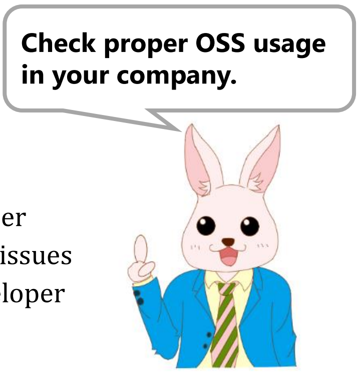
OSS: Open Source Software

Let's check OSS compliance of your company !

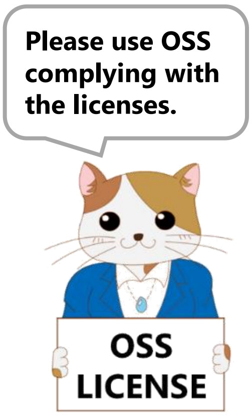
When your company uses OSS for business operations or developments, it is important to confirm your company using OSS propery. Start your company's OSS compliance by checking six items.

Background

In recent years, OSS has been used in various places such as home appliances, communication devices, personal computers, software products, or cloud services. OSS is usually released publicly and ready for use, such as freely copying, modifying, or distributing, with conditions described in a license which developer of the OSS developer attached with the OSS. When your company use OSS, it is important to be prepared for issues arising from using OSS, because OSS is usually released under conditions that OSS developer do not take any responsibility for the issues.



1. Observe OSS licenses before use



You can only use OSS that your company can comply with conditions described in the OSS license. Therefore, when you obtain OSS and use it in your own business operations or developments, it is important to investigate conditions of the OSS.

Variations of OSS licenses are much less than numbers of OSS and there are several condition types, though OSS licenses are freely decided by individual developers.

One common condition type is an attribution requirement. For example, if you distribute OSS to someone else, the license condition requires you attaching the license and leaving original copyright information.

Another common condition type is a distribution requirement. For example, if you provide OSS binary code to someone else, the license condition requires you providing the OSS source code to the provided one. For another example of the distribution requirement, when you distribute software that combines OSS and other programs, the license condition requires you distributing entire combination as OSS.

Let's check OSS licenses conditions of OSS your company use.

2. Take Care Providing OSS with OSS information

If you provide OSS to someone, OSS provided person or organization as well as you is required to follow the OSS licenses. It is also important to make the person or the organization prepared for future issues, such as bugs or vulnerabilities found in the OSS.

Accordingly, when you provide OSS to a customer, even in cases of embedding OSS into a product or providing OSS with other software under contract development, it is important to provide adequate OSS information with the customer, such as names, versions, or licenses of the OSS provided, for the customer's license compliance or future technical issues.

3. Keep in mind terrible impact amount of license violation

You will have a terrible risk if you sell product using OSS in a way not complying with the OSS license, resulting damage of your company's trust. For example, customer of the product would spread bad reputation by making a post to point out OSS license violation in Internet. You may also have a risk of having injunction or damages lawsuits for copyright infringement.

To avoid those situations, it is important to make sure whether shipping product contains OSS, OSS licenses is properly complied, and shipping the product with required information, if the product contains OSS.

4. Be prepared for bugs and vulnerabilities

Not limited to OSS, software users have to deal with bugs or vulnerabilities. If those issues are left unattended, your company will have risks, such as leaking confidential or personal information.

And since OSS developers are not responsible for bugs or vulnerabilities of the OSS, it is important for OSS users to collect information of and be prepared for bug or vulnerability of the OSS.

5. Upstream your amendments to the OSS developer or community

If you fix OSS bugs, vulnerabilities, or documentation errors, it is recommended to provide those amendments to the OSS developer or community, because your amendment will be useful for other people using the OSS.

If you do not provide your fixings with the OSS developer or community, corresponding bugs or vulnerabilities remain unfixed and you will have to make same fixings when you use upgrade version of the OSS in the future. In other words, providing your amendments to the OSS developer or community will help you as well as them and you will have improved efficiency for your future development.

6. Check OSS management system of your company

In order to comply with OSS licenses and to deal with OSS bugs and vulnerabilities, it is important to establish policy for managing OSS across your company.

Check that your company has an appropriate policy for managing OSS by following criteria:

A) Does your company check all licenses of OSS that you company ?
- ➢ If not, it is recommended to use OSS license investigation tool.

B) At the timing of adopting OSS, does you company confirm OSS license compliance?
- ➢ If not, it is recommended to place or clarify person to consult with when you do not understand OSS license contents.

C) Does your company confirm there is no unrecognized OSS in your developed software or software parts procured from other companies?
- ➢ For software or products from other companies, it is recommended to agree OSS checking ways for the software or product in advance with the companies.

D) Does your company confirm that OSS license information is provided to customers?
- ➢ If not, it is recommended to check OSS license information by person or organization in your company other than the developers.

E) Does your company manage OSS usage for individual product?
- ➢ If not, it is recommended to have centralized OSS usage management across the company. That accelerates your company's response for OSS-related issues.

F) Does your company keep collecting bugs and vulnerabilities information of OSS you use?
- ➢ If not, it is recommended to identify person or organization responsible for collecting those information.

G) Does your company have internal rules for posting information to the OSS development community?
- ➢ If not, it is recommended to set internal rule that allows submitting OSS modification to the original OSS developer or community.

H) Does your company internally clarify first contact information or coping way for OSS-related issues such as license violations or vulnerabilities?
- ➢ If not, it is recommended to examine appropriate person or organization, internally or externally.

Please share these OSS management policies with relevant parties.

OpenChain Japan Work Group
https://wiki.linuxfoundation.org/openchain/openchain-japanese-working-group