CMDBuild

The Experience of the City Hall of Udine (Italy)

CMDBuild is an open source software suited for configuration management purposes (CMDB - Configuration and Management DataBase).

The goal is to provide support for the whole management cycle for ICT assets, in order to know at any moment composition, deployment, use and update of them.

The system is able to manage, for example, hardware and software items, ICT services, documents resources, and also provides interfaces for other systems as Automatic Inventory (OCS Inventory NG), Workflow Engine (Enhydra Shark), Report Engine (JasperReports) and Document Management (Alfresco).

CMDBuild is very attractive for software features offered and for the ability to help the IT staff in reducing costs, improving at the same time the quality of ICT services deployed to the users.

CMDBuild is even more for the following reasons:

- it is derived from one of the best practice for the information systems management (ITIL), a sign of special attention just from the early stage of the project

- it is implemented using solid open source products (Java, Apache, Tomcat, etc)

- it uses a mode of development and management which in fact creates a collaborative development between a government body and market players.

For this last reason, the CMDBuild project was included in the CNIPA Open Source Observatory showcase:
http://www.osspa.cnipa.it/home/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=77&Itemid=36

On the development of collaborative arrangements, we talked with Dr. Antonio Scaramuzzi, CIO at the City Hall of Udine.

Dr. Scaramuzzi, can you describe the idea about software development for a government body that sees the direct involvement of the suppliers ?

The idea to make available the project results to the FLOSS community, dates back to the design of the repository CMDB, which began in 2005.

The many experiences in deploying software products released with open source licenses on the IT infrastructure (eg Apache, Samba, etc.), convinced us that a model of software development for the government providing a cooperative development, can be prosecuted in a win-win logic for both parties involved in the project.

The particular type of software license adopted since the born of the project (GPL) and the quality of the software implementation, did the rest. At this moment there are many experiences of adopting CMDBuild by other government bodies and by private companies. All these subjects started in developing software features to improve functionality and usability of CMDBuild; of course these new functionalities return immediately as common heritage for all users.

We have taken authority, as the commissioner, to maintain control of a general road map on the product development and on some strategic choices; however, all development activities are completed in close liaison with the company that acts as the maintainer of the product.

Have seen particular benefits with this approach?

The advantages are those derived from the model outlined above: everything that has been developed has been achieved in a shared investment between the private and public entities that have so far contributed, or still contribute, to the continuous improvement of the product, even if the starting step was an initial investment supported by the municipality. In this way the City Hall of Udine will continue to use the project results arising from the community.

There have been difficulties in managing this process?

Perhaps the first difficulties are arising at this state of the project. It's my hope that around CMDBuild will born a genuine community organized in the style of the FLOSS model, with actors and roles clearly defined. The degree of maturity now attained by the product and the number of people who increasingly use CMDBuild in a production environment and not just for testing purposes, suggest me that the time is indeed ripe for a leap in quality.

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