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2006 Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer discusses plans for collaboration on new solutions to make Novell and Microsoft products work better together
Microsoft

Microsoft: Never Open Source

Courtesy of CEO Steve Ballmer

Users that are holding their breath waiting for an open source Windows 7, Windows 8 or Office 14 are advised to exhale. Going against a hugely popular saying, Microsoft is firm in saying "never" to open source. Chief Executive Officer Steve Ballmer had a single answer to a question presented at the Microsoft Worldwide Partner Conference 2008 regarding the possibility that the company's flagship products will veer away from its current proprietary business mode. "No!" This, however, does not rule out interoperability with open source products, or the opening of the Redmond company's platforms to additional non-proprietary software solutions, Ballmer said on July 9, 2008 in Houston, Texas. "Are our products likely to be open sourced? No," Microsoft's CEO said, admitting that the software giant is, despite this flirting with the "enemy." As a matter of fact, the Redmond company is the proud owner of two open source licenses certified by the Open Source Initiative. Under Microsoft Public License (Ms-PL) and Microsoft Reciprocal License (Ms-RL), the company is offering products it has developed, mainly via CodePlex, its open source project repository. "We do provide our source code in special situations, but open source also implies free, free is inconsistent with paying for lunches at the partner conference," Ballmer added. This is, of course, not the first time that Ballmer has to fend off questions probing as to Microsoft's possible venturing into open source territory. Once positioned as the ultimate anti-open source poster child, Microsoft has changed its ways, and the alliance with Linux distributor Novell back in 2006 and the work done to embrace PHP are illustrative examples in this context. "Will we interoperate with products that come from like Linux, from the open source world? Yes, we will. Will we encourage people who want to do open source development to do it on top of Windows? Yes, we're proud that the best PHP system in the world is actually the one that runs on Windows today, not the one that runs on Linux. So we're going to encourage open source innovation on our platforms, and around our platforms," he revealed. Microsoft is undergoing a revolution in its business model following the pseudo-retirement of Bill Gates, but under the new leadership of Ray Ozzie, who now owns the title of Chief Software Architect, the company is reaching for the cloud. As far as the Redmond giant is concerned, its future will be shaped by Software plus Services and not by open source. "And, you know, we see interesting things where bits and pieces of technology, commercial companies are now starting to provide it in an open source form or to digest in an open source form. And we're open to that as well. But our fundamental business model will remain kind of commercial software, advertising, enterprise licensing, et cetera," Ballmer concluded.