

Background and Purpose

Introduction

The PlaneShift Team believes strongly in the Open Source community and, more importantly, in the Open Source philosophy and process. For this reason, before the project ever started, we decided to open our source code and to have all this code publicly available. The theory was that the Open Source strategy would enable us to gain more developers and to share knowledge and ideas with people that do not have the time to join our team full time, but are still interested in contributing some code. We believed it would enable PlaneShift to build a community of developers and to help other projects that decide to use Crystal Space as their 3D engine. We have been gratified over the last three years to see that these beliefs were correct.

The more controversial decision, of course, was the decision to use more proprietary licenses for the non-code assets of the game. However, we believed at the time and still believe that this decision is a necessity for the success of this project and protects the value of the efforts of all team members.

The standard path

Let us explain our view of the MMORPG scene and of the many developers out there that are trying to build a game.

It all starts when someone has a great idea and he begins to work very hard to obtain what he wants. He will surely look to other games and he will try to build something that is at least decent compared to the current industry standards. The tremendous amount of work needed to create a competitive product will overwhelm him. No one can create a good game without a big and solid team. In the gaming industry there's no place for small projects, they will simply fail for lack of resources, lack of time, lack of money, and mainly lack of commitment. If the project does not progress quickly, the interest of the net-surfers dwindles and with it the morale of the team. With bad team morale, the project slowly dies. Surely he can ask the community of developers to help him, but they will be probably running their own projects, or they want to attach themselves to a winner, not a "sinking ship" so they will have no time or inclination to really help.

The problem is that many people have a good idea in mind for a great game and start to create a new project on a very small scale. They focus on adding the most innovative ideas and content, but this costs a lot in terms of resources. When using this method any small project will ultimately fail.

In the current MMORPG and RPG scene, many projects are very similar. Although different teams tend to build everything in different ways-new rules, new races, new interface, new engine-if you look closely, their final goal is absolutely the same: a persistent multiplayer fantasy world forming a successful and enjoyable game. This diffusion of talent with common goals among dispersed projects is one of the primary reasons few Open Source projects succeed.

How PlaneShift Is Different

We have seen too many projects fail, and it is painful to see more when we know how much effort has been put into them. We want to find a way to gather all these individualistic developers and create a successful project-for the players, but also for those developers that share the same dream.

The commercial industry does not care too much about Open Source because in most cases the projects are not organized and strong enough to reach their goal and to compete with them. The only way for any of these small OSS projects to succeed is to sacrifice a little of their pride and to join a large and well-organized team. In this way, all talented people can bring their ideas and skills into one project. These talented people will be less responsible for overall project progress, but they can concentrate more on what they really want to do, have more fun and have a much greater chance of success.

Our vision is to convince talented and dedicated people that this is the right path to follow, by focusing on two key objectives: gathering and keeping resources, and maximizing chances of success.

Objective 1: Gathering resources under a single common project is very important to build a strong team. We should try to avoid our project forking into other similar projects, because that means splitting resources and thus, lowering our chances of success. Those other forked projects will repeat efforts already spent on discussion of rules, building new races, writing new code and we will end up again with a lot of resources wasted and no goal reached.

Objective 2: Ensuring success is another key point of our organization. We are trying to preserve the work done by our members as much as we possibly can, with licenses and by adding only talented members to our team. For the project to be successful, it needs to be unique in architecture, rules, music and ideas; it must attract good players and RPG'ers and create a fun, stimulating, friendly community. Most importantly, it must be playable and complete.

Why PlaneShift Is Licensed the Way It Is

To try best to achieve these two goals we have made some tough decisions about licenses. However, in order to explain our conclusion, first it is necessary to examine the alternatives:

Option 1: Release absolutely everything under the GPL license. This option sounds great in theory but in practice has the following problems:

- Anyone can get all of the code and art, music and setting information and start building a similar game with a part of our team. This is sub-optimal because the forked project will split our forces and will lower our chance of success, which is contrary to Objective 1. We need to protect against internal division on the team to keep momentum and stay productive.
- Anyone can get all of the code and art, music and setting information and start building a similar game with a completely new team. The new project would be similar to PS and would destroy much of the uniqueness we are trying to put into the game to make it special. The game would hence be less appealing and more confusing to players, because they will have no common reference point for hall of fame, guilds, etc. The other project can also change the main guidelines/story of the game, giving races and NPCs a different background and history, or even alter it in ways deliberately calculated to hurt PS reputation. That will cause a lot of confusion amongst fans and players, and will disrupt our effort to have the best quality control possible in our game, which jeopardizes Objective 2. Furthermore, the new (and separate) team is a waste of resources if they are trying to reach the same goal as PS. We can join and reach the same goal faster together. So, this problem also detracts from Objective 1.
- Most artists do not want to release their work to the general public. They fear it will be used in projects or in ways they do not like, so we would lose out on potential artistic contributors joining the project this way, which is against Objective 1.

Option 2: Leave the copyrights in the names of the authors of the material. Again, this approach sounds very fair to everyone, but on closer examination has the following problems:

- A member could decide to leave the team and deny the continued usage of material they had already contributed to PS team. This will be a major blow to our progress if he removes many models. We would have to rebuild those from scratch. This scenario would only have to play out several times before our progress and momentum would be slowed measurably and our chances of success reduced, which detracts from Objective 2.
- If we decide in the future to modify, change, or publish on a website any contributed material, such as a screenshot or preview of the game in action, we would have to get advance permission from all the various copyright holders of each model and each reproduced piece. It is true that he may have already agreed on many aspects, but we could easily face a new scenario (like his art published on the cover of a book or on a press magazine). We already have a list of more than 50 people that have contributed to PS so far and it would be really complex or difficult to contact them again if they have left the team. This will hinder our ability to expand or publicize the game and so it is against Objective 2.
- The author of contributed material could reuse the material for another similar game by simply allowing another project to also access his copyrights, which would hurt the uniqueness of PlaneShift and increase the chances of forking our team. This also detracts from Objective 2.

Option 3: The final (and best) option is to have a proprietary license that will assure past, present and future PlaneShift Team members that Objectives 1 and 2 are met and that their work will be used for PlaneShift only.

- All new contributors (or their legal guardians) are required to review, agree to and sign the Atomic Blue Contribution License Agreement ("ABC LICENSE"). If the creator of a work wants to contribute that work for inclusion in PlaneShift, but cannot be bound to the ABC LICENSE, the creator must contact Atomic Blue at info@planeshift.it. With very limited exceptions, only contributors that agree to the ABC LICENSE are eligible for full membership on the Atomic Blue team (the development team for PlaneShift) and only materials submitted under the ABC LICENSE will be included in the PlaneShift game.
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 2. The materials, once contributed, will be retained by Atomic Blue no matter what might happen with other projects, forks, mergers, alliances, and Atomic Blue will control how it is used.

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 *
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 *
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 *
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*
* Creation Date: <date>
* Description : <description>
*           ...
*
*/

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* Description : <description>
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