
[CVSNT: a failure of the open source model?](http://www.sandon.it/node/60)
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March Hare, the owner of CVSNT, announced that now to download the *community edition* a distribution fee has to be paid. That's not cheap at all at £426 - the price looks really to be set not to get some support for the community edition, but to drive people away from it and to the commercial suite. This is the last act in a series of attempts to stop people using the "free" edition of CVSNT, March Hare started with nag messages written into the log, then with nag screens, then introducing changes not available in the community edition (and I wonder if they didn't break the GPL doing so, especially since this is a fork from the original CVS, and it was never dual licensed) and now asking to pay that sum to download it

Of course the license they adopted does not forbid them to do that - if it works is another matter. I just wonder if this is a perfect example of how the open source model does not work for a small company when its core business is the same open source product, and they really try to make a living from it.

I always thought that the open source model works best for large companies that open source - or fund development of - subsidiary products (i.e. IBM and Eclipse) to help their real core business, or companies that uses open source software as the foundation of much more complex commercial products.

March Hare made the mistake to build a paid option which was basically nothing more than a bunch of already available open source software (i.e. Tortoise and WinCVS), plus some documentation and utilities. Very little to justify buying that instead of setting up the same environment using the same applications available for free, especially since you're trying to sell that stuff to experienced computer users like software developers, usually able to install and integrate software themselves. Add that CVS(NT) is perceived as a "legacy" product, that fashion today dictates other SCM tools, and there are a lot of open source alternatives, and IMHO it's pretty clear that their business model had serious flaws. But starting charging for what was a "free" product is not the best way to transform users of the free edition into paying user. The effect will be to move them to other "free" products.

Let's see what happens to March Hare now and if their new model works, or just seals the CVS grave. And are they aware that anyone who pays the distribution fee is then entitled to redistribute the software - even for free, if he like - as the GPL license says?

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