

# Making a Career out of Open Source



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**PERCONA**  
UNIVERSITY



**FerretDB**



**PERCONA**



**Open Source  
Software  
Founders ?**

**Open Source  
Software  
Contributors ?**

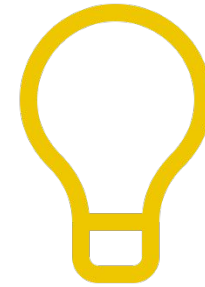
**Aspiring to be  
ones ?**

**Who are you ?**

# Premise of this talk



**You Love Open Source**



**You want to make a living  
doing what you love**

What is your  
Passion ?

Open Source in general

Certain “space”

Certain Open Source Project

# Basic Choices



**FREELANCE**



**GET A JOB**



**START A  
COMPANY**

# Picking “space” and a Core Project



**Hot project in hot space  
generates a lot of opportunities**



**They may, or may not last**

Bet on a  
Winner

**“Winner Takes it All”**

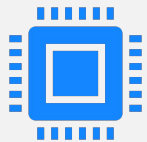
**May be more than one, but  
small number of Technologies**



**Core Project Creates “ecosystem”**



**Opportunity for many smaller projects to thrive**



**Think Linux, PostgreSQL, Hadoop, Kubernetes ecosystems**

**Ecosystem**



Niche in  
Thriving  
Ecosystem

**Can be great focus  
for Independent  
Developer**

# Open Source Project vs Product

Any code on Github can be called Open Source Project

Many Projects are focused on their Developer(s)

Developer writes what he feels that

May not care about documentation, compatibility, QA

May not care about user and customer support



**Clear Licensing**



**Lifecycle, Compatibility Promise, Upgrades**



**Builds/Packages**



**Documentation**



**Free or Commercial Support, Bug/Issue Handling**



**Security Issues Remediation**



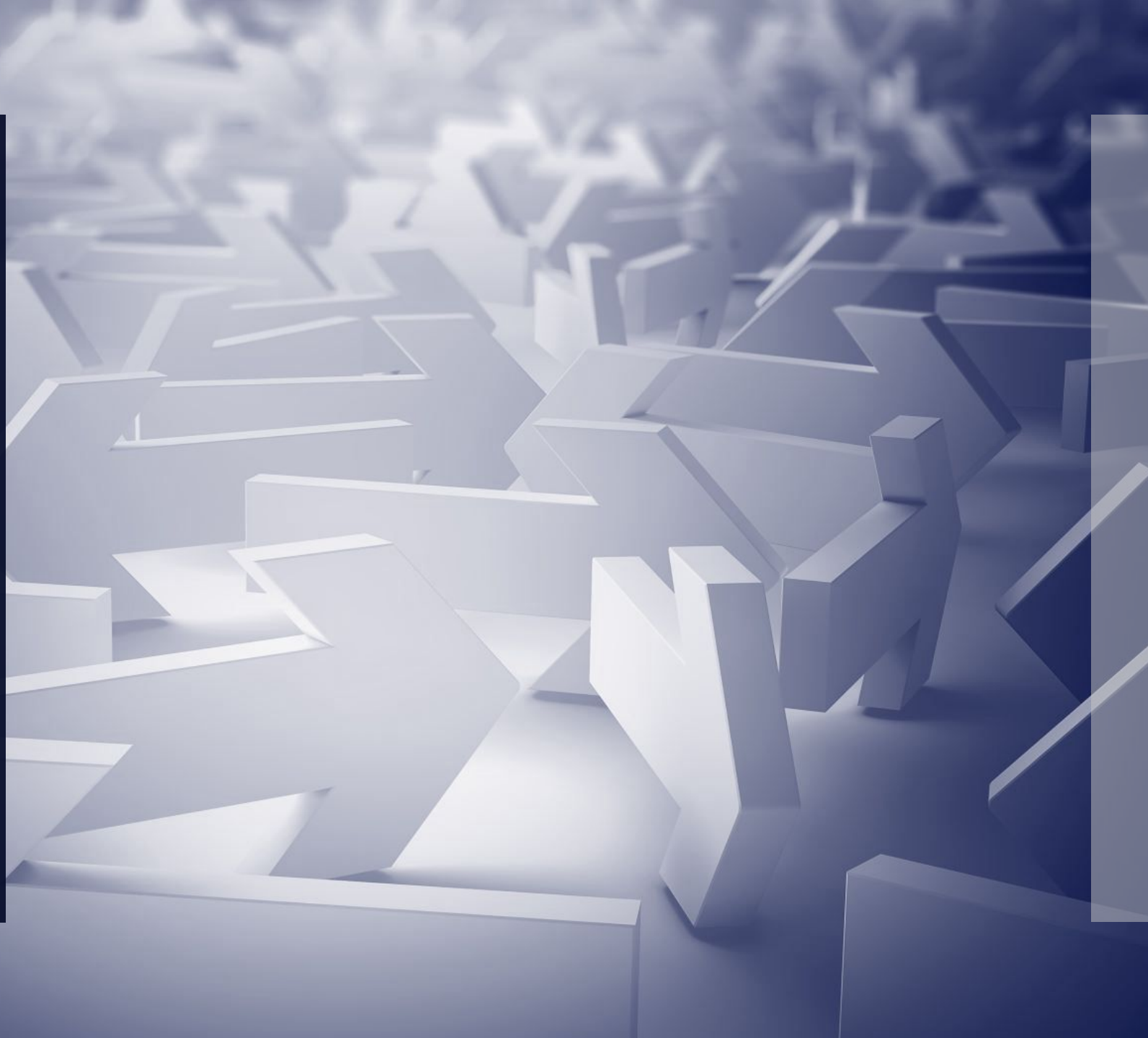
**Quality Assurance**

**Product –  
Commitment  
to Users and  
Customers**

What is your  
interest ?

**Not Every developer  
interested in the  
everything it takes to  
do the product**

# Looking into the Choices





**Easy to get started**



**Chose what projects  
to take**



**Can try part time  
while having other  
job**



**Can start our own  
project paid by  
customers**



**Can develop long  
term customers and  
make a good living**

## Freelance – Positives

**Actually Writing  
Code may be small  
part**

**Finding Customers,  
Negotiating,  
Collecting, Admin  
takes a lot of time**

**Many small  
customers – high  
overhead one large  
customer – risky**

**Burnout is common**

## **Freelance – Negatives**



**Company Using Open  
Source Software**



**Company releasing Internal  
Software as OpenSource**



**Company Building Open  
Source Software Product**

**Take a Job**



**Widest Choice of  
Companies**

**May be able to  
contribute some  
code to Open  
Source Projects**

**Contribution  
Policies vastly  
different between  
companies**

**Ask on the  
interview if it is  
important for you**

**Some companies  
may restrict  
contribution even  
in your free time**

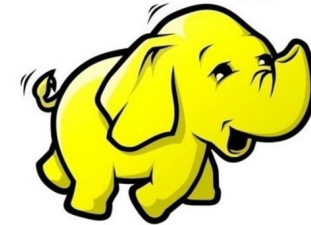
**Contribute to the  
projects with Bugs  
Reports,  
Documentation etc**

# Company Using Open Source Software



RocksDB

*hadoop*



ClickHouse



Prometheus

Company Releasing Internal Open Source

**Contribute Code  
to Open Source  
Project**

**Often Focus is  
Internal  
Customers**

**Community  
Participation and  
Personal Brand  
Development**

**Start the  
Company based  
on such product  
in the future**

**Company Releasing Internal Open Source**



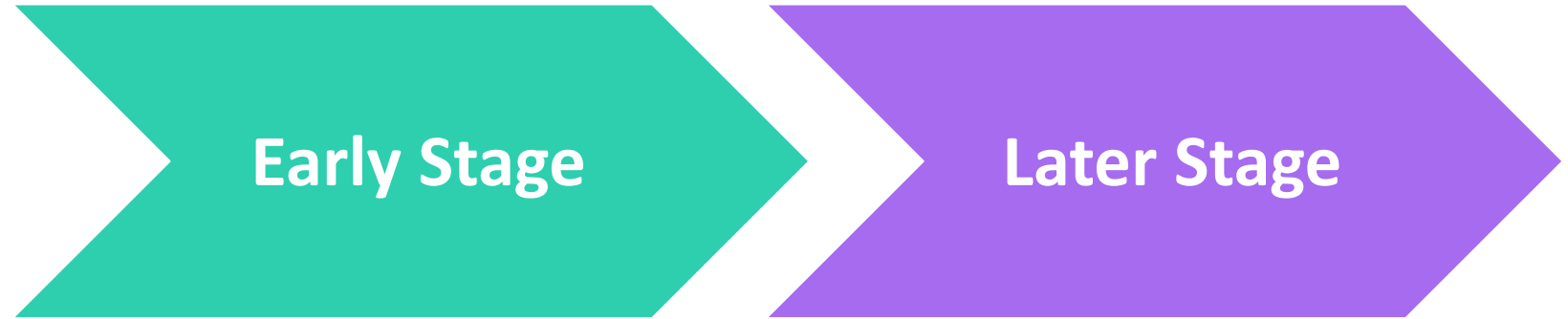
**Focus on building Open Source or  
somewhat Open Source Software**



**Customer Focus in the Product**

**Company Building Open Source Product**

# Company Stage

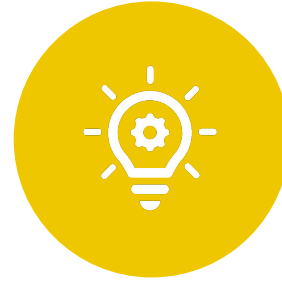


- Be at the Project Roots
- More Influence
- More Risk
- Variety of Roles
- Growth Potential
- Equity

- Stability
- Clear Processes
- Less Influence
- More Corporate



**Not just Engineering Skills  
needed!**



**Are you Entrepreneur ?**



**Do you have Business  
Minded Co-Founder ?**



**Marketing and Selling is a  
hard job which Engineers  
often do not appreciate**

# Start Your Own Company

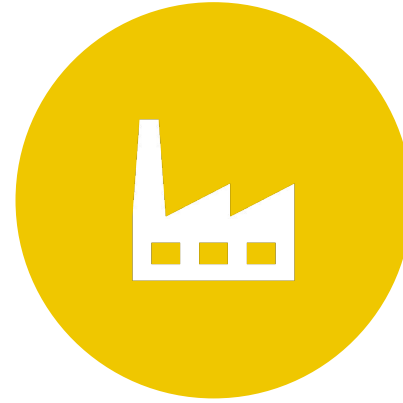
Do you need  
to be Project  
Founder ?

**It helps a lot but it is not a  
requirement**

**RedisLabs great example of  
company which was NOT  
started by Redis founder**



**SERVICES COMPANY**



**PRODUCT COMPANY**

Basic Choices



Can grow out of  
individual freelancing

Can be relatively easy to  
bootstrap

Easy to maintain  
Independence/Complete  
Control

Low Margin Quite  
Competitive Business

Can be great Lifestyle  
company but unlikely \$1B  
“exit”

# Services Company

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**Build Product around Open Source Project**

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**Funding (Often Venture Capital) is typically required**

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**Products are often only partially Open Source**

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**If Successful Very large exits are possible**

Product Company

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**Elastic - \$6B**

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**Cloudera - \$2.9B**

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**MongoDB - \$7.2B**

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**Pivotal - \$4.9B**

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**RedHat sold to IBM for \$34B**

**Current Company Market Capitalization**

Whatever Path  
you Chose

**Invest in Building  
Personal Brand**

## Produce Content

- Blog ? Podcast ? YouTube Channel

## Participate In Community

- IRC/Slack Channels, Forums, Conferences

## Write a Book

- Even self published book looks really good

## Write Some Code

- Maintain Great GitHub Profile

## Get Social

- Develop Offline Network, Twitter Following, LinkedIn Connections

Some Ideas

# Thank you, Let's Connect!

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/peterzaitsev/>

<https://twitter.com/PeterZaitsev>

<http://www.peterzaitsev.com>