

## Ten Must Have Free Software Packages for 2007

Out of the box software for your desktop or your internet site has changed so drastically in the last two years that most individuals are not aware of all the trends in the Open Source world. Having worked for Microsoft Corporation for a portion of my career, with stats such as 95% of the world uses Microsoft. I was in for a real eye opener on number of different software packages available in the Open Source world. Earlier, I was lead to believe that the Open Source world is full of unsupported and unreliable software, with no one to call if I need help. My question was, how could this be better than paid commercial software? After all Microsoft employs 70,000 people to get their software working.

I have put together a list of the top ten free tools for any internet professional. The first five are devoted to your desktop and the next five are for your website. If you do not have a website, you could consider getting one up and running with these free tools.

1. Ubuntu: Most people have heard of RedHat Linux as an operating system for your desktop. Many who have tried it seem disillusioned and revert back to Microsoft for its ease and simplicity. Ubuntu has a unique selling proposition which says "Linux for human beings". You can download this for free and get a powerful operating system for your desktop which is simple and easy to use.
2. Open Office: If you use Microsoft Office and believe that it is required to communicate with other word users around the world, you are right. However when you get a excel spreadsheet or a Microsoft word document which you cannot open, you will need Open Office to rescue you. That is right. Microsoft Office has bugs and when all else fails, you can use Open Office to open your documents. Open Office runs on your Windows platform or on Linux and is as simple as Microsoft Office. The only real difference is that you do not have to pay \$500 to get it or pirate it. Open Office is distributed as Open Source and is free to use on your preferred operating system.
3. GIMP: Most people are familiar with or have worked with Adobe Photoshop. When it comes to working with advanced graphics features like layers, transparency or to work with Adobe file formats, GIMP works just as well. GIMP works on most operating systems and provides an alternate powerful interface for editing and changing graphic files, logos or custom animations.
4. Free Mind: When it comes to organizing your thoughts along the likes of Leonardo de Vince used mind maps. There are many visual mind mapping tools out there, some with a 30 day trial. Try different ones, if you want the best there is in the market, it is an Open Source software called Free Mind. This software is simple to create and organize. You can publish these mind maps on the web with a few clicks.
5. DB Designer: If you have a database of any sort Microsoft Access, MySQL or Oracle, you will need to review the table structure to create reports or infer from the data you have. If you have worked extensively with database you may be familiar with ER/Win. You can reverse engineer a database and analyze its table structure with DB Designer for free. Reverse engineering a database is similar to getting a map for a city. Without a map you would be lost and have no way to get to your destination. DB Designer makes this possible for free.
6. Cam Studio: If you want to create an educational video of how to operate your website for users, here is an extremely simple tool with which you can record your voice while recording your screen in a video format for the web.
7. Wordpress: The quickest way to create a website with some content that you can easily publish is through a blog. Creating a blog is easy if you use Wordpress. You can install and have it up and running in a few clicks. You can easily add some AdSense advertising to your content and earn an extra income from the clicks of users.
8. phpESP: You will need a survey tool to get feedback from your users or to get a 360 feedback on yourself from your peers. You can try out many trial options or cut to the chase by selecting php ESP, a free tool. Installation is not as simple; however there are tons of help and instructions on the web about how to install it.
9. Sugar CRM: The best customer relationship management tool of all time is not Goldmine, Salesforce or any other Microsoft CRM solution. This will be apparent once you get a Sugar CRM installation up and running. You can manage your customer database and your marketing campaigns easily with this tool. There are lots of features in this tool. Make sure you go through all the help files and online tutorials to maximize your benefits from this powerful Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool.
10. Language translation tool: If you have a web site, why not use the automatic language translation to get your website translated to 10 other languages. Translation may not be perfect; however it is getting better every day with newer technologies. You can multiply your web content by ten fold and increase your reach with this free tool. Installation is simple and takes just a few clicks.

So think twice next time you fork out hundreds of dollars for your next software purchase. If you really want to spend money, why not help the homeless or the less fortunate instead or support the Open Source community.

#### About the Author

Catherine comes from a recruitment background and is an entrepreneur. She the CEO of a global freelancing site called <http://www.ServLance.com> that provides a free service for employers and freelancers to connect and make a living.

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