Why Commercial Support Improves Security and Stability For Organizations Using Open Source
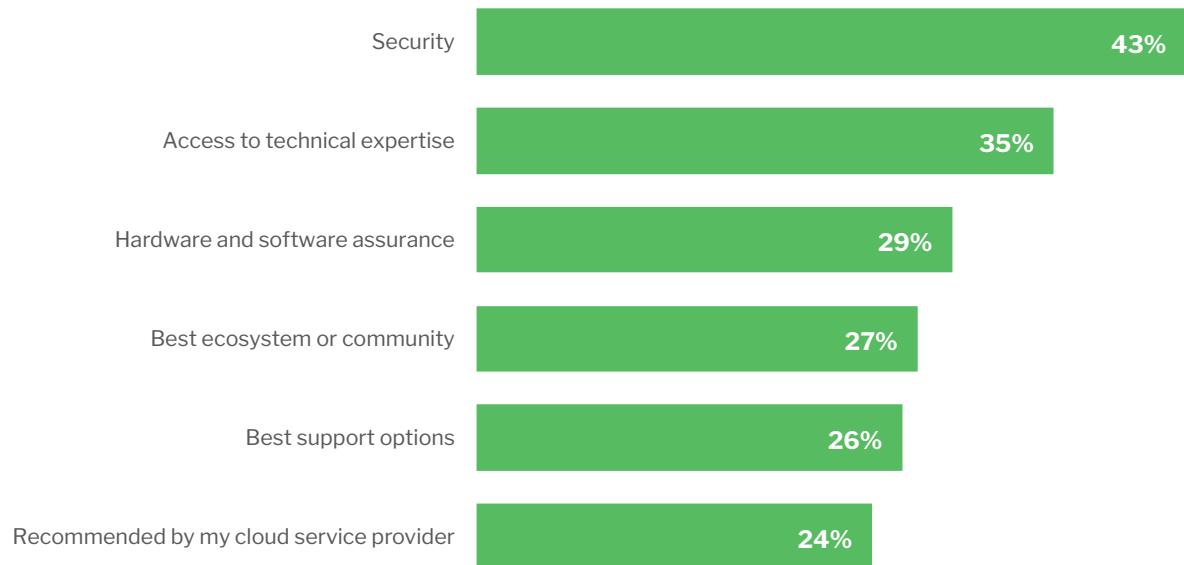
The 451 Take

With its prominent role in cloud infrastructure, application development and emergent trends such as cloud-native, open source software is a critical component of digital transformation and the success of midsized companies. Open source software can allow midsized organizations to expand infrastructure across multiple environments without sacrificing central governance. However, effectively leveraging open source software can be difficult given challenges such as security and compliance concerns, lack of talent, and a complex landscape of many projects and vendors. Most organizations using open source software require commercial support that includes stability and security enhancements, certification for hardware and software integration, and direct access to expertise.

Security, Support and Assurance Most Valued from Open Source Providers

Source: 451 Research/Red Hat custom survey
Q: Which of the following factors most influenced the selection of [vendor] as your primary open source provider?
Base: All respondents (n=1,350)

Factor	Percentage
Security	43%
Access to technical expertise	35%
Hardware and software assurance	29%
Best ecosystem or community	27%
Best support options	26%
Recommended by my cloud service provider	24%

As digital transformation continues, midsized organizations are turning to open source software to offset limitations they may have due to size and funding. Companies that can facilitate sanctioned and consistent use of open source software for their development and IT operations teams realize the most technical and business benefits from it. By leveraging open source advantages such as modularity, flexibility, efficiency and a broader set of developers through open source communities, midsized organizations are better positioned to take advantage of digital transformation to be more competitive and responsive in today's dynamic market.

Business Impact

COMMERCIAL SUPPORT ENABLES EFFECTIVE DEPLOYMENT. According to a Red Hat/451 Research custom survey, security, access to technical expertise, and hardware and software assurance are the key factors for selecting an open source provider (see figure above). Security concerns are consistently a priority for midsized companies leveraging open source software. Most organizations today recognize the need to secure their systems and applications to reduce risk. Support for open source software beyond community resources is also a critical need for midsized companies. However, lack of a clear line of communication to experts or contracted support can lead to improper management of open source software, creating inefficiencies and overspending, as well as increase risk. As organizations use a variety of open source software along with commercial offerings and cloud services, hardware/software certification and assurance are paramount to enable integration and security.

OPEN SOURCE MANDATES DRIVE ADOPTION. 451 Research's Voice of the Enterprise: DevOps H2 2019 survey indicates that far more enterprises have an open source preference (36%) or mandate (11%) compared to an open source aversion (11%) or prohibition (4%). Part of the growing prominence and reliance on open source software stems from its presence in key technology areas including cloud computing, the faster and more efficient software releases via DevOps, and the cloud-native trend that includes containers and Kubernetes. Open source software communities have also matured and evolved to give end users and customers a greater voice in features, priorities and roadmaps.

COMMERCIAL SUPPORT ADDRESSES OPEN SOURCE IMPLEMENTATION. Nevertheless, there are challenges with the use of open source software for application development and infrastructure management, particularly the use of free software without commercial support. Enterprise-level security and compliance requirements often necessitate certification and support from a commercial vendor. Midsized organizations typically lack open source expertise in-house and can also have difficulty supporting open source components using only community support. For digital transformation to be advantageous for midsized organizations, they need to be able to scale with security and compliance horizontally across infrastructure. Open source, if properly managed and supported, can help organizations achieve these objectives.

Looking Ahead

The need to effectively leverage open source software will only increase as enterprise infrastructure and application development continue to evolve, driven largely by trends such as DevOps and cloud-native. The complexity of the enterprise open source software ecosystem will also increase with a growing number of projects and commercial backers. The continued evolution of the DevSecOps trend will mean a greater number of security elements in DevOps releases, helping organizations to drive quality while reducing risk. Organizations that can leverage open source software effectively and efficiently with consistent support across the many different components and frameworks in use are better positioned to succeed. Our research indicates open source software can be a catalyst to more advanced production deployment and broader deployment of emergent technology and methodology, including DevOps and cloud-native. By taking advantage of both community and commercial support that enhances security, midsized organizations are better positioned to embrace these trends and achieve digital transformation.

Demand from customers and IT teams is soaring, and meeting it will require applications and infrastructure to be available and reliable in any environment. Red Hat's flexible hybrid cloud solutions are here to help you scale out with stability and security.