Librethreat Database Entries

2019 Ted MacReilly

When I wrote my handbook for destroying free software, I didn't anticipate it being part of a public database. Now that people are again aware of the problems proprietary software companies create for other software developers, I thought I would create a list of entries for the Librethreat database. These entries are based on the book.

Some of the feedback received about the book suggested that these threats were unproven. There is a long history of actions demonstrating these threats, but it's true that they are not yet cross-referenced with recent stories.

One of the advantages of the Librethreat database is that it can be cross-referenced with stores that highlight the problems described. Of course the book was aimed at people who were already familiar with such threats, but there are people capable of finding and linking relevant stories. I may even assist them.

First, I will highlight the nature of each threat from the book-- I have already sorted the quotes by the category of threat. The first section may also serve as a more dictionary-like version of my handbook, for quick reference or quicker study.

After quoting the parts from the book that describe each threat, i will include entries for each threat listed in the format of the Librethreat database. I recommend these entries be played in a buffer page on the wiki, with a title such as "incoming threats" so they can be added to the database gradually as they become relevant enough.

Enjoy,

Ted MacReilly

Threat type: License circumvention

License proliferation / licensing erosion
"A move towards our own Open Source licenses could let us use license terms to go after companies we want to force into other agreements."

Threat type: Corruption / unfair business practices

Lobbying for unfair business practices
"Reinforce and update the rules that keep the world operating [in a way that works for us]."

Antitrust tactics
"Not only are you in a position to ask for features that favor your company and very few others, but you can actually demand them... not all of these manufacturers actually wanted to do business exclusively with Microsoft. Microsoft pushed them to be exclusive, by forcing them to choose between a higher price and a variety of software options."

Theft by petition, threat, protectionism
"Patent agreements are an olive branch we extend to companies, who simply agree that what they are using is our intellectual property. We don't threaten to sue when that's unlikely to bear fruit-- instead we say 'Hi, we don't want to sue you-- we just want credit for your use of our property. If you will simply admit that what you're using is ours, we agree not to fight it.' ... They get to continue development, but something important has changed in the landscape-- instead of fighting to prove that something is ours, we have it in writing... Even as software patents lose their potency, the agreements companies were coerced to participate in under these patent-protection schemes remain."

Idea monopolies
"Patents have to be on things that are novel and non-obvious to people in the field. To get around this and the other requirements, we have our legal team apply for countless patents using the most absurd, drawn-out, vague language possible... patent battles have allowed Apple to harass companies with design patents over such trivial matters as rounded corners-- and to claim they invented a 'slide-to-unlock' feature— which has existed on barnyard gates for hundreds of years at least... you could say that their 'slide-to-unlock' feature is really just the 'scrollbar widget' that was probably invented by Xerox in the 1970s"

Journalistic hostages
"Even when this isn't true, the tech press has taken our side again and again... We can even push journalists-- just like Microsoft did to push OEMs to cooperate-- to lean favorably or lose our participation and cooperation... Just as we can do more favorable business with OEMs... the same game works with journalists... If an author becomes too critical, we can drop them-- stop handing them stories, and even use their employers against them (favoring another publisher entirely, until they learn from their mistake.)"

Shills and conflicts of interest
"Open source provides us many new opportunities to make these exchanges and representation in the press look more organic and less staged... We bribe journalists with meals and events and parties, we like to treat our friends well-- even if later we make it clear what the terms of treating us well are in turn... And if our companies can actually purchase and literally own some of the corporations that talk about us-- well, most people don't care about that..."

Threat type: Development disruption

Repo takeover
"With the acquisition of Github, Microsoft has demonstrated to the press, to developers and to the rest of the world just how much free software they own (or at least control.) ...Microsoft Github will bring all software development that much closer to a world where not only is there a computer on every desk, as Bill Gates once put it-- but where there is a Microsoft developer sitting at that desk. You didn't work for them a year ago, but congratulations-- you do now."

Mire
"Above all, the key strategy is not to destroy free software completely, but to break it in enough important places so that it poses less and less of a threat to your near-monopoly."

Takeover
"We purchase and gut competitors whenever we can. Sometimes we go after a company as large as Red Hat or Nokia, but smaller acquisitions grow our IP and give us raw material to exploit for relatively cheap."

Threat type: Design attack / development disruption

Malicious hardware and firmware
"Hardware and firmware make it possible to add unwanted features that the vast majority of free software users won't be able to simply uninstall and replace."

Unsupported / Poorly supported hardware
"Without 'free hardware' (and we know that won't ever happen) the free software people are stuck reverse-engineering hardware and guessing how to write drivers based on trial-and-error... What the drivers gain in stability and maintenance, they often lose in features and performance."

Hardware shift
"In the future, we may want to get more involved in firmware and move more features from software to hardware. So far, we have mostly used firmware as a way to reinforce our place in the software market. Meanwhile Lenovo has used firmware to actually reinstall unwanted software, features and surveillance directly."

Mobile platforms
"In the mobile market, the companies offering mobile platforms actually like having more control than their customers. iOS and Android have provided, we can still explore new deals with providers in countries where iOS and Android have farther from 100% saturation in the market."

New device horizon
"We can still explore SmartTVs, Smarthome devices and we are not remotely done with automotive. We need to work more with OEMs for all of these relatively new device categories-- not just the PC."

Forced / Excessively pushed updates
"We can control updates; we don't really care who pirates the 'starter pack' for our platform anymore, because we can monitor and update and deactivate whatever parts of the platform we want"

Feature Churn
"No matter how happy some customers are, or how much they rely on our software, we are still going to lead them away from one thing and towards another-- it isn't just because it's better; it's because if we let them rely on what they already have, we won't get to sell them anything new... The most convincing way to do this is to keep chasing what's new-- and dragging people from one thing to the next... Every one of our products should be viewed as an 'upgrade' to whatever else people are using... We need to keep fighting software stability or consistency by portraying it as selfishness and being close-minded, old-fashioned, uneducated, and uninformed."

Publisher / manufacturer control of media after "purchase"
"This is one more reason that we don't want software to be free and controlled by the user: if the user controls their files and programs, they can also copy media that the film industry and e-book publishers want to control after purchase... By allying with the media companies and major publishers, we have an additional source of revenue that [we] can first tap into and then gradually become its vendors"

Threat type: Development disruption, social

GREEN light: Corporate cultural values
"Their hacker philosophy is about putting certain values first-- just as we use new features to get people to accept new flaws [we] can promise to fix later ([then] say that we have a greater commitment to security) [we] can use their values to steer the next generation of customers (and critics) towards a more corporate culture... some of these values are good values... But as much as we have 'social value theater' in the workplace and have to play along, we can dump the same corporate culture onto anyone who will call it professionalism, and then say everyone else is just unprofessional and toxic."

Saturation of media
"After all, they keep telling themselves that writers write their own stories. Sure they do-- from whatever they glean from our press releases, press events, and corporate evangelists... We don't just have the tech press treating us kindly-- we have the organizations they interview where we want them, and even the other people the tech press gets their information from. No matter where you go, you're going to hear how great we are."

YELLOW light: Organizational homogeneity / single point of failure
"Open source brings organizational overhead and corporate culture into every project-- you can be the leader of your own project and do what you want to with it, but now you shouldn't-- every project should have a community, a code of conduct, and a dedicated website... Fortunately, Open source brings all this overhead to a project in a way that makes it easier to steer or influence (or purchase) the project."

Confuse, divide, conquer
"We can stir contention between 'open' and 'free' and get open source to defend our model, as proof they understand more about software... When free software zealots insist that the user should have full control of their computers and software, we can count on open source to needle them about each aspect of their position... we can tell their open source opponents that our product is better, and they will do the rest of the work as it vindicates their mixed approach..."

Destroying leaders and visionaries
"The most important person to paint as a has-been is Richard Stallman. .[He] and his followers are tightly-knit in their ideology. Attacking any of them is like attacking all of them-- we can play up their hacker style as social ineptitude, their adherence [to] standards and interoperability as a refusal to evolve, their playful culture as a refusal to grow up and be professional, and their self-reliance and independence as being non-team-players and even toxic masculinity."

RED light: Complete cultural takeover
"In exchange for software with more churn, more bloat, less choice and less user control and reliability-- they get 'cooler' software tools, larger sponsorships, bigger marketing and events that feature their software-- everything they would enjoy if we took over their world and did things our way... The plan has never actually changed, but our way of framing it has changed entirely. We de-commoditize protocols. We add features we want and deprecate ones that people rely on, and we tell them to get with the program... it's as if we hired them ourselves, but all we did was participate and influence."

Co-opting charities
"We can also work with charities to deliver (and pay for) our software... As long as our proprietary and commercial offerings have more perceived value than the free counterparts, we can point out that these charities could do more for people by raising additional funds to send higher quality commercial software to the people they want to help"

Apathy
"Free software developers seem to care very little about this, because they have their stripped free software versions of everything open source. So what if we make things less modular, more brittle, more bloated, and more poorly designed? They only use projects with a license allows them to clean up after us, so they're content no matter what we sabotage. We can overwhelm them and send them to clean up mess after mess, with the remaining effect of steering key projects to work more the way we want, and them accepting our changes."

Threat type: Consumer / user manipulation

False compromise
"We can probably do a little more to paint our critics as cynical-- or encourage them to be more open."

Trademark shift (from free to open to non-free)
"We can't kill the GNU brand by owning it... we can still fight GNU [by] changing its association-- we will continue to work to make them has-beens, neckbeards, amateurs, ideologues, zealots, and even bigots... We get more done using proxies and shills-- the destruction of their brand is the polish on our own image. the gradual shift in public consciousness from their branding towards our own, is the next best thing to owning them..."

Education takeover / student indoctrination
"We (always) need more opportunities for education that involve our products... we also need our own training centers or tutoring centers-- at least a pilot program. ...lobbying and public-service-like advertising, ...working with schools to indoctrinate students with our pro-monopoly point of view. We make certain that if someone says 'Wouldn't it be nice if all software were free?'-- whether they're in a classroom or an online chat or their own dinner table, that someone is ready to make them feel stupid for even suggesting it."

FOMO
"What you want everyone to think is that spending more money will always result in additional value... The positives we are going to focus on, are the positives of spending more. ...we can also feed the customer's fear of not getting enough-- to make them afraid of being 'ripped off' if they don't pay anything. convince them to associate value with spending-- not saving-- their money... FOMO doesn't just apply to events or social updates, it can also apply to 'missing out' on special promotional offers, better products and the myriad features we add to our software so that if you don't get the latest edition-- you will 'miss out' on everything better. ... This is no news to Apple, who built an industry on having 'cooler' (also more expensive) computers than the standard fare."

Appeal to consumer pride
"Another great thing about what's new is that people don't know anything about it. We can write our own narrative about new products, and until enough people gain access and knowledge (and preferably first-hand experience) they can't say very much about the product that we can say twice as much about... the incentive to do business is to continue to appear knowledgeable. This tactic works notably well among enthusiasts and professionals."

The "Corporations are people too" myth
"So far we have done very little to attack people for not giving us as many chances [trust] as other companies. We have Torvalds calling that 'hate' though we are pulling so many punches about exclusion these days. We can push this a bit harder."

The "Corporate control is security" myth
"If we want to sell the internet of things, we can't have people thinking that a bunch of amateurs are creating their software-- we want them to know that everything is under control."

The "Surveillance is security" myth
"Sell our surveillance by making it look less like our technology, and more like their own."

False sense of security
"People who feel like they're your friends will share more with you than people you treat like a competitor... This includes all the telemetry and handling of personal data that you exploit to reinforce your position in the market. The more people like your products, the more you can get away with."

Security theater
"People are afraid to turn off features that sound as if they add security-- won't that make them less secure? Aha, Gotcha! ...there's always room for more features related to 'security.'"

Freemium bait-and-switch
"These days, the old 'shareware' concept is reborn as the 'freemium' concept. With both, you get something for free and you pay money to make it great. This can also be used with weak open source versions and separate, proprietary versions or extensions."

Sheep's clothing
"Apple... has used the image of being 'different' and rebellious to justify overpriced, more proprietary components in its products. Microsoft... has worked on its reputation of being ruthless and having unfair practices that hurt the computer industry on several different levels. Co-founder Bill Gates has rebranded himself a philanthropist, a common pastime among former ruthless company leaders that gives them an image of being less destructive or sociopathic... While spying on users and selling their data mined by artificial intelligence and unscrupulous third parties, Facebook continues to work to make itself look like a philanthropic organization... Google's brand is perhaps simply about raw power. Like with these other companies, the real power is the power they have over the industry and the users of their products."

License proliferation / licensing erosion
* Threat type: License circumvention
* Affects: Copyleft, free software development
* Summary: Gradual enterprise move from reliable free-as-in-freedom licenses (FSF approved) towards arbitrary or even dubious substitutes (including non-GPL-compatible licenses)
* Recognized by: Free Media Alliance
* Also recognized by FSF: Yes
* Mitigation: Avoid / document / move away from projects that change licenses for dubious reasons or (especially) to dubious licenses
* Examples: "Commons Clause" license

Lobbying for unfair business practices
* Threat type: Corruption / unfair business practices
* Affects: User freedom, free software development
* Summary: Introducing or updating rules that keep the world operating in a way that works primarily for monopolies
* Recognized by: Techrights, Free Media Alliance
* Also recognized by FSF: Most likely
* Mitigation: Avoid / boycott / document / stand against companies that lobby against users
* Examples: The Copyright Alliance supporting SOPA

Antitrust tactics
* Threat type: Corruption / unfair business practices
* Affects: User freedom, free software development
* Summary: Abusing monopoly power to push other companies around
* Recognized by: Techrights, Free Media Alliance, critics of GAFAM
* Also recognized by FSF: Yes
* Mitigation: Avoid / boycott / document / stand against companies that use monopoly tactics against other companies
* Examples: Using unfair pricing to force OEMs not to offer competing operating systems

Theft by petition, threat, protectionism
* Threat type: Corruption / unfair business practices
* Affects: User freedom, free software development
* Summary: Some "patent agreements" put things into writing that couldn't be won in a courtroom-- encouraged by the implied or explicit threat of future litigation
* Recognized by: Techrights, Free Media Alliance
* Also recognized by FSF: Almost certainly
* Mitigation: Avoid / boycott / document / stand against companies that use or enter patent agreements to certify false and proprietary ownership of software
* Examples: The Microsoft / Novell / Attachmate / SUSE agreement(s)

Idea monopolies
* Threat type: Corruption / unfair business practices
* Affects: User freedom, free software development
* Summary: Low-quality patents allow companies like Apple to claim (until challenged) a monopoly on ancient concepts like "slide-to-unlock"-- which is basically a scrollbar widget from the 1970s.
* Recognized by: Techrights, Free Media Alliance
* Also recognized by FSF: Most likely
* Mitigation: Avoid / boycott / document / stand against companies that threaten companies with low-quality patent portfolios
* Examples: SCO, Microsoft, Apple, slide-to-unlock

Journalistic hostages
* Threat type: Corruption / unfair business practices
* Affects: Journalism, fixing corruption, anything that requires the public to be well informed or to make good decisions
* Summary: Journalists can be treated like OEMs forced to dance to a monopoly's tune-- if they do not stay in line, they are dropped and won't get timely stories about said monopolies
* Recognized by: Gizmodo, Free Media Alliance
* Also recognized by FSF: (Unknown) very possibly
* Mitigation: Avoid / boycott / document / stand against companies that handle journalists in this fashion
* Examples: Apple's past culture of extreme secrecy / abuse of reporters

Shills and conflicts of interest
* Threat type: Corruption / unfair business practices
* Affects: Journalism, fixing corruption, anything that requires the public to be well informed or to make good decisions
* Summary: Journalists and others wined, dined, and given gifts by companies they are supposed to report on or make decisions about / news outlets sometimes owned by same companies
* Recognized by: Half the world perhaps, except possibly the "journalists" themselves
* Also recognized by FSF: Most likely
* Mitigation: Call out such conflicts of interest, don't fund organisations with such shoddy journalism
* Examples: Linux Foundation

Repo takeover / corporate repos
* Threat type: Development disruption
* Affects: User freedom, free software development
* Summary: Before GitHub was purchased by a monopoly, Free software advocates had already warned people against its use
* Recognized by: Techrights, Free Media Alliance, Free software advocates
* Also recognized by FSF: Definitely after the fact, almost certainly before the fact
* Mitigation: Avoid repos that are similar to GitHub in their terms and ownership-- don't confuse corporation with community-- don't use corporate repos for community projects or free software code hosting.
* Examples: GitHub, Snap packages

Mire
* Threat type: Development disruption
* Affects: User freedom, free software development
* Summary: Rather than destroy free software completely, companies can break it in enough important places so that it poses less and less of a threat
* Recognized by: Techrights, Free Media Alliance, some critics of Systemd
* Also recognized by FSF: Perhaps to some degree
* Mitigation: Avoid / boycott / document / stand against companies that use EEE-like tactics against high-profile free software projects or free software organisations
* Examples: Systemd, Microsoft

Takeover
* Threat type: Development disruption
* Affects: User freedom, free software development, organisations
* Summary: Bribe, sue or buy out projects, companies and organisations that help free software
* Recognized by: Techrights, Free Media Alliance, free software advocates
* Also recognized by FSF: Most likely
* Mitigation: Avoid / boycott / document / stand against companies that buy out and relicense free software projects
* Examples: Oracle's acquisition of Sun

Malicious hardware and firmware
* Threat type: Design attack / development disruption
* Affects: User freedom, free software development, security
* Summary: Harmful features that affect the user even if they reinstall the operating system
* Recognized by: Techrights, Mark Shuttleworth, Free Media Alliance, free software advocates
* Also recognized by FSF: Yes
* Mitigation: Avoid / boycott / research / document such hardware
* Examples: Lenovo firmware payloads, ACPI vulnerabilities and exploits

Unsupported / Poorly supported hardware
* Threat type: Design attack / development disruption
* Affects: User freedom, free software adoption, value of hardware to free software users
* Summary: Some hardware has to be reverse engineered-- what drivers gain in stability and maintenance, they often lose in features and sometimes performance
* Recognized by: Techrights, Free Media Alliance
* Also recognized by FSF: Yes
* Mitigation: Look for endorsements of hardware from free software advocates, especially the FSF's "Respects Your Freedom" certification
* Examples: Nvidia is known for this

Hardware shift
* Threat type: Design attack / development disruption
* Affects: User freedom, free software development
* Summary: Monopolies that control software features will gradually move more of this control to hardware/firmware implementations
* Recognized by: Free Media Alliance
* Also recognized by FSF: Most likely
* Mitigation: Avoid / boycott / document / research
* Examples: ACPI, UEFI, IME

Mobile platforms
* Threat type: Design attack / development disruption
* Affects: User freedom, free software development
* Summary: The companies offering mobile platforms actually like having more control than their customers-- mobile is where user and developer freedom goes to die
* Recognized by: Techrights, Free Media Alliance
* Also recognized by FSF: Yes
* Mitigation: Avoid mobile devices / design news ones
* Examples: iPhone, iPad, Android, GSM stack

New device horizon
* Threat type: Design attack / development disruption
* Affects: User freedom, free software development
* Summary: SmartTVs, Smarthome devices and automotive entertainment systems all introduce new threats to security, privacy and freedom
* Recognized by: Techrights, Free Media Alliance
* Also recognized by FSF: Yes
* Mitigation: Avoid / boycott / document / research these devices
* Examples: SmartTVs, Internet of Things, automotive entertainment systems

Forced / Excessively pushed updates
* Threat type: Design attack / development disruption
* Affects: User freedom, security
* Summary: A free user controls when and if updates happen-- not every software vendor is respectful of this
* Recognized by: Free Media Alliance, people that left Windows in part because of their overbearing update feature
* Also recognized by FSF: In many instances, yes
* Mitigation: Avoid / boycott / document / stand against projects that make it impossible or exceedingly difficult to avoid updates when the user doesnt want them-- insist on opt-in or ask-first defaults
* Examples: Pale Moon, Mozilla, deactivating plugins installed by the user (the deactivtion of which may even lead to harmful code running when the browser restarts)

Feature Churn
* Threat type: Design attack / development disruption
* Affects: Stability, free software development, helps create lock-in
* Summary: Arbitrary and poor excuses for dragging people from one fad to the next-- routine sabotage mispronounced as "upgrades"
* Recognized by: Steve Litt, Free Media Alliance, some critics of Systemd
* Also recognized by FSF: Perhaps not
* Mitigation: Avoid / boycott / document / stand against projects that use EEE-like tactics against high-profile free software projects
* Examples: Systemd, GNOME

Publisher / manufacturer control of media after "purchase"
* Threat type: Design attack / development disruption
* Affects: User freedom, free software development
* Summary: Media companies circumvent first-sale doctrine and threaten the autonomy/existence of libraries by encrypting files and retaining proprietary control of keys-- a bit like ransomware, except a mainstream business practice with Apple, Microsoft, Amazon, others
* Recognized by: Techrights, Free Media Alliance, Free culture advocates
* Also recognized by FSF: Yes
* Mitigation: Avoid / boycott / document / stand against companies that control media after "purchase", insist it be called what it is: a "lease"
* Examples: E-books from Amazon and Microsoft, Digital restrictions on films, apps, music

GREEN light: Corporate cultural values
* Threat type: Development disruption, social
* Affects: Communication, software development, organisations
* Summary: Dumping corporate culture into free software organisations encourages / obligates members to act / think in a way that corporations can use to their advantage
* Recognized by: Techrights? Who is more likely to say this openly?
* Also recognized by FSF: At least, they recommend avoiding monopolistic terminology and even mocking it with alternative terms
* Mitigation: Avoid / parody / eschew corporate culture within reason
* Examples: Codes of conduct, Recent FSF passivity isn't a coincidence, KIND guidelines alternative to CoC isn't a coincidence

Saturation of media
* Threat type: Development disruption, social
* Affects: Communication, software development, organisations
* Summary: Free software news drowns amid constant penetration / saturation of advertising / perspective from non-free angles
* Recognized by: Techrights, Free Media Alliance, free software advocates
* Also recognized by FSF: To the point where they have policies not to promote non-free software
* Mitigation: Avoid / boycott / document the existence of non-free software projects (in a non-promotional way)
* Examples: The constant deluge of trivial stories about Windows 10 features in the tech press / even "Open Source" news.

YELLOW light: Organizational homogeneity / single point of failure
* Threat type: Development disruption, social
* Affects: Communication, software development, organisations
* Summary: As organisations become more corporate, they become homogenous, sterile, unappealing and overly cautious / politically correct-- beyond the vastly overplayed requirement of "human decency"-- they become easier to manipulate and steer from goals
* Recognized by: Techrights, others
* Also recognized by FSF: One would hope
* Mitigation: Avoid / parody / eschew corporate culture within reason
* Examples: OpenRespect, Dishonestly using Codes of Conduct to stifle the actual founder of free software at a free software event, Torvalds showing signs of being taken to a "re-education center" or something

Confuse, divide, conquer
* Threat type: Development disruption, social
* Affects: Communication, software development, organisations
* Summary: Playing open source against free software (it's not actually the other way around as you always imply, S.P. --never was!)
* Recognized by: Bruce Perens, Techrights, also some leaked stories
* Also recognized by FSF: Yes, but they don't say a lot about it
* Mitigation: Learn the real history of "Open source," not just the Torvalds-centric rewritten version they've promoted for decades (gradually being replaced with a Corporate-centric version by LF)
* Examples: FUD from OSI, FUD from Microsoft

Destroying leaders and visionaries
* Threat type: Development disruption, social
* Affects: Communication, software development, organisations, free software adoption
* Summary: Ad hom writ large, exaggerating or inventing negative stories about key figures in free software advocacy
* Recognized by: Techrights, Free Media Alliance, free software advocates
* Also recognized by FSF: Yes
* Mitigation: When Al Gore's words were taken out of context and twisted into the claim that he "invented the Internet," some of the net's real architects defended his contributions as vital to its success
* Examples: A variety of unjustified attacks on Stallman throughout the years, dishonestly overplaying the aggressive nature of Torvalds critique of dangerous/destructive/irresponsible changes to the kernel [NOTE: Which arguably prevents more harm than it causes. If a nurse drops an instrument into an patient's body, do we really suppose the surgeon shouldn't chastise them, ever? Is the appropriate response to every possible screw-up really "OK, don't worry about it?" This is political correctness beyond the requirement of human decency-- it's narcissists demanding the right to never be criticized or chastised.]

RED light: Complete cultural takeover
* Threat type: Development disruption, social
* Affects: Communication, software development, organisations
* Summary: The plan has never changed, takeover is already here, it just isn't evenly distributed-- "cooler" software tools, larger sponsorships, bigger marketing is the rule; the difference is that it is happening on free software turf now (or close enough for alarm)
* Recognized by: Techrights, Free Media Alliance, possibly others
* Also recognized by FSF: Very unlikely (or in very limited/historical context)
* Mitigation: Avoid / boycott / document / stand against projects and companies that use EEE-like tactics against high-profile free software organisations and projects
* Examples: Linux Foundation

Co-opting charities
* Threat type: Development disruption, social
* Affects: Communication, software development, organisations
* Summary: Some FLOSS-related and non-free software-related companies have complementary non-profit and commercial organisations; that isn't the problem, though it is a problem when the co-opt charities to promote non-free software
* Recognized by: Techrights, some public schoolteacher/activists, Free Media Alliance
* Also recognized by FSF: At least as much as you would expect
* Mitigation: Avoid / boycott / document / stand against projects that use EEE-like tactics combined with public charity organisations
* Examples: Influence and changes in both public education and OLPC

Apathy
* Threat type: Development disruption, social
* Affects: Communication, software development, organisations
* Summary: Deface Wikipedia, get called a bastard; but deface free software projects and take over related organisations, get named a "contributor" and people saying "it's not our problem"-- as the problems get larger, why are advocates getting quieter?
* Recognized by: Techrights, Free Media Alliance, most likely some people from Dyne or Devuan also
* Also recognized by FSF: To be determined
* Mitigation: Avoid / boycott / document / stand against projects and companies that use EEE-like tactics against high-profile free software projects and organisations
* Examples: Systemd, Many free software advocates

False compromise / complete compromise (mostly on one side)
* Threat type: Consumer / user manipulation
* Affects: Free software adoption
* Summary: All critique is painted as lack of compromise-- solution is to withhold all critique and "be more reasonable."
* Recognized by: Free software advocates
* Also recognized by FSF: Yes, where "Open source" is involved
* Mitigation: Honesty, integrity, (diplomatically) standing by valid critiques
* Examples: Free software should do things more like Open source (Open source is a compromise on free software principles, free software should give up their own principles for those of a monopolistic company-- "because compromise")

Trademark shift (from free to open to non-free)
* Threat type: Consumer / user manipulation
* Affects: Free software adoption
* Summary: "GNU" -> "Linux" -> "Azure"
* Recognized by: Techrights, Free Media Alliance
* Also recognized by FSF: At least the first part
* Mitigation: Avoid, as much as reasoably possible, assisting the rebranding of free as open or open as enterprise
* Examples: breakdowns of "how much" from each contributor goes into whether GNU/Linux is about "freedom" or about "development methodology", which (often deliberately) misses the point of why GNU existed in the first place

Education takeover / student indoctrination
* Threat type: Consumer / user manipulation
* Affects: Free software adoption
* Summary: Non-free software vendors use public education to subsidize marketing and create lock-in; if free software wants to "win" it needs to find its way into American (plus other) education whether by lobbying for it or by supplementing it
* Recognized by: Free Media Alliance
* Also recognized by FSF: Yes, but they don't say enough about it
* Mitigation: Focus on education with free software-- preferably in schools, also online, create tutorials and teach everyone how to code
* Examples: There are practically unlimited examples of non-free software in schools, although some countries use free software in classrooms [and some libraries use it in educational children's activities-- NOTE: we need much more of this!]

FOMO
* Threat type: Consumer / user manipulation
* Affects: Free software adoption
* Summary: People have spent decades being told they will "miss out" if they don't use non-free software or "upgrade" to features that erode their freedom and subjugate users
* Recognized by: Techrights, Free Media Alliance
* Also recognized by FSF: Almost certainly
* Mitigation: Be more objective/critical about new software, particularly when it erodes existing choiecs
* Examples: Systemd, Ubuntu, GNOME

Appeal to consumer pride
* Threat type: Consumer / user manipulation
* Affects: Free software adoption, stability
* Summary: Sell people new things, encourage them to feel superior to everyone using things that are well-established or stable because "they don't know anything about the new stuff."
* Recognized by: Techrights, Free Media Alliance
* Also recognized by FSF: Unknown
* Mitigation: Recognize and ignore trolls, but document and criticize the tactic
* Examples: Nope

The "Corporations are people too" myth
* Threat type: Consumer / user manipulation
* Affects: Communication, free software adoption
* Summary: Corporations are people, thus they deserve the same respect
* Recognized by: Techrights, Free Media Alliance
* Also recognized by FSF: They're too smart to fall for this
* Mitigation: Corporations are not people, when they do very bad things to people they should not expect respect from anybody
* Examples: Crap Jim Zemlin says, OpenRespect, Some of the typical nonsense from B.L., Torvalds' hatred of freedom is a disease

The "Corporate control is security" myth
* Threat type: Consumer / user manipulation
* Affects: The general public's concept of what security is
* Summary: Security is what you get when a monopoly takes care of stuff for you
* Recognized by: Free software advocates, critics of GAFAM, Techrights, serious security professionals
* Also recognized by FSF: It would have to be
* Mitigation: Learn / teach more about security myths
* Examples: Corporations have used this in the past to justify controlling what apps you can install on your phone

The "Surveillance is security" myth
* Threat type: Consumer / user manipulation
* Affects: Free software adoption
* Summary: "...for your protection"
* Recognized by: Techrights, Free Media Alliance, free software advocates
* Also recognized by FSF: Seems likely
* Mitigation: Do not promote or wilfully adopt mass surveillance whenever avoidable
* Examples: So many to choose from-- how about a home surveillance camera that can roam around on robotic wheels or treads?

False sense of security
* Threat type: Consumer / user manipulation
* Affects: Free software adoption
* Summary: Comanpies that do unethical things with your data want you to trust them, obviously-- they will act like a friend or helper
* Recognized by: Techrights, Free Media Alliance
* Also recognized by FSF: Absolutely
* Mitigation: Mitigating this is a cultural problem-- start by deleting Facebook and GitHub.
* Examples: Facebook, Twitter, Github, Google / Youtube, Mozilla, Telemetry, Cloud, GPS tracking, Internet of Things...

Security theater
* Threat type: Consumer / user manipulation
* Affects: Free software adoption
* Summary: "Security" is a magic word that makes people assume they need a thing or they won't be secure
* Recognized by: Techrights, free software advocates
* Also recognized by FSF: Sometimes at least
* Mitigation: Learning a little more about the subject
* Examples: Pale Moon's FUD against NoScript, Mozilla's control/deactivation of plugins that the user has installed, Secure boot, App stores that restrict what software you can install

Freemium bait-and-switch
* Threat type: Consumer / user manipulation
* Affects: Free software adoption
* Summary: Shareware is reborn as the "freemium" concept; with both, you get something for free and you pay money to make it great-- this isn't a problem for kickstarter funding, but it is when it results in and promotes non-free software
* Recognized by: Techrights, Free Media Alliance, critics of "Openwashing"
* Also recognized by FSF: Very unlikely (or in very limited/historical context)
* Mitigation: Avoid non-free software
* Examples: Ubuntu promotes non-free software

"Apple... has used the image of being 'different' and rebellious to justify overpriced, more proprietary components in its products.

Microsoft... has worked on its reputation of being ruthless and having unfair practices that hurt the computer industry on several different levels. Co-founder Bill Gates has rebranded himself a philanthropist, a common pastime among former ruthless company leaders that gives them an image of being less destructive or sociopathic...

While spying on users and selling their data mined by artificial intelligence and unscrupulous third parties, Facebook continues to work to make itself look like a philanthropic organization...

Google's brand is perhaps simply about raw power. Like with these other companies, the real power is the power they have over the industry and the users of their products."

Sheep's clothing
* Threat type: Consumer / user manipulation
* Affects: Free software adoption
* Summary: Rebrand everything to focus on the positive and ignore the subjugation of users
* Recognized by: Techrights, free software advocates
* Also recognized by FSF: Yes
* Mitigation: Criticize and when possible, avoid companies that treat users poorly or unethically
* Examples: GAFAM, many others. Amazon threatens "The Right to Read".

About the author:

Ted MacReilly is a technologist and tech writer concerned with modern trends in software design and development.

The Free Culture movement is in great need of support, and Free Software is also getting a little too soft. - Ted MacReilly, June 2019