InfoWorld OSBC 2009
San Francisco, CA
March 24-25, 2009

Open source will be the biggest beneficiary of the current economy and tight purses, although it may be sound self-serving at an open source event. A recent Novell-sponsored IDC survey revealed that 72% of the customers are planning and evaluating Linux in the enterprise; 68% are evaluating Linux as a client; 49% say Linux will the #1 operating system on the server side; and 67% rank interoperability between Linux and Windows as top priority.

Earlier misgivings about the mission-critical capabilities of Linux have been put to rest by large-scale deployments by the German Air Traffic Control (DFS), HSBC, Office Depot, and Walmart. *Fortune favors the bold.* Linux is like Walmart—everyday low prices. Open source software's value propositions are better quality software and no vendor lock-in. However, barriers to open source include security concerns, total cost of ownership, and application development complexity.

If open source for the most part is free and the software downloadable freely, what is the role of marketing and sales? Who do you want to target? What do they want to hear? Use blogs, wikis, and other means to spread the word; however, don't hand over your twitter keys to your PR folks. In old-fashioned Marketing, 50% of the budget went to waste, but no one knew which 50%. New-age Marketing is ,"How do I fill the sales pipeline?" The balance of power has shifted from the vendor to the customer. And, a subscription model changes the very nature of selling.

Although it is broken, the Internet is probably the most stable thing we have invented. There is still room for improvement and, as Einstein noted, "The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking that created them." We still can't teach a computer how to recognize a flower!

There are seven secrets to building a successful open-source community.
1. There is no such thing as a quick-return formula; growing pains help build the community.
2. Software **architecture** is key.
   a. Use a modular design
   b. Centralize the source code.
   c. If the design is not modular, just say 'No'.
3. Build a robust **ecosystem**. Everybody is equal, don't build hierarchies. Screw roadmaps because they kill innovation. That doesn't mean open source has no innovation. Make *trust* the currency of your transaction.
4. Develop a rich set of **tools**.
   a. Adoption—easy integration, RSS feeds…
   b. Identity—blogs, wikis…
   c. Group support
   d. Conversations
   e. Development
5. Have a **mission**. Find a high ground, "Don't chase the paper, chase the dream." Whatever you're thinking, think bigger.
6. **Culture** Be open to change and persuasion.
7. **Leadership** There is a difference between letting people what to do and creating an environment. Replace planning with coordination, says Clay Shirky. Join your own community; real communities are always out of control.