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ECONOMIC MOTIVATIONS FOR OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARE USAGE IN SRI LANKA

By

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ABSTRACT

This study identifies the costs involved with using Open Source Software and estimates the average cost of licenses and other costs in using proprietary software. Costs of retraining IT staff to configure and maintain Linux servers, costs of retraining regular staff to use Open Source desktop applications and costs of support from an outside agency to help answer queries and difficulties staff may have in using Open Source software are identified as costs applying to Linux but not to proprietary software while costs of administration staff time in sorting out licenses, extra time of IT staff spent on installing proprietary software, updating virus guards, security updates and sorting out virus damages are shown as costs applying to Proprietary software.

Costing is done only for costs that differ between the two systems. In arriving at the total costs, a pessimistic approach is used for Open Source costs and an optimistic approach is used to estimate Proprietary software costs to ensure that the practical cost savings are not less than what is predicted. The estimates show that Rs.101,000 would be spent on licenses for an average computer in an organization. This is shown to be an astounding 1 billion rupees just for the 30 organizations analyzed in this study. The costs for using Open Source would be less than 15,088 for an entire 3 year period. A minimum saving of 85% is predicted if Open Source software is used. While the balance 15% would diminish with experience as the costs primarily is on training.

A severe lack of awareness and knowledge about OSS is seen in IT decision makers in the organizations surveyed in the study. This could lead to choosing proprietary software over Open Source based on the wrong reasons. It is recommended that the government step in and create an agency which will create an upto-date awareness about Open Source and give wide scale advocacy towards promoting OSS usage. It also suggests setting up a research branch to find out and test the latest developments and inform the wider public about them and recommend the best Open Source solutions as well as provide consultancy to organizations that want to migrate to OSS.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CAD	Computer Aided Design
FOSS	Free Open Source Software
ICTA	Information and Communication Technology Agency
IOSN	International Open Source Network
IT	Information Technology
OSS	Open Source Software
TCO	Total Cost of Ownership



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