



OpenSkills

Business Overview

Friday, 30 September 2005

With

Caroline Thomas @ Starfish

Contents

Contents.....	1
OVERVIEW	2
FEEDBACK - KEY POSITIONS.....	3
1. WIIFM? – for current members.....	3
2. WIIFM? – for new Members	4
3. Aims	5
5. Stakeholders	6
6. MEMBER profiles.....	7
7. Other comments	7
JOBS – THE UNSPOKEN EXPECTATIONS.....	8
SWOT Analysis.....	9
OPEN SKILLS IN OCTOBER 2006	10
Scenario 1: Organic Growth	10
Scenario 2: Active Growth	11
Scenario 3: Rapid Growth.....	12
Summary.....	13



OVERVIEW

The purpose of this Report is to assist OpenSkills to plan its future growth pattern.

From previous discussions, the objectives of OpenSkills are to:

- Network - Provide a global network for the open-source community (and other professions & skills)
- Skills-base - Provide a transparent, peer-reviewed skills-base where employers can locate 'skills'

The purpose of this Report is to consider ways to grow the membership of OpenSkills.

- **Goal:** Increase membership of OpenSkills (from 50 members to millions over the years)
- **Why:** Why build membership
 - To build & increase the revenue stream (from membership fees)
 - To establish a critical mass of members - to ensure the long-term success of OpenSkills as **the** community of open-source (and other) experts
- **Keep to your Values:**
 - Attract 'good' Members
 - Attract the interest of recruiters
 - Retain the integrity of OS as a not-for profit, so don't accept ads etc.

Report Structure

This report aims to cover a lot of different areas. We have divided it into 4 sections:

1. In first section we review & cluster the general feedback of the key 'positions' around the table from the 2 Brainstorming sessions in September.
2. As the role of jobs was a major issue in the Brainstorming sessions, in the this second section, we have created some ideas and discussion points for an alternative recruitment system.
3. In the third section, we have analysed the feedback to draw up a snapshot of the OpenSkills business model, and created a SWOT analysis. This helps you assess the areas for growth and change. It also helps you consider the key values you want to retain.
4. In the fourth section, we assess the feedback, and suggest different Scenarios to reflect these opinions and choices.

Once the OpenSkills team have a chance to review this Report and assess the merits of the different scenarios, we will work on the different tactics to achieve the desired scenarios.

I hope you enjoy reading this report as much as I did in experiencing the passion and support for OpenSkills.

Best regards

Caroline Thomas

Director, Starfish Global Communications Pty Ltd.



FEEDBACK - KEY POSITIONS

1. WIIFM? – for current members

Why do people support OpenSkills?

What are your expectations?

- All Jobs! The prospect of gaining a lead to a job
- All Grow the Open Source community in Sydney
- AM I love open source and believe OSk is vital to support the community
- T Grow the Open Source community with 'good' people, but keep the balance of members that are not necessarily better than me!
- BB I created the software, I want it to work
- All Bypass the awful recruiters because Employers can see us directly (see Aims section) – but not become a recruiter

What are the Privileges of being a Member?

- MP An efficient alternative to the “Old Boys Network” – an entry into a bigger network
- JB/MP The opportunity for IT project managers (like us) to create the Dream Team for our Dream Job – by access to a larger peer-reviewed network
- JB “Your know **what** you know, we know **who** to know”
- DF OpenSource is a niche market – I want personal recommendations to hire my team
- MP The “key” becomes a hand-shake (a peer-endorsement)
- MP For me, OpenSkills is my ideal way of finding a job – through referrals, commendations, and it's a better alternative than touting my CV through 500 recruiters
- All Be part of the leading-edge of the Open Source community in Sydney
- PL Networking not work – I get to meet experts, and peer networks, good people who are useful to me, in a safe & friendly environment (not like a hard-sell networking function).
- BK It's a platform and a chat room for OpenSource networking. I expect OS to grow, use WIKI ideas

What are your outcomes?

- All No Jobs Yet! But the prospect remains
- DF I've had leads for 4 jobs
- PL I don't use SkillsBase for jobs, I've won jobs without providing a resume, just my networks and through OpenSkills referrals & networks
- MP I've had 2 leads from the Skillsbase which I've referred onto my employer to sell a service rather than my hours as a contractor
- All Good networks – meet peers, useful contacts

How did you first learn about OpenSkills?

- All Bruce Badger

How do you keep involved with OpenSkills?

- All Regular meetings, chatrooms



2. WIIFM? – for new Members

Why should new people join OpenSkills?

What are their motivations?

- All Jobs! The prospect of gaining a lead to a job
- AM We have the ‘bucket’ for a fishing recruiter (ie SolutionsFirst)
- All Networking for peer-review discussions
- All Open Source community - We are genuinely interested in OpenSource, in promoting it, in using it and the ensuring the success of it
- All The opportunity for IT project managers to create their Dream Team for their Dream Job
- MP The opportunity for visibility of your skills, it's a valid and valued outlet for OS recruiting

How do they find out about OpenSkills?

- All Referrals through our current members (it's not advertised, it's by invitation only at present)
- DF I recommend OSk when I need good code-cutters, current growth is by Osmosis
- PL I recommend OSk to ‘new’ LINUX people, so that they can pitch their new idea to an experienced community of ‘real people’ and get a ‘reality check’ on their idea
- AM I will recommend OSk to Wollongong students

What are the barriers to joining?

- T The unfriendly user-interface. It's too much effort to add your Resume to the skills base (so that it's easy for searchers). Make it easy to adapt the resumes ‘Resume Lite’
- RS The graphics need a better design and style sheet (less fonts, more design)
- JB The perception the Osk is only for ‘super-geeks’, when we need all layers of IT professionals for a Dream Team
- PL \$20 tariff & GPG key
- T GPG key is just too hard
- RS \$20 is not worth it (too much hassle for \$20 payment) change it to \$200

Why should they convert from being a "visitor" to a Member?

To be discussed in Scenarios



3. Aims

What are your goals & measures for success for OpenSkills?

What are the Open Skills values that mean most to you?

- All We can bypass the current system of proprietary software
- All We can bypass the current system of recruiters who mis-sell us, or take a cut for reselling our services
ie: *“put recruiters out of a job” “give recruiters the blow” “they are bottom-feeders”*
- All We survive by peer- reviewed networks and commendations
- All We are more than an ‘interest-group’
- All We are the source of your “Dream-Team”
- All But we are not recruiters
- All We want to be self-sustaining – not selling out
- All We want recognition for not ‘selling out’ like other communities in our market (eg, OSIA, SlashDot.org or even ACS)
- DF So we can introduce the benefits of open-source to big employers (eg. Banks)
- RS Is OSk scared of growth – beyond OS specialists?

Where are they based?

- All Sydney as a priority, but want to grow across the country and globally
Also have members in Lebanon and USA

How are they resourced?

Description:

- o OpenSkills is currently resourced on a pro-bono basis (free work, no salaries)
- o The aim is to be self-sustaining (covering the costs of developing the skillsbase, operating the OSk community, maintaining the system)
- o BB - Our tech. infrastructure has taken a lot of work & thought, to create this open community for members to reap the benefits.
- o Current costs are supposed to be covered by a minimal Membership Fee (currently \$20) and a 2% commission to the founders.

Future Aims

- All Are we selling ourselves (the network) or a service (jobs)?
- T Searches should be free
- PL Membership should be free – drop the barriers & it should grow quickly
Join the Dev list for free, encourage comments & feedback, spot trends
Have regular meetings
- BK Increase members – we’re based in Sydney so concentrate there first
- AM “If it’s not working – fix it”
- T We should be self-sustaining (cover our costs)
Have a Tiered membership
Keep quality people on the Membership (ie: peers, English speakers)



- BB A tiered approach may become bland
- MP Quality & quantity of contacts made – we want to retain quality
We're like 'internet-dating"
- RS Partnerships are needed (ie with recruiters) to rapidly gain job leads

How many Members should there be? By when?

- DF 1,000 members worldwide, critical mass
- T 2,000 members – best quality. I think 200 in 12 months is not practical
- JB Grow gradually over 6 months and see if our systems can manage it
- BB When the formula is right it will snowball to millions worldwide
- MP A network that creates 3 to 4 job contacts a day, worldwide
- AM "Shoot for the Stars" approach – aim for millions

5. Stakeholders

Who are the people who support or restrain OpenSkills?

Who is involved in the OpenSkills community?

Who are the stakeholders – your supporters, your competitors & facilitators?

Members

- All Members are the primary stakeholders of OpenSkills. They are our asset.
- All Can a Company be a member?

Recruiter members

- All Recruiters are essential stakeholders as they offer a key benefit (ie. jobs) to the Members listed on the skills-base
- All Recruiters can be recruitment firms & headhunters **or** a Company IT manager **or** other IT project managers & freelance contractors looking to resource projects
- MP I am not a contractor for hire, as recruiting enquires are referred to my employer Solutions First (who sell a service not a contractor)
- AM 30% of IT jobs are not advertised (ACS figs)
- MP The SkillsBase should have a 'flag" component – for recruiters to create wishlists and spotted lists
- RS In reality, recruiters give the job based on personality not skills ie: the fit.
- RS Most employers are lazy & want to be anonymous – so turn to recruiters to take the hassle out of advertising, interviewing, short-listing, rejecting, negotiating.
- All Recruiting Execs are perceived as bottom-feeders (except RS!)

Other Community Groups

- BB OSIA are the 'body-shop"
- UTS interest in OSkills to seek work experience
- All SLUG and OSIA have shared interests to OpenSkills members
- PL SLUG is not as good, its speeches do not focus on networks



6. MEMBER profiles

How do your Members currently participate in OpenSkills?

- ACTIVE MEMBERS?

All Attendance at Network functions – seem to be fun, popular useful for leads

T You have to want to join to have bothered to complete the entry system (Keys, adding to the skills base, trying to pay etc.)

- PASSIVE MEMBERS ?

All Cannot be bothered to enter Key

T Cannot be bothered to enter Full resume (so offer Resume Lite)

PL Just want free access to the Network, events and the Skills base

What skills & resources can they bring to the OpenSkills community?

All Jobs and leads

All Expertise – participate in chatrooms, software-dev

All Provide a visible community that promotes & builds the OpenSource sector

All Gain more Speakers – an alternative to ACS, SLUG & OSIA

7. Other comments

What other issues or opportunities are you interested in for OpenSkills?

- o We want membership to grow
- o We have struck a nerve (ie. the need to gain jobs and networks without the hardsell of recruiters or companies)
- o We want to break the barriers and create a real 'open' community
- o MP " This is a religion"



JOBS – THE UNSPOKEN EXPECTATIONS

Throughout the Brainstorming sessions, the major benefit of being part of OpenSkills emerged as “jobs”. However, jobs and recruiting are not seen as the major Aims of Open Skills.

Is there an opportunity to create an alternative to recruitment companies that both maintains the integrity of OpenSkills and provides ‘contributions’ to OpenSkills?

With this in mind, Starfish has developed some discussion points and ideas to address the ‘unspoken expectation’ of jobs.

“We are not a recruiter”

While OSk is not a recruiter, it can be a depository for posting job opportunities.

- This can start with internal pro-bono vacancies – eg. A designer for the front-end, a developer to set-up key access etc.
- This can start with small jobs to support the OpenSource community eg. Attend an event, speak at an event
- This can grow to include commercial postings from the wide body of recruiters (headhunters/ companies/ IT project managers/ Members)

The benefits of jobs

- OpenSkills delivers on its unspoken expectation of delivering job opportunities
- All visitors can ‘earn’ their membership by contributing to OpenSkills community
- You can control which jobs are posted

The recruitment process

Is there an opportunity to create an alternative to recruitment companies? Consider an environment where:

- jobs are posted free of charge on OpenSkills to Members and visitors
- people bid for the job directly to the recruiter

Retain the integrity of OpenSkills

- Anyone winning a job through OpenSkills has an obligation to contribute back to the OSk community (a ‘user-pays’ mentality for the community that creates an opportunity)
- They can contribute through a fee (eg. 2% of income)
- They can contribute through providing their software to the OpenSkills community
- In this way, anyone gaining success through OpenSkills ‘earns’ their membership through contributions.
- The use of feedback forms can ensure that ‘job-winners’ are transparent in giving contributions
- You can consider a Membership Status similar to Google (most popular sites get top listings) or eBay (most popular sellers gain star-status).
- And similarly, a peer- review of someone with no ‘stars’ or good feedback becomes excluded by their peers

Related benefits

- OpenSkills gains a self-sustaining momentum to build loyal and growing membership base
- OpenSkills can grow quickly and membership remains of a high quality
- OpenSkills builds a “Library” or depository of successful OpenSource software from its members



SWOT Analysis

This section identifies the areas to assess in growing the base of OpenSkills. We have analysed the feedback to draw up a snapshot of the OpenSkills business model, and created a SWOT analysis. This helps you assess the areas for growth and change. It also helps you consider the key values you want to retain.

Positives

Negatives

		Strengths	Weaknesses
<i>Internal Factors</i>		CEO centric – Bruce inspired growth to date	CEO centric – need to decentralise to Board and membership base to grow the community
		P2P - Great reputation for excellence in niche market	How to promote that reputation (media/ wider networks etc)
		Passion for 'Open-ness'	\$20 is perceived as a barrier
		Passion for Open Source	How to move beyond Open Source
		Energetic team of supporters	How do we measure if OS does create jobs opps or actual jobs
		The "key" becomes a hand-shake (a peer-endorsement)	Key is perceived as a barrier
		Low-cost entry	How to resource the overheads/ infrastructure/ organising if everything is free?
		Niche Market in OpenSource	How to move beyond Open Source?
		High-value membership	Can they afford more to underwrite the costs of the community?
		Have SolutionsFirst as the recruiting "bucket"	Need more 'job-success' stories
	Low-cost entry to a niche market	What is your distinct value?	
		Opportunities	Threats
<i>External Factors</i>		Dominate the Open Source market in Sydney, Aus. World	Your SkillsBase is mined/ copied and 'resold'
		Expand to other professions/skills	Resources to keep members informed & keen
		Expand to other regions/ global	WOM is not enough
		Gain more recruiters – you need them to gain jobs, they need you for a skillsbase, and they are free	Recruiters may be 'vampires' and steal your value
		Open Source is the next revolution (follows on from Microsoft, Internets, Googles & Ebays, Mobiles 3G etc)	Well resourced competitors – who want a skills-base to sell
		Open Skills has a value that it can charge for	Other P2P communities – eg. Yahoo Groups, MeetUp.com



OPEN SKILLS IN OCTOBER 2006

In this section, we have considered 3 growth scenarios for OpenSkills. It establishes:

- a. a Membership forecast to aim for,
- b. the opportunities for growth generated by this scenario
- c. the issues or restraints generated by this scenario

We are working on tactics for these scenarios, depending on your feedback as to which Scenario best fits your Board and Membership base.

Scenario 1: Organic Growth

Continue at present growth rate, by 'osmosis' or organic & passive introduction to new members. Minimal changes to Membership process

Forecasts:

- If every current member introduced 1 member, you would aim for 100 members in 12 months
- Stick to the OpenSkills niche market in Sydney/ NSW (potential 1,000 members)

Opportunities

- Retain high standards of membership – the classic "P2P" peer-to-peer community
- Promote the 'fishing' of Solutions First to demonstrate jobs won through OpenSkills
- Does this Scenario reach your goals of having the skills-base to create your "DreamTeam"?

Issues

- If only a few members are willing to participate in OpenSkills or make contributions to it, the peer-to-peer system may never become successful
- There may be insufficient members to reach the 'critical mass'
- Continuing issues with Key Access
- Does the cost of Membership cover the overheads?
- Danger that a low membership base will encourage defection to another group



Scenario 2: Active Growth

- Each current Member actively attracts a number of new members over 12 months (eg. 20)
- Concentrate on the core market of OpenSkills sector in Australia – to establish a success base to grow from.
- Review the Membership process to make it easier

Forecasts:

If every current member introduced 20 members (or 2 a month - exclude holidays), you would aim for 1,000 members in 12 months... and 5,000 in 2-3 years

Opportunities

- Retain high standards of referral-based membership – a real P2P community
- Begin to achieve the ‘critical-mass’ to attract Recruiters/ Jobs
- “Own” the open source community in Australia – as a base for global growth
- Establish a base of members that could achieve critical mass within 18 months
- Identify core groups for mass-membership (eg. Small Talk users etc)
- Identify countries or companies for mass-membership (eg. USA or Vodafone etc)
- Identify active members who will contribute to growth & success of the community
- Create a Tiered-System of “Founder members” and new members (dynamic system where founders can invite active members into the sanctum)
- This Scenario plays on the community theories of Milgram's "Six Degrees of Separation" and the Kevin Bacon game.

Issues

- Would the prospect of 1,000/ 2,000 / 5,000 members be too impersonal or hard to manage?
- How to & Who will handle the expectations of 1,000 members – what services do they need to participate/ contribute?
- Who will get recruiters looking at OSk?
- How to & Who will address issues to cover the costs of admin (membership processing) of a membership base of 1,000 – 5,000
- How to & Who will manage & motivate members on a monthly basis (eg. News/ events/ chat-rooms)
- Do you need rewards to encourage active membership and recruitment?
- How to & Who is measuring the success of OpenSkills ?
- How to & Who will address issues with GPG Key Access
- How to avoid the ‘them & us’ culture of a Tiered System
- You will need to create an ‘active members process’ or incentive to enable members to contribute to growth & success of the community



Scenario 3: Rapid Growth

- “Shoot for the Stars” approach
- Each current Member actively attracts a significant number of new members over 12 months (eg. 1,000 and aim for 10,000 to millions)
- OpenSkills identifies key ‘sales’ partners to build membership on their behalf – worldwide and across professions/ skills
- Open up Membership process to make it easier (eg. No fees, no peer review)

At first glance, this Scenario seems like a free-for-all. But here it’s worth looking at other global community models.

- eg. **eBay** is a global market that transcends national barriers in currencies, trade, cultures and trust. eBay makes its money on commission.
- eg. **Google** is a global search-engine that dominates 80% of searches in Australia and worldwide. It manages to host both independent searches (like OpenSkills now) and advertising. Google now makes its money on advertising and shares. It has built its market share through clever advertising – in the face of competition from significant media companies (Microsoft, Yahoo and Telstra-Sensis).
- Eg. **Netscape** was the premier internet-browser but failed to outspend the marketing prowess of Microsoft and others.
- Eg. **Napster** grew by having a real tangible benefit (free music downloads), but this pioneering success has been overtaken by legislation, new technology and the new era of IPOD alternatives

While there is no barrier to entry with OpenSkills, you can consider a Membership base where ‘status’ is earned through fees/ pro-bono work or software development etc.

Forecasts:

Aim for 10,000 members in 1 year globally in OpenSource community. Grow to millions.
Unlimited potential for other professional sectors

Opportunities

- Become the global skills-base community (eg. Imagine an “© OSKA.net – Open Skills Alliance”)
- “Own” the critical mass that will be of interest to Recruiters
- Bring together like-minded groups of not-for-profit communities of peers (eg: Oxfam has 60k supporters in Australia alone)
- Create a pyramid-scheme of global members (divided by skills-base/ or country / or employer/ or community group)
- Create a real ‘value’ to keep members loyal and growing



Issues

- What is the value to members of a free global skills base? Why would your members stick with OSk?
- What is the risk of increased Membership but decreased quality?
- What to do with members who take the benefits but don't contribute to OpenSkills community?
- How to & Who will handle well-resourced competitors (vampires!) who can extract the value from your skills-base, transfer them onto their database and cut your fees.
- How to & Who will handle the expectations of 10,000 members – what services do they need to participate/ contribute?
- How to & Who will recruit the Recruiters – without underwriting the recruiters' costs & rewards
- How to and Who will address issues with Key Access
- How to and Who will address issues to cover the costs of admin and motivating a membership base of thousands
- How do you measure the success of OpenSkills ?

The Big Issues

- If OpenSkills is a great success who shares the benefits?
- Who pays the costs?
- What is the exit strategy? What is the non-compete commitment?

Summary

So this document covers the multiple different positions of the Members of OpenSkills at the brainstorming. We have assessed and sorted the key areas of feedback into an ordered process, so you have a clear picture of the positions.

We have addressed the hot topic of jobs, and created some discussion points and ideas for you to review your preferences.

We have analysed the OpenSkills 'business' so you gain a one-page snapshot of the many opportunities and risks for future growth.

And finally, we have created 3 different Scenarios to address the potential growth of membership for OpenSkills. Each Scenario generates both opportunities plus resource-needs to make it happen.

For the Board and current membership, you need a chance to review this Report and assess the merits of the different scenarios, plus who is available to manage the growth of membership.

Come back to us with the Scenarios that best meet your needs and then we will work on the different tactics to achieve the desired scenarios. We will also draw-up a Success Criteria that you can review in Board meetings to check if you're on track.

Best regards
Caroline Thomas
Starfish Global Communications

