Outsourcing to an Unknown Workforce: Exploring Opensourcing as a Global Sourcing Strategy

Presented by:
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Abstract
This seminar presents a psychological contract perspective on the use of the open source development model as a global sourcing strategy—opensourcing—whereby commercial companies and open source communities collaborate on development of software of commercial interest to the company. Building on previous research on information systems outsourcing, a theoretical framework for exploring the opensourcing phenomenon is derived. The first phase of the research concerned qualitative case studies involving three commercial organizations that had “liberated” what had hitherto been proprietary software and sought to grow a global open source community around their product. This is followed with a large-scale survey involving additional exemplars of the phenomenon. The research identifies a number of symmetrical and complementary customer and community obligations that are associated with opensourcing success. The study reveals an ongoing shift from OSS as a community of individual developers to OSS as a community of commercial organizations, primarily small to medium-sized enterprises. It also reveals that opensourcing provides ample opportunity for companies to headhunt top developers, hence moving from outsourcing to a largely unknown OSS workforce toward recruitment of developers from a global open source community whose talents have become known as a result of the opensourcing experience.

Bio
Brian Fitzgerald holds an endowed professorship, the Frederick Krehbiel Chair in Innovation in Business & Technology, at the University of Limerick, Ireland, where he has also been Vice President Research from 2008-2011. He is Principal Investigator in Lero – the Irish Software Engineering Research Centre and was also Founding Director of the Lero Graduate School in Software Engineering.

He was formerly at University College Cork, and has held visiting positions in Italy, Austria, Sweden, US and the UK. He holds a PhD from the University of London and his research interests lie primarily in software development, encompassing development methods, global software development, agile methods and open source software.


Having worked in industry prior to taking up an academic position, he has more than 10 years’ experience in the software industry. This was gained in a variety of companies and in a number of countries (Ireland, Belgium, Germany).

He has been very successful in winning competitive research grants from a variety of funding agencies, including EU, Science Foundation Ireland and Enterprise Ireland. Overall, these projects have received total funding in excess of €57 million, with over €9 million received directly as Principal Investigator (PI).