

Open Source Software and Africa.

As posted by: *Wall Street Journal*

As an advocate for free, open-source software, I have run into Microsoft's "battles" many times, and your article ("Microsoft Battles Low-Cost Rival for Africa," page one, Oct. 28) made visible many of the issues around money-poor African nations being wooed by a large, powerful monopoly.



However, your article doesn't go into the deeper value of using FOSS in Africa. Because FOSS supplies the source code for the software used, end users have the choice of using the software as it exists on the Internet or changing the software to meet their needs. Getting security fixes for software running on older systems (a natural need when you make \$3 a day), changing the software to support your native language (not everyone speaks English), getting ancient peripherals to work long after the vendor lost interest in them (usually less than a year after the product ships), and developing a software economy in their own economic terms (creating high-tech jobs inside of their countries, instead of sending the money out of their countries) are all things that should be considered in the argument of free versus closed-source software.

The public should ask how a company like Microsoft can continue to justify to their shareholders creating needed changes to their software for people who can't pay for those changes? The answer is that they can't justify it. In the future they will have to either start charging for the software on which people are now dependent or abandon the effort.

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An aside for consideration are the the distinct segments within the field of Search Engine Optimization. Clarification and separation are required in terms of paid search marketing, sponsored search advertising, pay per click, email marketing (spam), and the foundation of strategic internet marketing: Organic Search Engine Optimization (Organic SEO) are also referred to as Natural Search Engine Optimization (Natural SEO).

Key Organic Search Engine Optimization Facts:

- Keyword search is the 2nd most popular online activity, rapidly approaching the popularity of email retrieval.
- 90% of all new website visitors are delivered by a major search engine and/or directory.
- 98% of all keyword search activity results are powered by the big 4 search engines: Google, Yahoo, MSN and AOL.
- Keyword search results on Google, Yahoo, MSN and AOL are determined by search engine spiders and/or robot crawlers.
- Recent internet marketing studies confirm that keyword searchers prefer the organic results at a 6 to 1 ratio vs. pay-per-click sponsored search advertising listings.

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