Open Source Q & A

Q: **What is Open Source?**
A: "Open Source" refers to a software distribution and licensing model where the underlying software code is available to be downloaded, edited, changed, and sometimes even redistributed. It is a popular model for certain types of software.

Q: **Is GxAlert or Aspect "Open Source" software?**
A: No. GxAlert was originally an Open Source product, but is no longer. Aspect is not open source.

Q: **Why aren't SystemOne products Open Source?**
A: Companies that employ the Open Source model allow their underlying code to be altered and distributed. They then charge customers for support in customizing the code, fixing bugs, and otherwise supporting the code. SystemOne feels that this model would result in worse performance of the software, and be more expensive for the customer. Most importantly, we worry about security issues. SystemOne exists to move, protect, and secure sensitive data, and we feel that we would not be able to guarantee the integrity of the data once our code was altered. For that reason, we do not make our code available.

Q: **But aren't Open Source solutions cheaper?**
A: Not necessarily. When you pay for SystemOne to deploy and support a data management solution, you are getting the world's experts in creating and supporting such tools. In choosing an Open Source solution, you must still pay someone to build, configure, deploy, debug, and support the software - and since there is no company standing behind the software, you have no one to turn to for assistance, upgrades, new features, etc.

As ICT-Works noted in a February, 2019 article: "…technologists experienced considerable configuration and maintenance costs when they used Open Source tools, which are often not fully understood by other stakeholders in the digital ecosystem. Technologists also worried about the quality of Open Source components as they are only updated and adapted when grant funding becomes available, resulting in extensive adjustments to build off of the software.

"Finally, there is a misguided perception that Open Source solutions have a magical support community that will swoop in and fix any issues for free, instantly. This is rarely the case. There are significant development costs to create and support an Open Source solution that can be compatible or even exceed proprietary license costs."

Q: **Does this mean that I am locked into GxAlert or Aspect?**
A: One well-founded fear in global health is that when a funding cycle ends, it will no longer be possible to pay for maintenance and support, and so all data will be "locked" into SystemOne's database and become unavailable. SystemOne is committed to the idea that your data belongs to you. In the event that a customer no longer wants to use one of our products, we will assist in downloading all data in a form that can be imported into another tool. For customers who wish to continue using one of our products without a contract, SystemOne will provide assistance to transition the customer from a hosted server to an in-country server if needed, and provide the last version of GxAlert for continued use.

Q: **Can SystemOne software be altered to suit my needs?**
A: Yes! SystemOne regularly customizes GxAlert and Aspect for customers as required. Because the customization is done by our own engineers, you can count on the quality of the end product, and rely on us to support it.

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