

Unit 4 Open-source software

Teacher's notes

Preparation

Before you use this lesson plan:

- Make one copy of each worksheet per student.
- Visit the proposed websites to check they are operational.

Warmers

Short (5 minutes)

Ask the students if they can provide a definition of open-source software. If necessary, see the glossary of the book for an answer. Ask whether they use any open-source software. If yes, what do they use? Why have they chosen open-source in preference to the offering of a commercial software company?

Long (10 – 15 minutes)

Ask the students to brainstorm the factors they might take into account when buying office software. These could include: the kind of programs included in the package, the cost, the need for training, compatibility of file formats, and so on. Distribute the first page of the worksheet. Divide the group into pairs and ask the students to do the ranking exercise. After the pairs report their decisions, use the board to find an agreed ranking for the whole group.

Set the scene

(5 minutes)

Ask the students to read the situation. Emphasise the facts that the organisation is not-for-profit, there is a limited budget and neither they nor their associates have modern, powerful computers.

Present the tasks

(5 minutes)

Explain the procedure:

- 1 Divide into small groups or pairs.
- 2 Use the websites to research and collect information; fill in the table.
3. Have a meeting to discuss the findings and decide which software package to use.

Do the tasks

Research (20 minutes)

- If computers are available, allocate one to each small group or pair and let the students do their research.
- If computers are not available, set the research as homework to be performed at home or during free time at work. Emphasise to the students that they do not need to spend more than about 20 – 30 minutes collecting information.

Meeting (20 minutes)

After the research, break up the research groups or pairs and form new groups. The students compare and discuss the information they have found in these groups and make a decision about which software package to select. They also nominate a group spokesperson. Appoint a chairperson for the meeting. Hold the meeting in which each spokesperson gives the decision and reasoning of their group. The outcome of the meeting will be a majority agreement.

Variation

The students are very likely to choose the OpenOffice.org option given the scenario. In order to extend the meeting, you can give extra information to different groups during the early discussion phase. For example, tell some groups that charity income is expected to fall in the next six months due to economic recession (or the opposite) and tell other groups that many of your overseas partners may benefit from a Microsoft sponsorship deal aimed at charities in Africa.

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Aims

- talking about office software
- making a decision

Decide the best ranking for the factors below when deciding on the best office software package to buy.

Ranking	Factor
	Applications included in the package
	Cost of purchase and/or licences
	Compatibility of file formats
	Ease of use
	Need for training
	System requirements
	Reliability (Does it contain bugs?)

Situation

You are responsible for IT at a not-for-profit organisation that helps to build schools in small villages in the developing world. This means that the organisation deals with a large number of charities and community organisations in many different countries. You are currently using Microsoft Office 97 and recognise the need to upgrade to newer software. However, there are two things you have to consider: you have a limited budget and both your organisation and those you deal with in other countries do not have access to many recent specification computers. The two options you are going to consider are: up-grading to Microsoft Office 2007 or switching to a free, open-source package such as OpenOffice.org.

Tasks

- 1 You are going to research the differences between Microsoft Office 2007 and OpenOffice.org.
- 2 You are going to discuss with your colleagues which is the best option for your organisation.

Task 1 – the research:

These websites will give you information about the two software packages.

OpenOffice.org compared with Microsoft Office

<http://www.openoffice.org/product/more.html>

In the list of *Documents to download*, click on the 28 page Product Comparison link to download the pdf. Use the links on the contents page to take you to the sections you need.

OpenOffice.org product information

<http://www.openoffice.org/product>

Click on the menu in the centre graphic to find more information about each OpenOffice.org component. Use the screen grabs of the interfaces to help you judge the usability of each application.

Microsoft Office interface

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-gb/products>

Scroll down and find a menu in the centre of the page called *What's new in the products?* Click on *Read details on the new user interface*. Use the images to help you judge the usability of the new Microsoft interface.

Fill in the table.

	Microsoft Office 2007	OpenOffice.org 2
Applications		
Cost		
File formats		
Ease of use		
Training and support		
System requirements		

Task 2 – making a decision

Discuss with your partners the information you have collected. Decide which of the two office software packages will be best for the organisation. Nominate a spokesperson to present your decision and reasons in a meeting.