

# OPEN SOFTWARE FOUNDATION

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## **CORPORATE BACKGROUNDER**

### **OPEN SOFTWARE FOUNDATION**

The Open Software Foundation is a computer industry first: a not-for-profit corporation jointly established by the industry's leading vendors as a neutral supplier of open software technologies for UNIX<sup>®</sup>-based systems.

OSF's mission is to develop an open environment that will provide a single, globally-accepted standard for software applications that uncouples those applications from particular architectures or individual vendors' products.

Its ultimate goal is to contribute to overall computer industry growth in today's increasingly networked information processing environment by providing users with the greatest portability, interoperability, and scalability of applications.

OSF is developing software that will address three key user needs: portability, the need to run the same application software on multiple vendors' systems; interoperability, the need to have different vendors' systems work together transparently; and scalability, the ability to host the same software environment on the entire range of hardware platforms, from desktop devices to supercomputers.

It is doing so through an open development process that is completely new to this competitive industry.

### **History and Membership**

OSF was formed in May of 1988 with eight original sponsors: Apollo Computer Inc., Digital Equipment Corporation, Groupe Bull, Hewlett-Packard, International Business Machines Corporation, Nixdorf Computer AG, N.V. Philips Telecommunications and Data Systems, and Siemens AG. Subsequently, Hitachi Ltd. of Japan also became a sponsor company.

Since that time, 85 additional members have joined. These include systems manufacturers, hardware systems vendors, independent software vendors, semiconductor manufacturers, service companies, industry consortia, educational institutions, public and quasi-public entities, and consulting and research firms.

Through its members, OSF has a funding commitment in excess of \$130 million through 1991. Membership is open to anyone who wishes to join. All members participate in decision-making and have early access to technologies under development.

### Product Development

Before the end of 1989, OSF will introduce the first release of its new software environment, OSF-1, including extensions and utilities. OSF-1 will integrate the best technologies available in the industry, using as its starting point X/Open and POSIX specifications.

The cornerstone of OSF's development process is the Request for Technology, a process characterized by open input, open development, and open output with equitable access to specifications and code.

The first Open Software Foundation RFT, issued in July 1988, was for the graphical user interface component of OSF-1. It resulted in 39 submissions, 23 of which met OSF's criteria.

As will be the case for all OSF-1 components, the submissions for the user interface were evaluated by OSF members through a series of formal meetings and two-way communications programs.

At the conclusion of the process, on December 30, 1988, OSF announced that the user interface would be based on a blend of technologies: Digital Equipment Corporation's toolkit technology, and a joint Hewlett-Packard/Microsoft submission that combines the appearance of HP's 3-D interface with the behavior of Microsoft's Presentation Manager.

The friendly "look and feel" of the new interface will provide users with the same familiar way to access computer resources regardless of the hardware platform they are using, from personal computers to mainframes. With it, users will be able to manage a variety of software applications, using a windowing system rather than simply text-based commands. In some cases, they will be able to move data among different applications transparently.

In all its development, OSF is remaining consistent with the international X/Open Common Applications Environment (CAE), the National Institute of Standards and Technology (formerly the U.S. National Bureau of Standards) Application Portability Profile, and equivalent European and international standards.

The OSF-1 operating system will feature a streamlined, modular, and completely re-engineered kernel, making it a stable and powerful platform for current and future applications.

OSF will provide application developers and end-users compatibility with existing versions of UNIX, including System V, releases 2.0 and 3.0, and Berkeley, version 4.3

Under the open development process OSF has designed, specification documents, source code and a validation suite for OSF compliance are available to anyone, under stable and equitable licensing terms. The process has an additional important feature for members: it gives them advance "snapshots" of technologies under development so they can incorporate these OSF offerings into their own product development.

#### Catalog Technology Program

The first RFT process brought to light several technology areas that are of interest to OSF membership but not yet appropriate for standardization. As a result, OSF plans to make examples of such technologies available to members wherever appropriate through the Catalog Technology Program.

The principal requirements for inclusion in this program are that software be of product quality, that it be strictly compatible with OSF's core technology, and that it be subject to a qualification review by OSF.

#### OSF Research Institute

While OSF's open software environment will allow members to add value through compatible extensions, OSF has also formed a Research Institute to increase the rate at which laboratory innovations become products.

OSF will devote 10 percent of its operating budget to support the research community, with the OSF Research Institute serving as the link between the foundation and both university and commercial labs around the world.

The institute will act as both clearing house and focal point for development of operating system and specification extensions and enhancements, and is expected to have a far-reaching effect on the design and use of computer systems into the next decade.

## Guiding Principles

OSF has developed seven guiding principles for its work. They are:

- to provide offerings based on relevant industry standards;
- to keep the process of soliciting inputs and technology open;
- to provide early and equal access to specifications and continuing development;
- to make the decision process timely and vendor-neutral;
- to keep implementations independent of hardware;
- to provide equitable, stable licensing terms;
- and to spur technical innovation through participation by universities and other research organizations.

Membership in OSF remains open to anyone: end users, computer hardware and software suppliers, educational institutions, government agencies, and business organizations around the world.

The foundation's headquarters are located at Eleven Cambridge Center, Cambridge, Massachusetts.