



Among his many other accomplishments, Steven Feldman is Principal of KnowWhere Consulting Ltd; Chairman at Geo.me Solutions; Non Executive Chairman at Exprodat | GIS for Petroleum; Strategic Advisor to the Board at Astun Technology Ltd, and Member of the Advisory Board at Open Cage Data

# There is no such thing as a free lunch

In the last of a three-part column, Steven Feldman offers further practical suggestions on support for the Open Source movement

It costs nothing to give a little bit of acknowledgement to the Open Source projects and community that are supporting your organisation and, for practical purposes, here are a couple of suggestions:

1. If you have a web map or spatial data output on your web site you could include some form of acknowledgement of the Open Source tools that helped you to deliver the project. If you have used several such tools or developments, you could link to a page on your site that details them (not just the geospatial ones), or you could link to the OSGeo web page
2. Publish an annual Open Source usage report. Set out your organisation's Open Source policy; take time to audit your usage of Open Source and the benefits and savings thereby achieved; acknowledge the projects/tools you have used, and list the contributions, financial and time, that you have made in the past year.

Once you have done that, why not commit yourself to reaching out to other potential users to share your experiences through case studies and by speaking at events?

## Consultants

If your organisation uses a services company to implement, customise or support Open Source software then you might want to ask what they are doing to contribute to the Open Source ecosphere?

- Do they donate a percentage of their revenues to sponsor open source projects or the OSGeo Foundation?
- Do they contribute code to any of the projects?
- Do they sponsor functionality from which everyone benefits?
- Do they support their staff in volunteering within projects, events and groups?

In other words, are the consultants that you are using to implement Open Source solutions following this 'Good Practice'?

## Something else?

I am sure there are other ways of contributing to the Open Source community that I have missed off this short list. Use the comments below to offer your suggestions and let me know if you think that this Good Practice guide would be useful (or if it's a waste of time).

## The end of free lunches

Hopefully this first stab at a Good Practice guide will encourage users of Open Source software to contribute time and money to the community that creates and supports the Open Source software from which they benefit. Don't leave it to someone else to fund that feature you need or to fix a bug - step up and contribute.

## OSGeo: supporting the mission

Perhaps, at this stage, it is worth reminding ourselves of how the not-for-profit Open Source Geospatial Foundation, or OSGeo, supports the collaborative development of open source geospatial software, and promotes its widespread use:

- Provides resources for foundation projects - e.g., infrastructure, funding, legal.
- Promotes freely available geodata - free software is useless without data
- Promotes the use of open source software in the geospatial industry (not just foundation software) - e.g., PR, training, outreach.
- Encourages the implementation of open standards and standards-based interoperability in foundation projects
- Ensures a high degree of quality in Foundation projects in order to build and preserve the Foundation "brand".
- Makes Foundation and related software more accessible to end users - eg. binary "stack" builds, cross package documentation.
- Provides support for the use of OSGeo software in education via curriculum development, outreach, and support.
- Encourages communication and cooperation between OSGeo communities on different language (eg. Java/C/Python) and operating system (eg. Win32, Unix, MacOS) platforms.
- Supports use and contribution to Foundation projects from the worldwide community through internationalisation of software and community outreach.
- Stages an annual OSGeo Conference, possibly in cooperation with related efforts (eg. EOGE).
- Awards the Sol Katz award for service to the OSGeo community.



OSGeo: spreading the message

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