

Get the job done – Get the right software

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When deciding on software solutions, IT departments are important decision-makers. They are in no way passive recipients of the software that vendors deliver. They need to play very active roles in ensuring that the solutions meet their organization's needs entirely. Be it an open source or commercial software solution, certain factors must be evaluated to determine the suitability of the software before it is acquired.

In some countries, governments have considered adopting policies and strategies aimed at providing an advantage to a particular software model over the other. These include procurement preference policies or other national preference policies, for instance where preference is given for the funding of research and development based on a particular software model. The appeal of such policies may lie in the government's desire to bring about consumer benefits like lower costs and wider vendor choice. Another motive may be to give local software developers a jump start in the industry, so as to cultivate a domestic market free of dependence on foreign sources.

However, such preference policies unwittingly stifle the market, artificially limiting the choice of software available that can best meet a customer's needs in a cost-effective manner. This means that software providers are prevented from competing on equal terms. Hampering this competition leads to organizations force-fitting their systems with software solutions that may not fully meet their needs.

Software solutions, like other products, should always be selected based on their merits, not

preferences. Organizations procuring software from vendors should first state in clear and objective terms the functionality and requirements that the solution needs to fulfill, and allow all software contenders, including open source and commercial software providers, to submit proposals for consideration. The solution should then be picked based on its functionality, performance, interoperability, security, value and relative cost of ownership.

By maintaining free competition in the market, both the industry and consumers will benefit in the long term. Software developers will be motivated to compete with one another to deliver better products, innovating without being constrained in the way they commercialize or license their innovations in the future. Sustaining innovation in the software industry is key to the growth and success of the tech industry, and providing consumers with continually improving solutions.

By maintaining a freely competitive market, domestic software vendors will also be disciplined in staying competitive in a realistic marketplace, better preparing them for the global marketplace where they would not be likely to succeed if they were to grow complacent in a sheltered preferential market.

In a marketplace free from preference policies, organizations will not be stifled, but will instead be guaranteed the freedom to choose from the best available software solutions, with full trust that their choices are not artificially constrained by factors that do not inherently determine the quality or performance of a product. And in doing so, the jobs at hand will get done more effectively.

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