

Certified Open™ — managing the risk of lock-in

Open Standards; Open Competition; No Constraints.

In defining your IT infrastructure – hardware, software and applications – one of your key objectives is to create the maximum amount of agility in terms of future procurement decisions.

The problem is, the use of proprietary (as opposed to open) standards compromises this objective. This is the main factor, far more than any other, that creates risk – and the exposure to lock-in.

In the public sector, Transformational Government, and the creation of a citizen-focused, shared services environment, implies change in the IT infrastructure. And the fact that lock-in may already exist will inhibit the effectiveness and the benefits to be gained from transformation.

In the private sector, speed of response to the needs of the business, and the constant pressure on cost, imposes frequent refresh of technology and adoption of innovative new approaches.

The problem has been that there is no way to assess the exposure to the risk of lock-in – until now.

Certified Open supports an organisation to develop all aspects of an open environment. Both by encouraging a mix and match of proprietary and Open Source Software, and by ensuring both internal and supplier staff have the level of skills necessary.

Certified Open creates the framework that allows your suppliers to identify the level of openness of their products, services and staff. And by insisting that your solution suppliers assess against this framework, you will be able to identify the risk of lock-in before you undertake the key tasks of re-architecting your infrastructure to the demands of transformational government.

Certified Open provides a fully graded “kitemark” of openness; and that, in turn, allows you to identify current exposure as well as minimising the risk of exposure in the future. And that, after all, is the hallmark of risk management – to identify the risk before it occurs!

Managing the Risks of Lock-in

1. **Portfolio Analysis** – ensure you have a comprehensive register of all of the elements within your environment which constitute risk of lock-in.
2. **Assess Openness** – challenge the suppliers of each element to provide you with a statement of openness based on **Certified Open's** Products & Services Framework.
3. **Validate Responses** – review the suppliers against the Open Forum's directory on the Open Forum website.
4. **Identify Problem Areas** – identify those areas that constitute risk within the **Certified Open** Framework.
5. **Risk Mitigation** – press the suppliers that constitute risk to provide evidence of their proposals to mitigate the risk they represent.

Who we are

Certified Open™ has been developed by OpenForum Europe and the Institute of IT Training with the support of both Open Source Academy the elnnovations project funded by the UK Government and TOF-E, the consortium project part funded under the European Commission's eTEN programme.



TOF-E

The Open Forum Europe is the consortium project within the eTEN European Commission programme. The consortium members are from UK, Ireland and Denmark and the project is due to complete in May 2007 after completion of full market trials in each of the three countries. Open Forum is the name under which the service is planned to go live, at which point the service will expand to a pan European capability.

'Open Forum' is a commercial electronic portal and the framework of services and tools offered by the 'Open Forum' will assist SMEs, Enterprises and the Public Sector in the pragmatic adoption and support of OSS by intermediating between business users and the OSS developers, integrators and support community across Europe.

www.theopenforumeurope.co.uk

Openforum europe

open, competitive choice for IT users

OFE

OpenForum Europe (OFE) is not-for-profit, independent of any organisation and was launched in March 2002 to accelerate, broaden and strengthen the use of OSS in business and government. OFE pursues the vision of an open, competitive European IT market by 2010 in line with the European Commission i2010 Strategy with the mission of facilitating open competitive choice for IT users. OFE is supported by major IT suppliers and works closely with the European Commission and National Governments both direct and via National Associates. OFE is project leader for the TOF-E project.

www.openforumeurope.org

For further information visit the web site or call us on the number below

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**Certified
Open™**



Certified Open™

- Open Competitive Choice
- Free of Lock-In
- Products, Services and Skills
- Enabling Innovation

Achieving IT effectiveness



Products & Services Framework

Certified Open™ provides a self-certified framework within which products can be evaluated in terms of the amount of lock-in that they incur when deployed by users. The framework is intended to be consistent across a range of products and is designed from the users' not the suppliers' point of view. Within the context of Certified Open, the term 'open' can be taken to mean

- Freedom from vendor lock-in
- Openness to substitution by competing products

Lock-in to a product can occur in many ways. This framework sets out to clarify the obvious forms of lock-in that occur via technical and commercial issues e.g.

- Dependence on undocumented or proprietary protocols
- Dependence on undocumented or proprietary data formats
- Licensing terms that preclude the use of alternative products
- Reliance on extensions to standards
- The use of 'standards' that are based on patents or other forms of restriction
- Restrictive licensing or marketing agreements

The assessment framework requires evaluation of the product across the following domains:-

Client View - Describes the way in which the end-user interacts with the product.

Software View - Broad, covering both software as an entity and as a component.

Hardware View - describes the physical devices associated with the product.

Data View - The data created, used or stored by the product.

Business View - Recognises that lock-in is not only a technical matter.

Each product or service is evaluated and given an appropriate (gold/ silver/ bronze) certificate.

The program offers a strong value proposition to each of the key stakeholders:-

Corporate Organisations - the ability to innovate, maximise delivery of user services, and select effective partners
SMEs - maximise cost effective use of IT

Purchasing Managers - the ability to specify and objectively assess the openness of products and services

IT Managers - continue to deliver effective, efficient and innovative IT solutions

Solution Partners - differentiation based on the degree of openness achieved by the product or service; in addition, a tool to guide developments by accredited partners

Consultancies - independent audit path for consultancy advice



Skills

Skills development is managed by **Certified Open SkillsTracker** – a web-based skills assessment tool. This is a self-assessment process with rigour provided by the process of:-

- Mapping certifications and qualifications to the framework;
- Mapping courses to the framework; and
- Providing a methodology for manager sign-off for work-place developed skills.

Access to the **Certified Open SkillsTracker** is secure and is made via the log-on screen. There is a new user log-in facility for IT Professionals to set up their record. The core functionality of the SkillsTracker can be seen from the log-in screen; it covers:-

- **Your Details** – personal details and password;
- **Assess Skills** – the evidence of skills to a detailed level of granularity;

- **Skills Profile** – this is the hard copy of the skills profile showing validation;
- **Development Report** – guidance in terms of certificates and courses relevant to career development.
- **Guest Tickets** – controlled access to the individual's e-skills portfolio.

The following Specialisations are included within this Competency Framework:-

- Operating Environment
- Interoperability
- Networking
- Hardware
- Utilities
- Applications
- Business management
- Database management
- Development
- Security
- Community Issues
- Migration

The program is fully metrics based and provides evidence of:-

- Competence
- Ability
- Experience

The program offers a strong value proposition to each of the key stakeholders:-

- **Public Authorities** – readily available pool of validated skills and resources – both internal and external; basis for establishing IT Professionalism within the Open Source Software environment.
- **Procurement** – sound basis for evaluating tenders that require Open Source Software skills.
- **Hiring Managers** – assurance that claimed skill sets are realistic.
- **External Service Providers** – differentiation based on quality of staff and demonstrable support for the community; in addition, clear channel management benefits in terms of skills management.
- **Open Source Product Providers** – the ability to source projects and programs with highly skilled staff.
- **Training/Certification Providers** – a driver for training and certification – it overcomes the key objection that IT Professionals don't know what they don't know!
- **IT Professionals** – demonstrate their ability within an industry recognised competency framework, providing clear career development goals, and providing an “outputs-based” CPD record of value to the community.
- **Enterprise Computing** – full realisation of the benefits of Open Source Software.

Certified Open™ - Governance

The **Certified Open** frameworks are managed by the **Certified Open** Council that oversees both the frameworks and the appeals process. All organisations and individuals using the **Certified Open** standards accept the **Certified Open** Code of Conduct and the Appeals process.

Certified Open is a strong guide to openness; but the process is not a guarantee, and the nature of the agreement between the client and the provider is unchanged as a result of the **Certified Open** program. Nevertheless, there is a rigorous process if untrue claims are found to have been made. In the first instance, any individual or organisation is able to appeal to the program administrators for a review of any claim that either a product or a service fails to achieve the certified open status claimed by the product/ service owner, or that an individual does not possess the skills they claim.

An initial review of the case will establish whether there is a case to answer. If there is, then the formal appeals process will come into effect.

In the event that an appeal is upheld, all of the assessments completed by the organisation or individual will be treated as suspect and will be downgraded. The organisation or individual will be required to submit to witnessed assessments in order to re-join the program.

The Certified Open web site will maintain an alert system so that any individual within one of the relevant OSA Communities of Practice may indicate a cause for concern and the basis of that concern; this will enable all organisations participating in the program to have an “early warning system” of any potential infringements or upcoming issues.

- Open Governance Process to maintain the currency and relevance of the frameworks.
- Comprehensive Code of Conduct under which all participants work with the **Certified Open** program.
- Rigorous Appeals Process to ensure that claims are tested and realistic.
- Engaging Community of Practice involvement to ensure evolution of the program
- Effective Metrics to provide both measurability and granularity within a complex area of technology

