



# The Road to FOSS

## Pros, Perils and Pitfalls

Dr Andrew John Hughes  
Software Engineer, Red Hat

# Proprietary Software

- Reliance on a single vendor
  - No competition for support
  - Controlled by their whims
  - Have to **trust** them
- **May** have licensing costs
  - Vendor motivated to sell more licenses



# Free and Open Source Software

Free as in  
Freedom

Not as in Beer  
Software libre



# Free Software Principles

0. The freedom to run the program for any purpose
1. The freedom to study how the program works, and change it to make it do what you wish.
2. The freedom to redistribute copies so you can help your neighbour.
3. The freedom to distribute copies of your modified version to others.

Both 1 and 3 require access to the source code.



# Licensing

- Principles are enshrined in the license
- Two main choices
  - Copyleft (GPL and friends)
  - BSD-style / Apache
- Look for well-known licenses
- Check the FSF and OSI websites for information



# But How?

- Can't just 'flip a switch'
- Like any big change, it's not cost or problem free
- Potential Issues
  - Freeing your data
  - Re-training
  - Software support



# Freeing Your Data

- How much is your data tied to the software you use?
- First step in moving to FOSS is to make sure your data can be retrieved in a format which meets *an open standard*
- Prevents others being forced to use the same software



# Open Standards

- Made the Internet what it is today
- Necessary for interoperability and competition
- Need to be royalty free
- Not Reasonable And Non-discriminatory (RAND)





# Re-training

- Changing software is likely to require staff re-training
- Particularly true of those required to administrate systems
- Small steps with clear advantages
  - Internet Explorer -> Firefox
  - Microsoft Office -> LibreOffice



# Software Support

- No need to rely on one vendor
- Can even be in-house
- But...
  - Whims of the community
  - Need to be as vigilant
  - Possibility to *fork* but requires maintenance



# Questions?



# Where to Go From Here

- <http://www.fsf.org>
- <http://www.opensource.org/>

