



Playing Field

Georg Greve

**Contents:**

Bad news

Proprietary default

Lack of understanding

Rebranding attempts

Rebranding attempts

SciFi Help!

Good news

Gartner to the rescue

Enlightenment?

Aim

Summary



# Free Software and the Playing Field

Georg Greve

October 4, 2010



Playing Field

Georg Greve

Contents:

Bad news

Proprietary default

Lack of understanding

Rebranding attempts

Rebranding attempts

SciFi Help!

Good news

Gartner to the rescue

Enlightenment?

Aim

Summary

## Bad news

Proprietary is still default...

### How is proprietary defaulted to?

- ▶ Procurement:  
Geared against service cost
- ▶ Accounting:  
Treats proprietary licenses as **assets**. (Doh!)
- ▶ Patents: (F)RAND, ART+P:  
Exclusion as principle
- ▶ Public R&D funding:  
Rules assume proprietary exploitation
- ▶ Where Free Software is funded:  
Projects go largely to same players  
(rules select “most capable paper-pushers”).



Playing Field

Georg Greve

Contents:

Bad news

Proprietary default

Lack of understanding

Rebranding attempts

Rebranding attempts

SciFi Help!

Good news

Gartner to the rescue

Enlightenment?

Aim

Summary

## Bad news

The majority still do not understand proprietary software

### What is proprietary?

- ▶ Exclusive control of proprietor
- ▶ Unless you're self reliant: proprietor != user
- ▶ **Common result:**
  - ▶ Networking effects establish dominant product
  - ▶ Only a **single** source (= monopoly)
  - ▶ Qualified decisions hard to impossible

**So how are people expected to understand the strategic advantages of Free Software?**

This is not a new question...



# Bad news

## Rebranding:

Playing Field

Georg Greve

### Contents:

#### Bad news

- Proprietary default
- Lack of understanding
- Rebranding attempts
- Rebranding attempts
- SciFi Help!

#### Good news

- Gartner to the rescue
- Enlightenment?
- Aim

#### Summary





Playing Field

Georg Greve

#### Contents:

##### Bad news

Proprietary default  
Lack of understanding  
Rebranding attempts  
Rebranding attempts  
SciFi Help!

##### Good news

Gartner to the rescue  
Enlightenment?  
Aim

##### Summary

## Bad news

Not everything that limps is a comparison – Angela Merkel

### Whatever happened to enlightened self-interest?

- ▶ “Fair Trade Software”
  - ▶ Pity with software developers as motivation?
- ▶ “Bio Software”
  - ▶ “No ants traumatized in production.”
  - ▶ “Bio” has its whole own set of issues...
- ▶ But we're better and cheaper!
  - ▶ **Really?**
  - ▶ And will we get the chance to prove it?



Playing Field

Georg Greve

#### Contents:

#### Bad news

- Proprietary default
- Lack of understanding
- Rebranding attempts
- Rebranding attempts
- SciFi Help!

#### Good news

- Gartner to the rescue
- Enlightenment?
- Aim

#### Summary

## Bad news

### An interpretation of SciFi?

*“Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.”*

– Arthur C. Clarke

*“Any sufficiently advanced corruption is indistinguishable from incompetence.”*

– Georg Greve

*Corollary: “With sufficient incompetence, the cost of corruption reaches zero.”*

– Reinhard Müller



## Good news

Gartner says it'll be alright...

Playing Field

Georg Greve

### Contents:

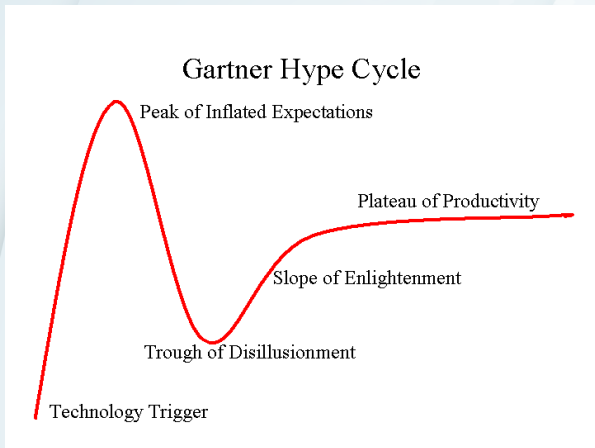
#### Bad news

- Proprietary default
- Lack of understanding
- Rebranding attempts
- Rebranding attempts
- SciFi Help!

#### Good news

- Gartner to the rescue
- Enlightenment?
- Aim

#### Summary





Playing Field

Georg Greve

Contents:

Bad news

Proprietary default  
Lack of understanding  
Rebranding attempts  
Rebranding attempts  
SciFi Help!

Good news

Gartner to the rescue  
Enlightenment?  
Aim

Summary

## Good news

Slope of Enlightenment? Use, study, share, improve!

*“Awareness, awareness, awareness...”*

– FSFE, c.a. 2001

### So what is a Free Software company?

- ▶ Freedom for the customer
- ▶ More than one vendor for deployed (!) solution
- ▶ Up- and downstream management
- ▶ Adds value for customers & community
- ▶ Differentiate on **quality & efficiency**, not control!





Playing Field

Georg Greve

Contents:

Bad news

Proprietary default  
Lack of understanding  
Rebranding attempts  
Rebranding attempts  
SciFi Help!

Good news

Gartner to the rescue  
Enlightenment?  
Aim

Summary

## Good news

If you aim for next village...

*"I want it all, I want it all,  
I want it all and I want it now."*

– Queen

### Aim higher

- ▶ Coexistence is reality, not goal.
- ▶ Spit out the proprietary Kool-Aid:
  - ▶ "technology neutral"
  - ▶ "Free Software is so much more favoured..."
  - ▶ "We just want to coexist..."
- ▶ If there's a cannibal in the room...  
...pull back your hand: Open Core.  
Gartner: *"The emperor's new clothes."*



Playing Field

Georg Greve

Contents:

Bad news

Proprietary default  
Lack of understanding  
Rebranding attempts  
Rebranding attempts  
SciFi Help!

Good news

Gartner to the rescue  
Enlightenment?  
Aim

Summary

## Summary

This playing field is level only to the very tilted

### Further reading

- ▶ “Time for the community to take charge of its brand”  
<http://blogs.fsfe.org/greve/?p=347>
- ▶ “What makes a Free Software company?”  
<http://blogs.fsfe.org/greve/?p=260>
- ▶ “Analysis on balance: Standardisation and Patents”  
<http://fsfe.org/projects/os/ps.en.html>

### Contact

- ▶ Kolab Systems AG  
<http://kolabsys.com>
- ▶ Georg C. F. Greve  
[greve@kolabsys.com](mailto:greve@kolabsys.com)