

# llamatrax

by llamawerx

...an innovative solutions partner™

## Laying an Open Foundation for Business

In a previous article (*"Is Open Source Right for You?" April 2004*), I considered the pros and cons of open source. Now let's look at a few open source projects that are worth a try. Many notable open source projects exist, so it's difficult to pick a few. In this article, I'll discuss projects that will have an immediate impact on your business. Some of these you've heard of and some may be new to you. My goal is to give you with a starting point of tools to investigate, consider, and potentially use.

Of course, I can't talk about open source without talking **Linux** ([www.linux.org](http://www.linux.org)). The Linux operating system has made a huge impact on the open source revolution. The Linux kernel is a UNIX-type system, is open source, and is the basis for many Linux distributions including RedHat, Mandrake, SuSE, and Debian. Linux is a leader in the server platform market and is used to host many commercial web servers due to its up-time performance. Its use in the home, office, and embedded systems is increasing too.

Do you find yourself waiting for MS Internet Explorer to start-up? **Firefox** ([www.mozilla.org/products/firefox](http://www.mozilla.org/products/firefox)) is a slimmed-down web browser intended to

provide the web-browsing features you want, without the stuff you don't need. It's lean and quick. The best feature, in my opinion, is tabbed browsing – each webpage can be viewed within a tab of the same window. Say goodbye to windows cluttering your desktop. You can download extensions for additional features too. My favorite extension augments the tabbed browsing allowing you to save a session: all currently open tabs are saved within one bookmark to easily recreate that browsing session.

[Linux, Windows, MAC OS]

For desktop software that doesn't skimp on functionality, **OpenOffice** ([www.openoffice.org/product](http://www.openoffice.org/product)) includes a word processor, spreadsheet, presentation, and drawing packages. It's free and runs on multiple operating systems! And don't worry about your old documents; the suite supports common document formats including Microsoft Word and Excel. Handy features include the ability to publish your work in PDF format without additional software. By the way, OpenOffice is the basis for Sun's StarOffice product. [Linux, Windows, MAC OS]

Need to collaborate with your colleagues? You might try creating a **TWiki** ([www.twiki.org](http://www.twiki.org)) website. A TWiki allows users to browse, edit, and add/delete pages using their web browser. Any type of file can be uploaded and linked into the content. It includes password protection and change tracking so nothing is ever lost. Need a bulletin board to store/share

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knowledge? Share ideas? Track meeting action items? TWiki can do all this and more! Extensions are available including calendar support, action item tracker, drawing and spreadsheet tools, and different "skins". *Llamawerx* uses its internal TWiki extensively. [*Linux, Windows, Mac OS*]

Want to seamlessly share customer contact information within your organization? **eGroupWare** ([www.egroupware.org](http://www.egroupware.org)) is a pluggable framework for hosting web-based applications like a group calendar, address book, email, to-do list, shared internet bookmarks, and the list continues. An access control list provides flexible support for access control and information sharing. [*Any OS; Java*]

For a full featured relational database, I suggest you checkout **PostgreSQL** ([www.postgresql.org](http://www.postgresql.org)). Implementation started at the University of California at Berkeley a decade ago. It has strong SQL support, is full featured, provides a powerful query engine, and can be extended by the user. While not as popular as **MySQL** ([www.mysql.com](http://www.mysql.com)), in many regards, it's technically superior. If you need transactions, views, stored procedures, and triggers, but don't want to invest in Oracle, give PostgreSQL a try. [*Linux, Windows, MAC OS*]

These days, almost everyone has a website and **Apache** (<http://httpd.apache.org>)

powers more websites than any other. First released in 1995, it became the #1 web server on the internet – a position it holds to this day – within a year. Like many open source tools, extensibility is the name of the game. Using third-party modules, administrators can customize the web-server to meet their needs: LDAP, authentication, Tomcat, RSS, SSL and more. Apache is so well respected that Apple even bundles a version with OS X. [*Linux, Windows, MAC OS*]

For deploying J2EE applications, use the #1 choice among Java developers: **JBoss** ([jboss.org/products/jbossas](http://jboss.org/products/jbossas)). An application server provides functionality for deploying large-scale web applications; functionality such as transactions, clustering, security, persistence, cache, and remote method invocation. Recently, JBoss received \$10M in venture capital funding! It comes optionally bundled with Tomcat. [*Any OS; Java*]

Hopefully, I've sketched an open source foundation for you. Like any plan, the devil is in the details, but there's plenty of help out there. Start by visiting the links in this article. Then download and install one. Try **Firefox** – it's probably the easiest. Run it next to IE and I think you'll be impressed. As you gain confidence, try some of the others. Remember, you can take it one step at a time. Renovate, don't try to build a brand new house.

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