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Commercial open source had very good 2009

by [Matt Asay](#)

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2009 was very good for open-source businesses. Sure, there was the very public news of [Red Hat's gravity-defying year](#), along with Novell's SUSE Linux business [climbing each quarter](#), but what of the still-private open-source companies?

It turns out they had much to celebrate, too.

Not every open-source company publicized its progress, but several did:

- SugarCRM [announced](#) a "record year in terms of revenue, subscriptions and users, adding over 2,000 commercial customers" to bring its total customer base to over 6,000 organizations scattered across 75 different countries. (Disclosure: I am an advisor to the company.)
- Zimbra got the press, but [Open-Xchange managed to increase its user base](#) to 15 million users, a net increase of 7 million users in 2009.
- Sonatype, which [plays a key role](#) in advancing the Apache Maven community, has seen Maven Central hits skyrocket to 300 million, with unique visitors doubling over 2008. While I am not privy to its financial results, I do know from sources close to the company that the Sonatype has consistently hit its targets.
- Alfresco, my employer, notched its [17th-straight growth quarter](#) at the end of 2009. Alfresco is profitable with results that put it on the IPO track.
- While still largely pre-revenue, open-source cloud computing pioneer

Eucalyptus Systems scored 15,000 monthly downloads after launching in April, with companies like Eli Lilly lining up to trial its software.

- **JasperSoft grew** its open-source business intelligence business by 75 percent, year-over-year. Downloads crept close to 8 million with over 100,000 paying customers. (Disclosure: I am an advisor to the company.)
- Even companies that don't normally make a lot of noise, **like Songbird**, made significant headway, with Songbird scoring a significant distribution deal with Philips.

Red Hat **argues** that the bad economy has been good for open source. The evidence above, while hardly conclusive, indicates that the open-source bellwether could be right.



Matt Asay brings a decade of in-the-trenches open-source business and legal experience to The Open Road, with an emphasis on emerging open-source business strategies and opportunities. Matt is vice president of business development at Alfresco, a company that develops open-source software for content management. He is a member of the CNET Blog Network and is not an employee of CNET. **Disclosure**. You can follow Matt on [Twitter @mjasay](#).