex.org
FOUNDATION

Introducing the CodePlex Foundation

The CodePlex Foundation is an independent foundation dedicated to encouraging and enabling commercial software companies to participate and contribute to open source communities. Established in September, 2009 with seed funding from Microsoft Corporation, The CodePlex Foundation is a neutral forum, governed by an independent Board of Directors and guided by advisors drawn from the open source and commercial communities. The Foundation brings these worlds together to support the free and open exchange of ideas – and code – between OSS community developers and commercial software developers.

Participants and sponsors of the CodePlex Foundation work together to establish best practices, processes and innovative legal protections. Through this work, CodePlex seeks to lower barriers to the adoption of open source code in commercial software products, while making it easier for commercial software companies to participate in the open source ecosystem.

OUR MISSION AND GOALS

- The mission of the CodePlex Foundation is to enable the exchange of code and understanding among software companies and open source communities.

- Our guiding principles, to support community viability and to be commercial friendly, speak to the breadth and purpose of our mission.

- Our community viability principle is focused on supporting a culture that will attract dedicated individuals, advance their projects and encourage their professional development.

Today's IT environment requires a commercially friendly and collaborative open source foundation that ensures maximum adoption of projects. Through the CodePlex Foundation, the ecosystem for open source software expands, and sponsorship and partnership opportunities are created between the CodePlex Foundation, the open source community and commercial entities.

The Value of the CodePlex Foundation

The CodePlex Foundation offers value to many individuals, projects and organizations:

- **For open source projects** - The CodePlex Foundation enables open source projects and developers to concentrate on developing quality code without being distracted by legal and licensing issues. We offer clear licensing and contribution agreements, while also providing a place to ask questions and give information. The CodePlex Foundation enhances personal development through community participation and mentorship.

- **For commercial software developers** - The CodePlex Foundation provides a legal and licensing framework that makes it easier to contribute code to open source projects. For corporate software developers who have been unsure how to safely contribute to open source, the Foundation provides a model for how to get started as an open source contributor.

- **For commercial entities** - The CodePlex Foundation solves the problem of corporate contribution to community projects by providing a legal and licensing struc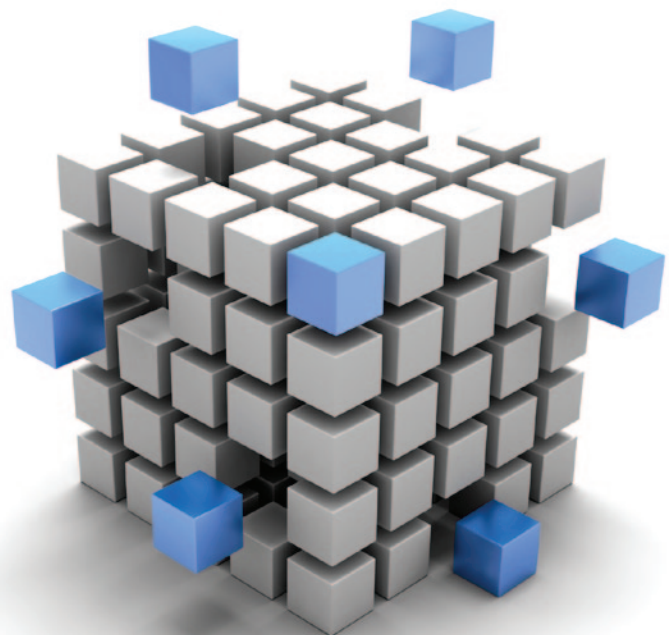ture that simplifies corporate contributions to open source projects. By creating sponsorship opportunities between projects and commercial entities, we enable open source as a viable choice for businesses. Further, we develop an easy, low-risk, simplified process for corporate sponsors to engage in the community and make contributions to open source.

- **For the OSS community** - The CodePlex Foundation ensures maximum adoptability of projects and provides robust community management. We act as a forum for interaction among open source projects, developers, commercial software developers and corporations interested in using open source or contributing to open source projects.

- **For open source foundations and leaders in open source** - The CodePlex Foundation is complementary to other foundations. Its broad focus enlarges the open source ecosystem.

CodePlex Foundation Guiding Principles

Community viability – The CodePlex Foundation works to attract and foster vibrant communities of open source contributors as well as projects. We provide opportunities for teamwork, collaboration, mentoring, user choice and best practices.

Commercial friendly – The CodePlex Foundation bridges the gap between open source communities and commercial entities. We advocate for commercially friendly licenses, clear code provenance, secure code and vulnerability response plan, and commercial sponsorship.

What does the CodePlex Foundation do?

Commercial software developers are under-represented in open source projects for a number of reasons, including cultural differences, different development methodologies and differing perspectives on copyright and patents. The CodePlex Foundation is the only open source foundation expressly dedicated to increasing participation in the open source process by helping commercial software developers overcome these obstacles and others.

Why is this important? Open source software has come of age. One report estimates the value of the Linux kernel alone at over $1.3 billion US, clearly demonstrating the potential benefits for businesses of all sizes.

It's clear that we have reached a convergence of maturing technology and evolving business models, an inflection point where more commercial companies are willing to use OSS. The CodePlex Foundation was founded to help drive that change. The Foundation gives commercial developers a place to voice their needs, and makes it easier for commercial entities to adopt open source technology.

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO LEGAL AND IP ISSUES

The CodePlex Foundation develops legal innovations to build a safe harbor in which software companies and open source communities can collaborate to spur adoption of open source. For example, we allow software companies to grant the Foundation a patent license for any code they contribute to the Foundation. Then we relicense those patents at no cost to all downstream users and developers, including covering their use in derivative works.

Our code contribution and assignment agreements form the basic process for helping corporations move IP into the open source community. For projects and companies that participate in CodePlex Foundation projects, these legal innovations enable more developers to participate in open source while also providing opportunities for more commercial entities enjoy the benefits of open source.

The Museum as Metaphor: How the Foundation is Organized

The Foundation, like a museum, is divided into galleries. In our case, galleries are collections of technically or thematically related projects. The galleries and their projects are supported by the Foundation staff, which keeps the Foundation running and centralizes services required by the galleries.

A gallery is created by submitting an application that is approved by Board of Director's vote. Every new gallery launches with an anchor project, and each project must belong to one of the galleries. Criteria for projects being accepted into individual galleries are determined by each gallery. Individuals or corporations that want to donate a project to the Foundation must find a gallery willing to accept it.

Companies that sponsor galleries and their respective projects provide the CodePlex Foundation with a monetary donation, along with dedicated project resources and a three year commitment to the gallery. All code that is generated through the gallery is open and accessible to the broader development community.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE AND CONTRIBUTE

Choosing to collaborate with the Foundation is an important step and a milestone for open source communities and the projects that they represent. Here's why:

- All projects that join the CodePlex Foundation benefit from the shared resources available to projects. This includes administrative and infrastructure support to projects and their communities, plus centralized marketing resources.

- New projects that join the foundation benefit through increased opportunity for mentorship and sponsorship from their gallery. In addition, new projects have an opportunity to build reputation and earn credibility through association with the Foundation.

- The foundation provides a model for anchor projects to nuture new project and we are building a collection of best practices from participating projects.

- Anchor projects benefit by building a strong ecosystem for their projects to provide more end-to-end solutions for their adopters. Large corporations that are familiar with the Foundation may be more inclined to adopt or participate in its projects.

Microsoft is the founding sponsor of the CodePlex Foundation, but neither the Foundation nor Microsoft view this as an exclusive relationship. As the details of our sponsor program are being established, we see an opportunity for software companies large and small to be part of the sponsor program.

CONTRIBUTE OR PARTICIPATE IN GALLERIES AND PROJECTS

The Foundation is interested in adding galleries and projects that represent a range of technologies. We want to hear from projects, commercial entities and developers that want to affiliate with the Foundation.

PARTICIPATE AS AN ADVISOR

Our Board of Directors represents a broad cross section of influencers involved in open source. To broaden our range and gather expert opinion from many corners of the software world, we have established an Advisory Board of open source and software industry luminaries. To participate, contact the Foundation, or follow us on Twitter at @codeplexF.

JOIN IN THE DISCUSSION

As much as possible, we want the activities and decisions of the CodePlex Foundation to be transparent. We also want the Board of Directors, the staff, and the Board of Advisors to be accessible. We encourage everyone with a stake in the success of open source to follow and participate in the discussion.

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