

Manifesto for Nomination as President

Hugh Douglas-Smith

Background

I have been actively involved with the Joomla project for more than eight years having started with the Extensions team processing reviews. I was elected to the Board of Directors as DC of operations in Feb. 2018 and served in that role for two years until becoming Legal & Finance Director in Feb. 2020.

During my time on the board I have worked with the other board members to bring some standards and procedures to the roles and processes that exist. In the last eighteen months I have also worked to secure sponsorships in order to maintain an income stream into the project, something which despite the world locking down to deal with Covid and face to face events ceasing, I am proud to say that in the current fiscal year we have seen the income significantly increase over the previous year.

Outside of Joomla, I have spent more than thirty years in the I.T. industry working for typically large American software houses as part of the board or senior management teams in the sales, marketing or operational areas. I have also served on the board of a number of European based software companies and when not directly within the software industry, I was head of sales for one of Europe's largest Tier One ISPs with a team of 80 people and a budget of more than £80M.

Joomla

When you stand back and look at what Joomla has achieved since its inception, it is by any measure, simply incredible. To have commanded a market share which by whatever measure has been in a top 5 position is something many commercial companies would have given their right arm for. We should be immensely proud of having achieved that, especially as a volunteer organisation.

We must however understand that with that presence comes a huge responsibility. There are millions of websites out there which form the lifeblood of small or medium sized companies. The owners and often staff of those companies rely on having a reliable web presence and Joomla has provided that. What we must do, is ensure that the trust that is placed in us, by all of those users, is not forgotten. To that end, I believe that we need to focus now on presenting a far more professional image and infrastructure which is capable of propelling us forward and providing a sustainable environment for our community and volunteers. With the release of J4 imminent, we need an infrastructure to drive us to the next level.

Open Source Matters Inc.

OSM is and always has been US based which made a lot of sense when the organisation was founded. Our lawyers and bankers are also based in the US and that over the last few years has presented some significant challenges to the organisation. For example to add the

treasurer as a signatory to the bank account (which is pretty much essential) he has to travel to New York and present in person at our bank. In a Covid world, this is impossible.

We have also been working to achieve 501c3 status for the Joomla Foundation in the US, something which has already gone through multiple rejections and appeals. This is an important status because without it, we miss out on many income streams which would significantly benefit our operation. All of our competitors have a similar status within their organisations and benefit accordingly. We need to obtain the 501c3 status and I am hopeful that our latest appeal will be successful. Currently however, if our latest appeal fails, we do not have a plan B.

I believe we should look to how the organisational structure has hampered us in recent years, particular given that our largest userbases in terms of volunteers are on this side of the Atlantic. I therefore propose, and make it the key goal of my manifesto for President to establish a parallel corporate structure within Europe.

This would NOT replace OSM, or the Foundation, but would give us a trading entity and charitable status on this side of the Atlantic where I know from my experience as the Chairman of the board of Trustees of two UK charities that the gaining of charitable status (501c3) is a lot less arduous and more easily achievable. As part of this I would also look to supplementing our current banking facilities with a European parallel, then as officers change through the normal election cycle, so the bank could be cycled between US and Europe as required.

As part of this, I would also intend to formalise the way in which Joomla operates, this time as a corporate organisation that can, where necessary employ staff into specific roles. Providing a far more professional status on which to grow our presence again, but also to provide a much stronger foundation and infrastructure for our community and volunteers.

We have lost many great volunteers over recent years through what has been perceived as bullying within the community. We have a 'Conflict Resolution Process' which does little to improve the situation. There appears to be universal agreement that the way forward is to outsource and focus on mediation rather than banning and punishment, but so far the costs have been beyond what the current organisation can afford. As a corporate entity, I want to be able to afford those strategies that strengthen our community and provide a safer and more inviting place for everyone to work.

To do that we need to be able to offer additional levels of service to organisations who want to rely on Joomla and be able to charge them to receive those services. In the current structure this is not possible. I am thinking here of being able to offer hosted services with SLAs and potentially ready to run integrations. In other words, an enhanced product but one you need to pay for if you want to benefit from the additional features or services. To those who are worried about change, or the commercialisation of the community, I would point you towards Redhat as an example and see how offering a service led 'professional' solution has supported their community.

Finally I want to address the elephant in the room, the recent revelations of the financial issues caused by a previous President. As the board member who originally proposed the motion to make bank accounts visible to the board, I believe we need to be far more open and transparent. We also need to behave like a company, it is not wrong to trust people, but we must ensure that right checks and balances are in place to ensure misappropriation of funds is not possible in the future. To that end I have already introduced the policy for holders of corporate cards and will continue to ensure that we work more transparently in the future.

So, my plan is to find a way of making OSM and Joomla a more professional organisation and one that can react more quickly to the market it is in. If you agree that this is now the direction we need to move in, I hope you will be able to support me in this nomination.

Thank you for your attention and continued support.

Hugh Douglas-Smith