



Obeo Accelerates Growth, Increases Exposure as a Strategic Member of the Eclipse Foundation

Case Study





Building a Stronger Open Source Strategy at the Eclipse Foundation

Open source software has been key to Obeo's product strategy since the company was created in 2005 in France. The original Obeo team was very small — three company founders and an intern — and they believed an open source strategy was the best way to increase usage of Acceleo, the company's software for model-driven development, and build brand awareness.

The strategy was successful. Today, Obeo employs dozens of people, partners with major industry players, and has a global customer base. The company is also a member of the Eclipse Foundation Board of Directors.



Cédric Brun, CEO, Obeo

Cédric Brun is Obeo's CEO. He was also the company's first intern. With his long history and leadership role at the company, Brun has

a clear view of the factors that helped Obeo build credibility and market awareness.

"Our growth, especially our growth outside of France, would not have been possible without the reputation we built by participating in the Eclipse Foundation," he says. "Our involvement in the Eclipse Foundation helped us to be recognized in our technical niche in just a few years."

Obeo specializes in open source solutions to create and transform complex industrial systems, IT applications, and corporate digital operations. The

Acceleo software has always been open source, but it was not originally hosted at the Eclipse Foundation. That changed after the Obeo team met members of the Eclipse Foundation community at an Eclipse Summit Europe conference — now called EclipseCon — in 2006 and initiated its first project.

The Eclipse Foundation Is a Natural Fit for Obeo

“At the time, most developers were using the Eclipse IDE, and there were additional technologies such as the Eclipse Modeling Framework, so we knew we had to target this environment,” explains Brun. “It really made sense for us to benefit from that whole ecosystem.”

In 2007, Obeo joined the Eclipse Foundation and created the Eclipse EMF Compare project to bring model comparison and merging capabilities to the Eclipse Modeling Framework. Contributing the open source Acceleo software to the Eclipse Foundation was a natural next step. The company’s involvement in the Eclipse Foundation expanded from there.

“As we created and participated in more Eclipse Foundation projects and working groups, we realized it also made sense to further enhance our commercial products business with open source technologies,” explains Brun.

Eclipse Sirius is one example. The modeling workbench software was originally developed for Thales, and Obeo offered it as a commercial product for about three years. Then, Thales contributed the

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code to the Eclipse Foundation in alignment with Obeo’s willingness to evolve from a business model that’s 100 percent based on a commercial product to an approach that’s based on an open core with add-ons.

“Open source has been an important factor in Obeo’s strategy since our inception,” says Brun. “And the Eclipse Foundation has been an accelerator that we were organically driven to. We are now doubling down on this commitment by releasing the next generation of this modeling technology, which is web-enabled, as Eclipse Sirius Web.”



Strategic Membership Expands Obeo's Influence and Visibility

When Obeo joined the Eclipse Foundation, the company selected a membership level that matched its role as a contributor to, and consumer of, Eclipse Foundation projects. Just two years later in 2009, the company upgraded its membership to become a strategic member.

Strategic members of the Eclipse Foundation have a representative on the board of directors, giving them direct influence over the strategic direction of the Eclipse Foundation. They also have representatives on the Eclipse Foundation Planning and Architecture Councils, giving them direct input into the development processes and architecture of the Eclipse Foundation project community.

"We wanted more visibility into the strategy of the Eclipse Foundation as an organization and we wanted to participate in driving the strategy," says Brun. Several other factors influenced Obeo's decision. "The rules are clear, open, and they enable product-based business goals," says Brun. "Also, the governance is vendor-neutral, and the community is expert, welcoming, and friendly. These were all aspects we considered when we decided to become a strategic member of the Eclipse Foundation."

A Seat at the Table With Global Technology Leaders

The Strategic membership puts Obeo on equal footing with the other board members, a diverse group of companies that includes global technology leaders such as Bosch, Fujitsu, Huawei, IBM, Oracle, Red Hat, and SAP. Each company on the board has the same voice and the same vote, regardless of their size, membership fees, or number of employees involved in the Eclipse Foundation.

Brun says the experience has been beneficial from multiple perspectives. “First of all, it’s pretty exciting to have a seat next to some of these people and to have the same influence over decisions that have an industry-level impact,” he says. “It also gives us the opportunity to learn and to grow as people, especially regarding all of the legal and licensing aspects of open source software. We’ve gained quite a bit of experience and we know how to approach decisions from a legal perspective, which is very helpful when talking with customers.”

While Obeo has evolved to the highest level of membership at the Eclipse Foundation, Brun advises companies considering membership to start by simply joining projects, participating in the community, and attending events.

“If you participate in the technology communities you’re interested in and it works for you, then becoming a member is a natural step. But, you have to get involved and actively participate to receive value from your membership,” he says.

Eclipse Foundation Memberships for All Levels of Involvement

The Eclipse Foundation offers four membership levels that are tailored for different levels of involvement:

- **Strategic:** Members invest significant resources in advancing the technologies hosted at the Eclipse Foundation and have a seat on the Eclipse Foundation’s Board of Directors.
- **Contributing:** Members view Eclipse Foundation technologies as key to their strategies and offer products and services based on, or with, Eclipse Foundation technologies.
- **Associate:** Members participate in, and show support for, the Eclipse Foundation ecosystem.
- **Committer:** Members are the core developers of Eclipse Foundation projects who can commit changes to project source code.

Because membership fees are based on a member’s annual corporate revenues, companies of any size can afford to join the Eclipse Foundation.



Increasing Involvement in the Eclipse Foundation Leads to New Opportunities

As Obeo became more involved in the Eclipse Foundation, new business opportunities arose.

“Our presence in the community led to contracts for development services and partnerships that allowed us to grow the company to almost 50 employees,” says Brun. “And what is really interesting for us is that our customers are mainly big industry players and organizations that are looking to accelerate development that is specific to their domain and they’re making a long-term commitment to the technology.”

Relationships With Much Larger Customers and Partners

Brun sees a strong connection between customers’ willingness to invest in Obeo’s solutions and the company’s participation in the Eclipse Foundation.

“Being part of the Eclipse Foundation and developing the technology as open source is a key differentiator for us because it provides assurance to businesses that the technology will last, even if

Obeo does not,” he explains. “This was particularly reassuring when we were still a very small company. But, if you look at the first projects we created and maintained — Eclipse EMF Compare and Eclipse Acceleo — they’re still evolving 14 years after their first release and that’s definitely something our customers are happy about.”

One of the key partnerships Obeo developed through its involvement in the Eclipse Foundation is with Thales, a French multinational company

that provides electrical systems and services for the aerospace, defense, transportation, and security industries. While Obeo has a few dozen employees, Thales employs tens of thousands of people and has annual revenues in the billions of euros.

“Thales is a large consumer of Eclipse Foundation technologies, but also a large contributor to the Eclipse Sirius and Eclipse Capella projects among others,” explains Brun. “We’re able to partner with them on projects for the long term. We’re also able to build on our experience and involvement in the Eclipse Foundation to act as a middleman who can help and advise Thales about opportunities to enhance their solutions.”

Brun notes that Obeo has developed relationships with other much larger organizations at the Eclipse Foundation that have also led to business opportunities.

“The Eclipse Foundation provides a magnifier effect because we’ve been identified as the company to get in touch with for certain types of projects, and that has been very important to our growth,” he says.

Business Growth and a Global Reach

While it’s difficult for Brun to quantify the return on investment from Obeo’s Eclipse Foundation membership, he says there’s a clear connection to business growth.

“Membership in the Eclipse Foundation is the backbone that helps us understand what we need to do to grow our business from a broader, strategic perspective. I can’t say that membership is the only reason, but I can say that our revenues have doubled since 2009. And more than 25 percent of our revenues are now generated outside of France,” he says.

With the Eclipse Foundation’s vendor-neutral governance and clear intellectual property rules, Obeo has even been able to collaborate with competitors.

“Even if we’re competitors in the market, the ability to work together on projects and share common platforms is highly valuable,” says Brun.



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The Eclipse Foundation's administrative move to Europe in 2020 also brought business benefits. For example, Obeo's European customers are no longer concerned about being subject to North American laws. And it's easier for Obeo to set up and participate in European research projects and to receive research funding from European institutions.

"Joining research projects is a helpful way to fund R&D, test prototypes with academics, and provide innovative, open source solutions to real-world problems," says Brun.

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About Obeo

Obeo provides collaborative and specialized visual software for architects of innovations and transformations. Obeo's open source solutions are used to create and transform complex systems, including:

- Industrial systems in avionics, space, defense, energy, and transportation
- IT applications
- Corporate digital operations



Open source software is central to the company's philosophy and its business is built around supporting customers as they implement tailored, open, open source, and adaptable modeling solutions.

The company has leveraged its position as a global leader in Eclipse Foundation modeling technologies to build a customer portfolio of 250 major organizations in France and internationally.

For more information, visit obeo.fr.



About the Eclipse Foundation

The Eclipse Foundation provides its global community of individuals and organizations with a mature, scalable, and business-friendly environment for open source software collaboration and innovation.

The Foundation is home to the Eclipse IDE, Jakarta EE, and more than 375 open source projects, including runtimes, tools, and frameworks for cloud and edge applications, IoT, AI, automotive, systems engineering, distributed ledger technologies, open processor designs, and many others.

The Eclipse Foundation is a not-for-profit organization supported by more than 300 members, including industry leaders who value open source as a key enabler for their business strategies.

To learn more about the benefits of membership in the Eclipse Foundation, visit eclipse.org/membership.

To stay connected with the Eclipse Foundation, follow us on Twitter @EclipseFdn, LinkedIn, or visit eclipse.org.