Microsoft joins Linux Foundation in another nod to open-source code

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Microsoft has joined the Linux Foundation, the latest sign that the software giant is embracing open-source technologies it formerly treated with hostility.

The foundation helps advise the development of the Linux and other software tools built on open-source terms that allow the public to freely use and modify software. Microsoft last week said it had joined the foundation on its most expensive tier of corporate membership, alongside the likes of Intel and Hewlett Packard Enterprise. Linux, which former Microsoft chief executive Steve Ballmer once called a cancer, was for years one of Microsoft's biggest rivals. The free-to-use operating system was seen for a time as the primary threat to expensive, proprietary Windows.

Windows won the battle for the personal computer but didn't fare so well in the broader debate about the value of open-source versus proprietary technology.

Linux-derived Android dominates the smartphone market, and open-source tools are a force in cloud-computing technologies. Many software startups favor open-source software by default.

Microsoft teams plugging away on developer tools and server software, realms heavily influenced by Linux, broke with the company line during the last several years in pushing greater involvement with the open-source community.

When Satya Nadella, previously Microsoft's server and tools chief, was named company chief executive in early 2014, the tone shifted companywide. Microsoft, Nadella said at an event in October 2014, loves Linux.

The company, headquartered outside Seattle, has since released elements of its own software under open-source terms and announced a version of its database management software, SQL Server, for Linux, among other steps.

GitHub, an online developer community and repository for software projects, said in September that there were more Microsoft employees contributing to open-source projects than representatives of any other single company.

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