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Free/Libre/Open Source Software (FLOSS) : lessons for intellectual property rights management in a knowledge-based economy

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in a knowledge-based economy.

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Paper prepared for the DIME London Conference
Intellectual Property Rights for Business and Society
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Abstract : The aim of this paper is to focus on the emerging situation in which open source software is nowadays produced not only by individual developers but in a growing proportion by firms that hire programmers for their own objectives of development in open source or for contributing to open source projects in the context of dedicated communities. As commercial firms it is important to analyze how and why they are capable of drawing benefits from such involvement and their connected activities. Moreover, we want to stress the different types of business model these firms rely on and the possible evolution they are likely to follow in the near future. We shown how Open Source principles provide an alternative way of thinking and managing intellectual property that do not come up against the same problems but needs a radical change in the way of drawing commercial benefits from knowledge development tasks. Then we analyze the growing involvement of commercial actors by setting up a typology of the different business models that can be observed in the OS landscape, how they correspond to the different strategies of industrial firms according to the main characteristics of their technical skills and market position. Finally, in a conclusive section we will draw the main lessons of the FLOSS experience for a possible enlargement of those principles of IPR management and business to other knowledge based commercial activities.

Key-words : Open Source Software ; intellectual property rights; GPL ; knowledge sharing ;
entreprise strategy; business model; users; competition

JEL : L15, L86, O34