Rebuilding Open Source Governance

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Scope of Open Source Governance

Michel Ruffin, "Standardizing Open Source Governance Processes",
Standards for Free and Open-Source Software Governance Workshop 2013
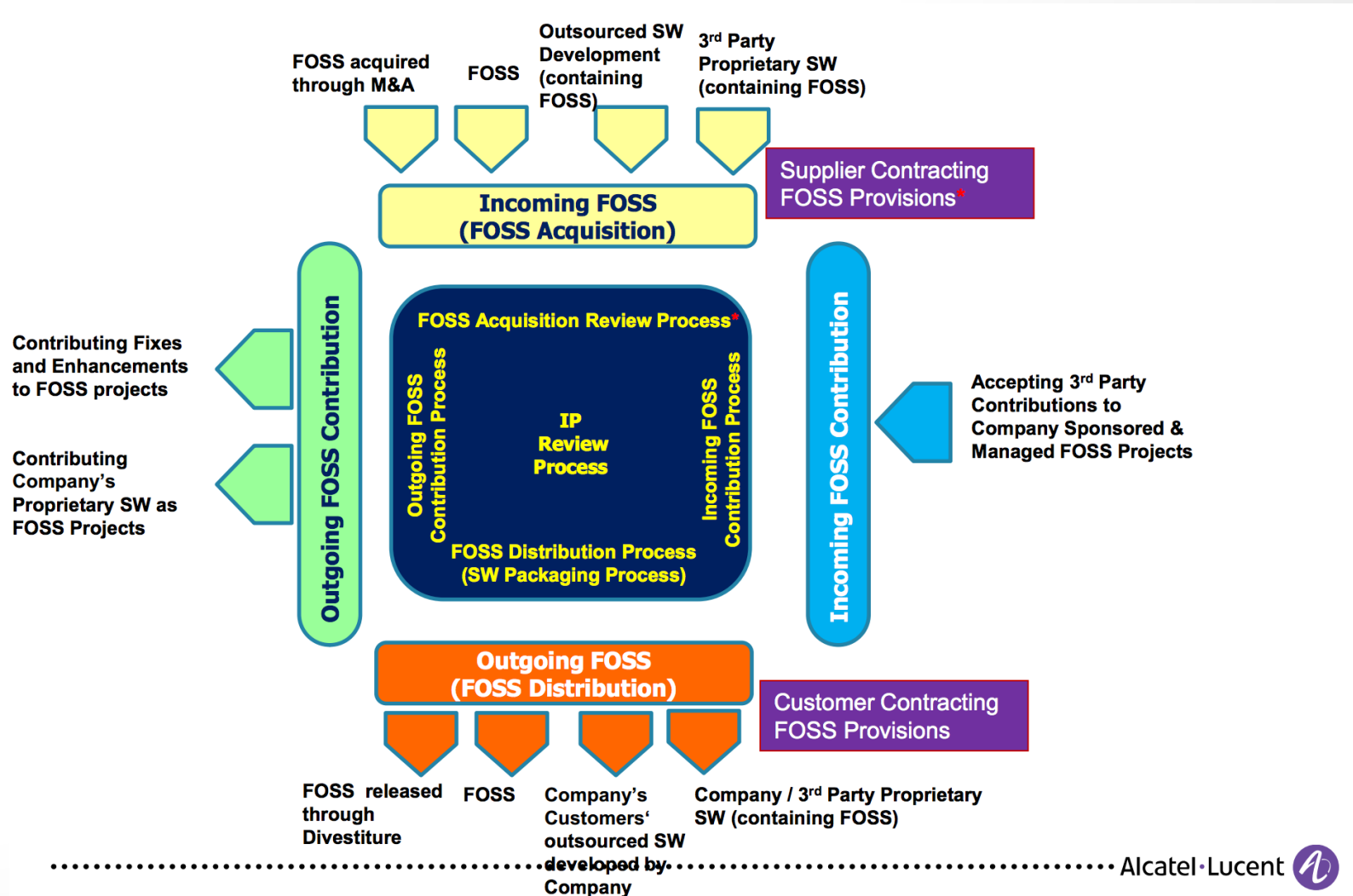
Challenges in Open Source Governance

- Scalability

- Unpredictability in human behavior

- Environmental changes

Scalability (1)

- Increase in # of used open source projects
  - Reducing cost of analyzing open source software
  - Reducing cost of distributing open source software notice
  - Reducing redundant analysis of open source software
  - Dealing with the derived software/models
  - Tracking source of original open source software
  - Efficiently responding to internal questions and requests
  - Reducing fragmentation
  - Reducing redundant development efforts

Scalability (2)

- Increase in # of outside source code requests & claims
  - Scalable distribution methods: E-mail → Web site
  - Reducing cost of maintaining web site

- Increase in # of 3rd party vendor software
  - Evaluating and validating 3rd party software
  - Analyzing open source compliance of 3rd party vendor software

Unpredictability in Human Behavior

- Raising awareness

- Preventing human error
  - Enforcing open source compliance process

- Effective communication among lawyers, patent experts and developers

Environmental changes

- Organizational changes

- Changes of management

- Changes in common beliefs

- New Licenses

- Advancements in technology and media

Limitation of Greedy Strategy

- Catching up with new versions of open source software
- Managing in-house patches
- Getting expertise in open source software
- Improving quality of customized open source software
- Influencing open source community

→ Open source contribution

Issues with Open Source Contribution

- Establishing open source review process
  - License issues
  - Patent issues
  - Legal issues
  - Value of contribution
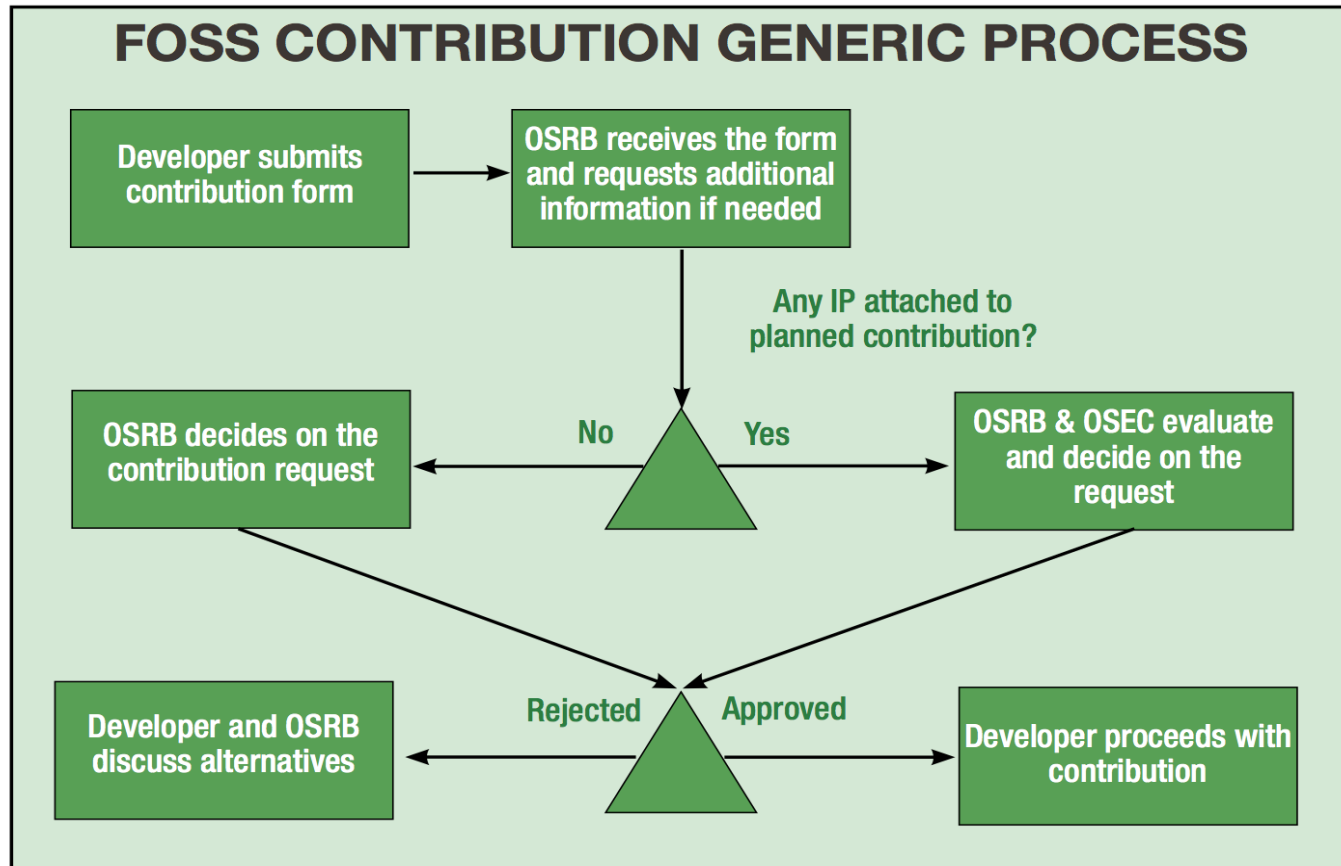
Contribution Process Example

Figure 1: Generic process of managing the Contribution Form from submission to approval.

OSEC (Open Source Executive Committee)

OSRB (Open Source Review Board)

Contribution Form Example

1. Requestor Information

This section provides information about the individual sending the request to contribute or start a new FOSS project. If this were an electronic form available on the company's web site, the requestor's information would be automatically retrieved from the company's LDAP server upon login to the site.

Name:
Email:
Corporate ID:
Phone:
Department:
Manager:

2. Product/Component Information

If the contribution is already used or planned to be used in a product, then provide basic information about that product.

Product/Component name:
Product/Component version:
Product/Component release number in which the contribution was introduced:
Architect Name of the Product/Component:

3. Scope of Participation

This section details the scope of participation in an existing FOSS project or the intention to start a new FOSS project.

- Participating in an existing FOSS project:
  - Bug fixes
  - Feature improvements
  - New features implementation
  - Reference implementation to a standard
    - Specify:
      - Standard name:
      - Standard web site:
      - Standard version:
  - Other [Explain]
- Creating a new FOSS project

4. FOSS Project and Software Information

This section provides basic information about the existing FOSS project or the new project to be launched.

Project name:
Version number:
Website:
Software category:
- Operating system
- System software / Libraries
- Driver
- Middleware
- Build tools
- User Interface

5. License of the FOSS Project

This section provides basic information about the software license. You need to include a copy of the license text into Appendix A.

License name:
License version:
License web site:
Rationale for selecting this license (applicable only for new projects):

6. Justification for FOSS Project Participation

What are you planning to contribute? Provide a detailed description of the contribution.
What are the benefits for making the stated contributions?
What are the consequences of not participating in the project?

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If this form were electronic, at the end of question 6, the requestor should be able to click "Submit" to send in the request to the company's Open Source Review Board (OSRB) for evaluation and approval.

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7. OSRB Approval (Section to be completed by OSRB)

☐ Yes   ☐ No   ☐ Conditional

OSRB Approval Commentary:
Electronic signature:
Date:

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If this form were electronic, after the OSRB approval, an automatic email would be sent to the members of the Open Source Executive Committee (OSEC) or to the VP of the Department or Organization for their approval.

Some companies have an OSEC whose approval is required when any given planned contribution include company IP.

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8. Organizational / OSEC Approval

OSEC Chair Name:
Electronic Signature:
Date:

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Life's Good

Maintaining Open Source Projects

- Building ecosystem of developers

- Preventing fragmentation

- Holding ownership of the open source project

Conclusions

- Open source governance is mainly about management of complexity and change

- Integration with the software development process and practice is desirable

- Balance between tight process and efficiency is needed