

IBM

## DRIVING CRITICAL ORGANIC DIFFERENTIATION WITH ABM AND THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

### PROJECT SUMMARY

When IBM acquired Red Hat, it made the largest software industry acquisition ever, as well as a big bet that open source software is the future of business IT.

IBM client teams wanted thought leadership and messaging that could position IBM's Cloud with more competitive differentiation to shift misperceptions and show the advantage to individual developers of IBM's more open public cloud. All clouds are built with largely the same underlying open source components, which many IT decision makers still didn't realize. In addition, many clients still behaved as they might have in the pre-cloud era, dedicated to one or a few vendors and seeking license volume discounts. Decision makers needed more detail on open source, hybrid cloud and how it should change their thinking on developer hiring and cloud selection for the best compatibility as we move toward 5G.

Knowing that developers influence the majority of IT buying decisions and implementations, the team surveyed and communicated with developers and their hiring managers with a thought leadership campaign that had three objectives:

1. Refute the misperception that a single dominant cloud would lead to easier hiring and retention of top developer talent.
2. Gain developer and media attention to promote the new narrative as well as continued dedication to IBM's long open source heritage.

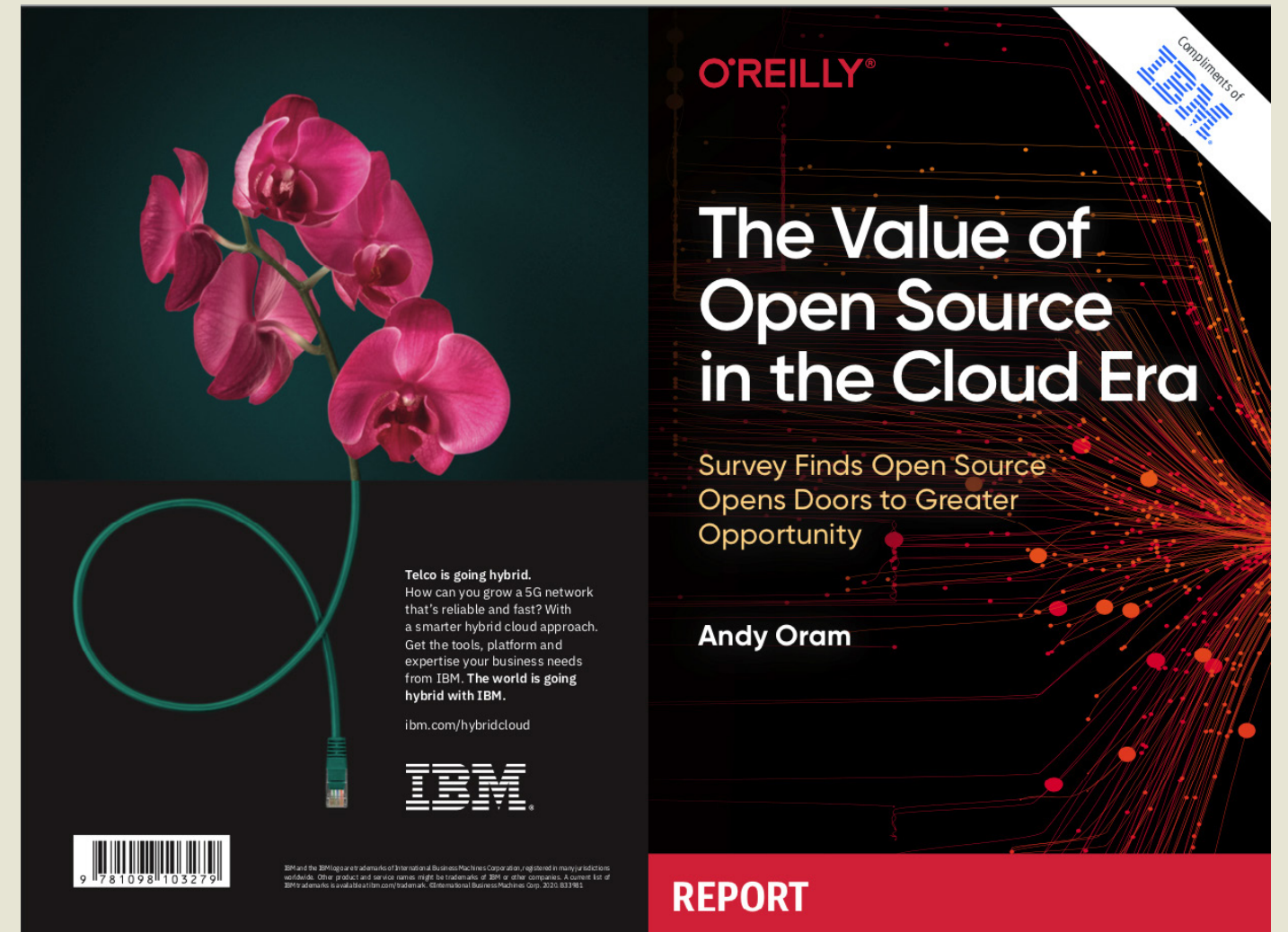
3. Drive interest and downloads to create leads and trackable value.

While IBM has decades of experience in both open source computing and thought leadership development, this approach was unique as it combined both. It was the first time IBM had done research with developers and hiring managers focused on open source, which is typically not considered an area of high profitability. However, it was of absolutely critical strategic importance.

Experience from the financial crisis in 2009 hinted that there would be a renewed interest in training and guidance on how developers could increase their employability and their market value. This would increase interest in training, and new opportunities, due to the pandemic crisis and growth in digital transformation. The IBM team worked with O'Reilly Publishing, which owns one of the most important developer conferences (OSCON) and has deep and wide reach into the developer community, to create its thought leadership approach.

The global survey of over 3,000 suggested that developers would be better off building skills around the open source technologies that underpin a vendor's cloud rather than focusing on skills related to a specific vendor or API.

After the survey results were analyzed, the team orchestrated a cross-functional sales enablement effort and PR push to launch *The Value of Open Source in the Cloud Era* report in North America, with coordinated activities across



PR, Corporate Advertising, and digital, social, field, and event marketing. Each team had 30-day, 60-day, and 90-day milestones and requirements.

The full report in the O'Reilly newsletter received 3.5% of unique clicks from its 327,000 subscribers. The O'Reilly impression count was over 11,447 and over 1,000 unique impressions on LinkedIn alone. In addition, the IBM press push produced 900,000 impressions initially, which continues to grow. The report received hundreds of downloads in the week of launch with IBM's social and news push.

Though the marketing plan for "*The Value of Open Source in the Cloud Era*" thought leadership was only semi-deployed by June 2021, the impact of 1 million impressions and hundreds of shares and downloads is impressive. With the linkage to both DevNexus and Developer Week, 31 deal opportunities related to these marketing activities are worth millions in validated pipeline. It's worth noting that the initial investment for the research and the report was less than \$100,000.

Due to the success of the North American launch, the report has now been translated into Spanish and Portuguese for Brazil and launched in Q3 2021.