Building a Business around Open Source DM Solutions and the MapServer Experience

Dave McIlhagga

President,

DM Solutions Group Inc.

DM Solutions' Adoption of Open Source Philosophy

➢ Background

➢ Need for a platform to support demanding, customized mapping applications

➢ Discovery and adoption of MapServer Technology developed by the University of Minnesota

Getting a Prospective Client to Buy-in

➢ Solid technical foundation is a necessity

➢ Ultimate buy-in from a client is a result of trust and a sense of partnership with you

➢ Trust and partnership are a result of you treating them as your partners trying to solve a problem. Treat them with respect, and listen to their concerns instead of pushing an agenda.

The Holy Trinity of Open Source Business Models

➤ Cooperation
  ➤ Work with your clients, not just for them. Their problems are your problems too – and open source gives you the opportunity to do something about it!

➤ Partnership
  ➤ Big projects don't get done alone. Try to bring many players to the table so that the benefits of one person's actions to all is clear.

➤ Trust
  ➤ Recognize that your clients chose you because they believed in you. There's a community out there waiting to help you – Let Them!

Small Business makes Money on Services, not Product

➢ Most small businesses (even ones selling proprietary software) will tell you that services are where the money is made. So why invest so much time trying to build and sell that "perfect" product?

➢ Software that is in the hands of 5,000 instead of 50 has a far greater chance of resulting in future work for you. You're the expert after all, so if someone needs (and will pay for) the best: you'll be at the top of the list.

Sales & Development – not Necessarily a Marriage made in Hell

➢ Effective Communications and Marketing can help spread the message of the great work you are doing in the open source community.

➢ Community support by developers serves to reinforce the message being presented by your communications and marketing.

➢ The two efforts complement each other

➢ Working with Open Source is special and bold. Use that to it's full advantage in your company message!

Taking that first Big Step

➢ DM Solutions – Release of PHP/MapScript

➢ It was well received in the community

➢ Although initially mailing list questions were primarily handled by DM staff, PHP/MapScript has since then taken a life of it's own.

Building Better Client Tools

➢ DM Solutions development of MapLab

➢ Pending release of Chameleon 1.0

Spin-offs of Releasing Technology

➢ Even before release of Chameleon, tremendous market interest already exists

➢ Where2getit is adopting Chameleon technology to support the company's content management for their locator clients.

A Formula for Success in Open Source

➢ It's all about the people

➢ Get the software out there and being used. It's free so there should be nothing to hold you back.

➢ Patience – building a loyal client base takes time, and not respecting that can damage the credibility that is so fundamental to your business success.

➢ Open Source is not a get rich quick scheme – and your clients will likely respect you for your adoption of open source.