



Business Readiness Rating™

A Framework for Evaluating Open Source Software

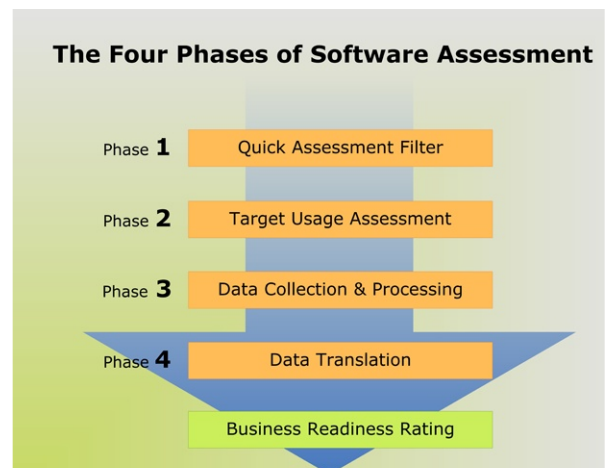
Open source software is changing the way that software is being developed and used, and is having a significant impact on IT managers responsible for the selection of software components and tools to be used within their organizations. Using open source software involves new ways of doing business, and often includes assessing software maintained and supported by new and small vendors.

Evaluating software is a critical task for these managers, but there is no easy, effective, and trustworthy process for assessing open source software. With no widely used approach for evaluation, companies cannot easily determine the suitability of open source software for their needs.

The Business Readiness Rating (BRR) is being proposed as an open and standard framework that can let IT managers quickly make informed and educated decisions about open source software.

The BRR assessment has four phases:

- 1) performing a “quick assessment” to rule in or rule out software packages and create a short list of viable candidates
- 2) ranking and weighting categories or metrics of the software
- 3) gathering and processing the relevant data
- 4) translating the data into a numeric score from 0 to 5, where a high score represents a greater business readiness



THE WEIGHTING CATEGORIES

The BRR identifies metrics and categories to use in the in-depth assessment process, where a metric is a measurable property of an open source software project, such as the number of books published about the software or the number of project committers.

The assessment process is organized into twelve categories:

- Functionality - how well will the software meet the average user’s requirements?
- Usability - how intuitive is the software for end users? how easily can the software be installed, configured, deployed, and maintained?
- Quality - is the software well designed, implemented, and tested?
- Security - how secure is the software and how well does it handle attacks?
- Performance - how well does the software perform? How does it do against standard benchmarks?
- Scalability - how well does the software scale for high volume use?

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- Architecture - how well is the software architected? How modular, portable, flexible, extensible, and open is it? How well does it support integration with other software components?
- Support - how well is the software supported? How many sources of support are available?
- Documentation - is there technical and user documentation for the software? Is it of good quality?
- Adoption - how well is the software adopted by the community, the market, and industry?
- Community - how active and lively is the community for the software?
- Professionalism - what is the level of professionalism of the development process and the overall project organization?

Of course, not all of these characteristics are important or applicable for each assessment, so the BRR evaluation framework is based on assigning relative weights to different factors, and using only those that are relevant to a specific evaluation. Each user organization selects the weightings suited to its needs.

GETTING INVOLVED

As a community-based effort, the BRR is open to broad participation from all of the different constituencies with an interest in evaluating open source software. There are many ways to participate:

- Join a Task Group - there are currently three such groups:
 - 1) Taxonomy - The BRR, in partnership with IDC, is using IDC's software taxonomy as a basis for grouping software into categories. The next step is to enumerate functional characteristics for software in the various categories.
 - 2) Data - This group is working on the collection and organization of data on individual open source components, including aspects of the software and the associated development project(s)
 - 3) Corporate Use - This group is establishing a formal network to discuss open source evaluation, adoption, and use within corporations. Contact the group leader at corporate@openbrr.org.
- Register on the BRR web site at www.openbrr.org to download the BRR white paper and contribute to the discussion forums, including suggested changes and enhancements to the evaluation framework
- Contribute evaluations to the BRR community; sample evaluations are available from the BRR site
- Become a sponsor and help support further development of the BRR
- Contact the BRR leadership with additional ideas by sending email to getinvolved@openbrr.org

STEERING COMMITTEE

Larry Augustin, Open Source Strategist
 Michael Goulde, Forrester Research
 Peter Kronowitt, Intel
 Murugan Pal, SpikeSource

Josh Berkus, PostgreSQL
 Marc Hedlund, O'Reilly CodeZoo
 George Pace, Prudential Financial
 Anthony Wasserman, Carnegie Mellon West (Chair)

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