

# Consultancy to do open source shopping for Stop & Shop chain

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STAFF WRITER

Open Source Advisors wants to guide businesses through the ever-growing options in the open source community.

Out of the gate the two-person startup has signed on Stop & Shop as its first customer and aligned with its first partner, Alpha Software in Burlington.

The Needham-based company is not developing software but rather is in the business of professional services, starting with a focus on assessment.

"There are about 3,500 open source products right now, and they're not games or toys but real products, and a lot of people don't know what's out there for open source and how it can bring down costs," said managing partner Paul Campbell, who along with fellow managing partner Carl Rubin formed the consulting firm this month.

With the catchphrase "90 percent of the functionality for 10 percent of the cost," Campbell and Rubin hope to educate businesses on the cost savings of open source versus commercial software.

That's not to say that commercial software is not a piece of their strategy. Rather, the consulting firm helps customers understand how to blend open source solutions with commercial products, in particular back-end ERP systems.

For Braintree Sourcing, a division of Ahold U.S.A., which owns Stop & Shop, it was a matter of moving outside of Ahold's IBM mainframe and into an open source environment to develop an application that collects data from suppliers, generates internal reports and customer reports.

For Stop & Shop, Braintree Sourcing provides sourcing services for not-for-resale products such as materials to build a store, down to plastic grocery bags.

"We brought Open Source Advisors in to review where we are, sort of like a checkup," said Tom Wilber, manager of

business analyses for Braintree Sourcing. "They checked that all of our controls were in place and that we made the right choices from an open source perspective."

The end result was a combination of Red Hat Linux, MySQL, Tomcat, J2EE for application development, software security using an open source version of SSL, and Jasper for its reporting server software, to develop the open source application.

"We went with open source because of its flexibility and lower maintenance and hardware costs," Wilber said.

Braintree Sourcing also plans to use Open Source Advisors for co-development projects and open source tools to help sourcing managers plan and manage activities, he said.

In addition to professional services such as strategy development, licensing management, vendor facilitation, requirements definition, software evaluation and selection, and ROI and feasibility studies, Open Source Advisors will also perform the implementation, design custom application, integrate the solution to back-end ERP systems and provide ongoing support. The company is considering offering an ASP-like hosted service.

The duo's go-to-market strategy also includes setting themselves up as advisors to the venture capital community.

"The venture firms have a lot of leftover products they want to donate to the community, but they don't know how to do it," Rubin said.

Working with partners such as Alpha Software is another avenue for Open Source Advisors to build out the go-to-market strategy.

Alpha Software has historically built desktop database software, but Alpha Five Version 6 builds web-accessible database applications with no programming required. Open source relational database management system MySQL is one of the technologies used to gather live data to build

web applications.

"We're working with (Open Source Advisors) because our customers are interested in getting custom applications built," said Richard Rabins, co-chairman of Alpha Software. "So customers using our front end can turn to them to build the custom open source applications and connect them to the back end."

## Software

### Open Source Advisors

**Business:** Professional services focused on open source and ERP

**Managing partners:** Paul Cambell, Carl Rubin

**Employees:** 2

**Location:** Needham

**Web:** www.opensourceadvisors.com

"People are very enthusiastic about open source because of the cost issue, so it's a relief for them to be able to work with intelligent people like Open Source Advisors to cut through all the smoke and noise surrounding open source," Rabins added.

Campbell and Rubin have a combined 45 years of IT and professional services experience. Most recently Campbell was with Oxford Global Resources, where he acted as a managing director and chief technology officer, overseeing 1,000 professional services consultants. During his time with Oxford, Campbell worked on projects to move clients to Linux software, particularly on Oracle applications.

Rubin has spent much of his career in the ERP implementation world, with specialized expertise in implementations and add-on custom applications.

"If you're using an Oracle database, typically people develop in Oracle, so they have to buy more licenses and there are maintenance costs," Rubin said. "The vast majority of that custom application work could be done with MySQL, which only slightly trails Oracle in terms of performance."