Making a Career out of Open Source

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Open Source Software Founders ?

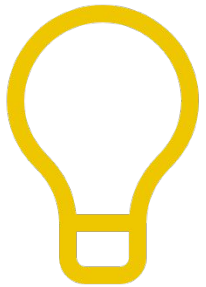
Open Source Software Contributors ?

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

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What is your Passion ?

- Open Source in general
- Certain “space”
- Certain Open Source Project

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Basic Choices

FREELANCE

GET A JOB

START A COMPANY

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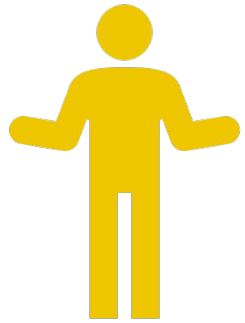
Picking “space” and a Core Project

Hot project in hot space generates a lot of opportunities



They may, or may not last

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Bet on a Winner

“Winner Takes it All”

May be more than one, but small number of Technologies

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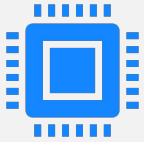
Ecosystem

Core Project Creates “ecosystem”

Opportunity for many smaller projects to thrive



Think Linux, PostgreSQL, Hadoop, Kubernetes ecosystems

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

Product – Commitment to Users and Customers

- Clear Licensing
- Lifecycle, Compatibility Promise, Upgrades
- Builds/Packages
- Documentation
- Free or Commercial Support, Bug/Issue Handling
- Security Issues Remediation
- Quality Assurance

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

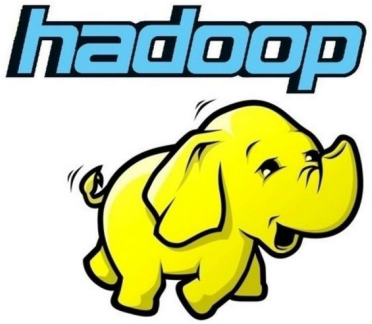
Ask on the interview if it is important for you

Some companies may restrict contribution even in your free time

Contribute to the projects with Bugs Reports, Documentation etc

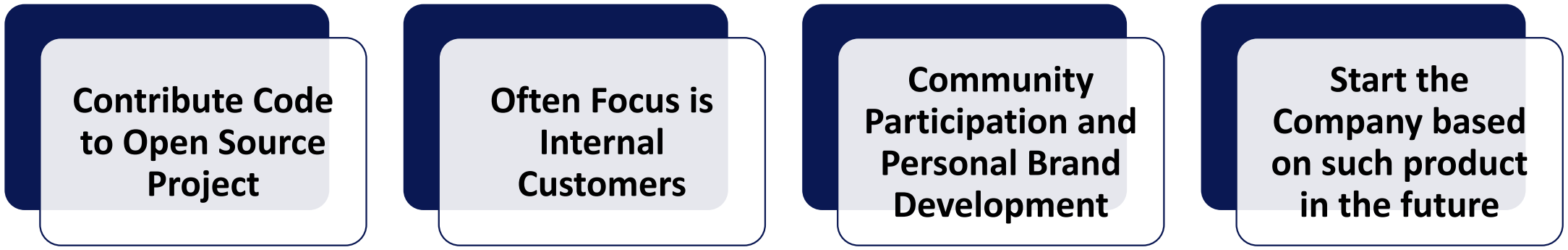
Company Using Open Source Software

RocksDB



ClickHouse

Company Releasing Internal Open Source



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

Early Stage

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

Later Stage

- Stability
- Clear Processes
- Less Influence
- More Corporate

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Not just Engineering Skills needed!

Are you Entrepreneur ?

Do you have Business Minded Co-Founder ?

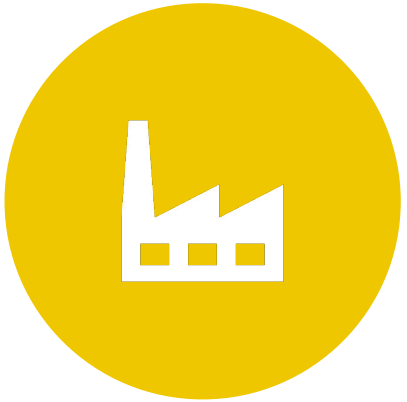
Marketing and Selling is a hard job which Engineers often do not appreciate

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

Build Product around Open Source Project

Funding (Often Venture Capital) is typically required

Products are often only partially Open Source

If Successful Very large exits are possible

Product Company

Elastic - $7.9B

Couchbase - $0.7B

MongoDB - $24.8B

Gitlab - $6.9B

RedHat sold to IBM for $34B

Current Company Market Capitalization

Whatever Path you Chose

Invest in Building Personal Brand

Some Ideas

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

Thank you, Let's Connect!

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