Help saving MySQL - YAXS

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Michael "Monty" Widenius, the creator of MySQL, am asking you urgently to help save MySQL from Oracle's clutches. Without your immediate help Oracle might get to own MySQL any day now. By writing to the European Commission (EC) you can support this cause and help secure the future development of the product MySQL as an Open Source project.

What this text is about:
- Summary of what is happening
- What Oracle has not promised
- Oracles past behavior with Open Source
- Help spread this information (Jump to 'What I want to ask you to do')
- Example of email to send to the commission (Jump to 'send this to:')

I have spent the last 27 years creating and working on MySQL and I hope, together with my team of MySQL core developers, to work on it for many more years.

Oracle is trying to buy Sun, and since Sun bought MySQL last year, Oracle would then own MySQL. With your support, there is a good chance that the EC (from which Oracle needs approval) could prevent this from happening or demand Oracle to change the terms for MySQL or give other guarantees to the users. Without your support, it might not. The EC is our last big hope now because the US government approved the deal while Europe is still worried about the effects.

Instead of just working out this with the EC and agree on appropriate remedies to correct the situation, Oracle has instead contacted hundreds of their big customers and asked them to write to the EC and require unconditional acceptance of the deal. According to what I been told, Oracle has promised to the customers, among other things, that "they will put more money into MySQL development than what Sun did" and that "if they would ever abandon MYSQL, a fork will appear and take care of things".

However just putting money into development is not proof that anything useful will ever be delivered or that MySQL will continue to be a competitive force in the market as it's now.

As I already [blogged](link) before, a fork is not enough to keep MySQL alive for all future, if Oracle, as the copyright holder of MySQL, would at any point decide that they should kill MySQL or

make parts of MySQL closed source.

Oracle claims that it would take good care of MySQL but let's face the facts: Unlike ten years ago, when MySQL was mostly just used for the web, it has become very functional, scalable and credible. Now it's used in many of the world's largest companies and they use it for an increasing number of purposes. This not only scares but actually hurts Oracle every day. Oracle have to lower prices all the time to compete with MySQL when companies start new projects. Some companies even migrate existing projects from Oracle to MySQL to save money. Of course Oracle has a lot more features, but MySQL can already do a lot of things for which Oracle is often used and helps people save a lot of money. Over time MySQL can do to Oracle what the originally belittled Linux did to commercial Unix (roughly speaking).

So I just don't buy it that Oracle will be a good home for MySQL. A weak MySQL is worth about one billion dollars per year to Oracle, maybe more. A strong MySQL could never generate enough income for Oracle that they would want to cannibalize their real cash cow. I don't think any company has ever done anything like that. That's why the EC is skeptic and formalized its objections about a month ago.

Richard Stallman agrees that it's very important which company owns MySQL, that Oracle should not be allowed to buy it under present terms and that it can't just be taken care of by a community of volunteers. http://keionline.org/ec-mysql

Oracle has NOT promised (as far as I know and certainly not in a legally binding manner):

- To keep (all of) MySQL under an open source license.
- Not to add closed source parts, modules or required tools.
- To keep the code for MySQL enterprise edition and MySQL community edition the same.
- To not raise MySQL license or MySQL support prices.
- To release new MySQL versions in a regular and timely manner. (*)
- To continue with dual licensing and always provide affordable commercial licenses to MySQL to those who needs them (to storage vendors and application vendors) or provide MySQL under a more permissive license
- To develop MySQL as an Open Source project
- To actively work with the community
- Apply submitted patches in a timely manner
- To not discriminate patches that make MySQL compete more with Oracles other products
- To ensure that MySQL is improved also in manners that make it compete even more with Oracles' main offering.

From looking at how Oracle handled the InnoDB acquisition, I don't have high hopes that Oracle will do the above right if not required to do so:

For InnoDB:
- Bug fixes were done (but this was done under a contractual obligation)
- New features, like compression that was announced before acquisition, took 3 years to implement

- No time tables or insight into development
- The community where not allowed to participate in development
- Patches from users (like Google) that would have increased performance was not implemented/released until after Oracle announced it was acquiring Sun.
- Oracle started working on InnoDB+, a better 'closed source' version of InnoDB
- In the end Sun had to fork InnoDB, just to be able to improve performance.

It's true that development did continue, but this was more to be able to continue using InnoDB as a pressure on MySQL Ab.

Note that Oracle's development on the Linux kernel is not comparable with MySQL, because:
- Oracle is using Linux as the main platform for their primary database product (and thus a better Linux makes Oracles platform better)
- The GPL code in the kernel is not affecting what is running on top on it (because of an exception in Linux).

Because we don't have access to a database of MySQL customers and users the only way we can get the word out is to use the MySQL and Open Source community. I would never have resorted to this if Oracle had not broken the established rules in anticompetitive merger cases and try to influence the EC by actively mobilising the customers after the statement of objection was issued.

It's very critical to act upon this AS SOON AS POSSIBLE as EC, depending on what Oracle is doing, needs to make a decision around 2010-01-05. Because of the strict deadline, every email counts!

What I want to ask you to do:

- Forward this email/message to everyone that you know is using MySQL or Open Source/free software and to all email list where you know there are people present that use or care about MySQL and open source (please check first that this email hasn't been sent there before)
- Alternatively send emails with information about this and tell them to read http://monty-says.blogspot.com/2009/12/help-saving-mysql.html
- Add links on your web site to http://monty-says.blogspot.com/2009/12/help-saving-mysql.html with the text "We are using MySQL, help save it", for the duration of the next two week.
- Blog about this (feel free to include this text or just link to my blog)
- Call by phone (don't contact by email, this is urgent) your boss or VP and ask him to read this email and send a letter to the EC commission ASAP!
- If you don't have anyone to contact above, send an email to the EC!

As we want the EC to get a correct picture of the situation, we want you to first fill in the upper part and then choose one of the proposed texts below that best matches your view of the situation. Feel free to supply your own text and additional information if you think this will help the EC to reach a better understanding of how MySQL is used.

Send this to: comp-merger-registry@ec.europa.eu

If you want to keep us updated, send a copy to ec@askmonty.org

If you have extra time to help, fill in the following, if not, just skip to the main text.

Name:
Title:
Company:
Size of company:
How many MySQL installations:
Total data stored in MySQL (megabyte):
For what type of applications is MySQL used:
Should this email be kept confidential by EC: Yes/No

Copy or use one of the below texts as a base for your answer:

a)
I don't trust that Oracle will take good care of MySQL and MySQL should be divested to another company or foundation that have everything to gain by developing and promoting MySQL. One should also in the future be able to combine MySQL with closed source application (either by exceptions, a more permissive license or be able to dual license MySQL under favourable terms)

b)

I think that Oracle could be a good steward of MySQL, but I would need EC to have legally binding guarantees from Oracle that:
- All of MySQL will continue to be fully Open Source/free software in the future (no closed source modules).
- Open Source version and dual-licensed version of MySQL should have same source (like today).
- That development will be done in community friendly way.
- The manual should be released under a permissive license (so that one can fork it, the same way one can fork the server)
- That MySQL should be released under a more permissive license to ensure that forks can truly compete with Oracle if Oracle is not a good steward after all.
Alternatively:
- One should be able to always buy low priced commercial licenses for MySQL.
- All of the above should be perpetual and irrevocable.

There should also be mechanism so that if Oracle is not doing what is expected of it, forks should be able to compete with Oracle

c)
I trust Oracle and I suggest that EC will approve the deal unconditionally.

Let us prove to Oracle and EC that the Open Source community is a true force and we take good care of our citizens and we prefer to work with companies that does the same!

The future of MySQL is in your hands!

Thanks for the help!
Michael Widenius
Creator of MySQL

UPDATE: Oracle has made some public promises that only fixes this one issue marked with (*).

NOTE: Their promise to storage engines vendors is not future safe as it's a time-limited non-assertion (they promise to not sue for 5 years), but they could still sue one for using a storage engine with old code after the 5 years. They limited the promise to the storage engine API but not to other plugin API:s that almost every pluggable storage engine uses. They clarify this, Oracle should change this to be a license exception for all plugins and it should be valid perpetual with the released code. It's also unclear if this non-assertion is valid if the vendor makes extension to the interfaces (which most storage engines do).

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