Examples of Software Communities

Summary

This is a short historical summary how small software communities have shaped the development of the IT industry.

Software Communities

The first personal computers became available in the early 1970's. My first personal computer at the university was a HP model with a 80 character display and a built in printer - good enough to build and run simple Basic programs. The processor was great and able to sort a list with 200 students in half an hour - quite an achievement in those days. At least you had to wait in line with your punch cards!

The introduction of the **IBM PC** and the DOS operating system by **Microsoft** in 1981 revolutionized the way how people were working with a computer. Hardware design and manufacturing still needed a lot of investment but software had been created by a community of people working together much like the LINUX community is working together today. Vision, innovation, skill and cooperation of individuals can contribute to the evolution of software industry much more than in any other industry.

The introduction of a graphical user interface (GUI) with **Windows** 1.0 in 1985 and its widespread use with Windows 3.0 starting in 1990 made computers accessible for untrained people. GUI development again was driven by early development at **Xerox Parc, Apple Max OS, (Lisa),** Amiga and others.

Local team support for non computer specialists was another key success factor for the Windows operating system. People started to cooperate using their PC in small local teams, sharing applications and data. In contrast to the early days of computing, people without deep computing know how could use the systems no

The World Wide Web community

The roots of the world wide web go back to the early 1970s. The WWW ecosystem again was created by communities working together and not by companies inventing and planning products. Therefore the web is based on open standards and stays so although various companies try to get control of key elements, e.g. the browser, without lasting success. The WWW community is addressing problems bottom up and is organized pretty well to establish proposed standards in the IT industry.

There are numerous other IT communities like LINUX or the Open Source Initiative driving technology through cooperation. Most of them are supported also by commercial companies which realize the value of standards for their customers and their own product development.

Communities built around commercial products very often emerge from the initial standards activity and are key to mid and long term evolution of the basic ideas and standards.

The Portal community

The portal community emerged out of the special portal interest group within Apache (Jetspeed). The work of this group was picked up initially by IBM and evolved in JSR 168 portlet standard, which is the dominant model for Java based portals today. Other standards like web services and Web Services Remote Portlet (WSRP), JSR170 for content repositories are also very important in the context of portals.

A large number of communities are engaged in applying the base technology in their special field of interest especially in the academic community, e.g. www.uportal.org , a community mainly supported by US universities but with a clear vision to create a platform for world wide cooperation in the academic world.

The portal standards have been embraced quickly by the industry looking for a system to aggregate information and applications from many sources in order to build complex value chains and employee information systems.

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