About me

1984: Apple II, PC, Windows 95

1990: French Grande Ecole: "Your are a soldier of economic war"

1995: Joined the internet revolution, Netscape, Mozilla Fan

1998: French Startup, VC, IPO, Virtual Millionaire

2001: Internet Bubble, back to normal, back to US company, used Wikis and Open Source

2004: Created XWiki, Open Source

APELL, CNLL, Euclidia, Hub Open Source, OW2, OpenFoodFacts, Murena

XWiki SAS

- French & European independent company
- Self-Funded, Majority Ownership
- ~4M€ revenue in 2023
- 50%+ growth in 2023
- 60 people in Paris and Iasi (Romania)
- Two Open Source softwares: XWiki (LGPL) & CryptPad (AGPL) with an international community, 100% Open Source
- Engaged for digital sovereignty in EU
- Services: Support, Training, Consulting, Hosting in the EU

Enabling Freedom

XWiki

- Since 2003: Collaboration, information management
- Platform that quickly adapts to your knowledge
- Competitors: **Confluence**, Notion, Teams Wiki
- Confluence migrators available
- Part of the openDesk project

More than 7000 installs, more than 400 clients

CryptPad

- Since 2016: Encrypted real-time collaboration
- Zero-knowledge platform
- Office edition through OnlyOffice
- Large usage in Germany!
- Competitors: Google Docs, Office 365

Received en EU price in 2019: Privacy and Trust Enhanding Startup Award, NGI

How did XWiki SAS start ?

Why be an Entrepreneur

- In 2004, I was just a geek liking technology

- Creating something useful and have impact

- Doing it from Europe

- Taking responsibility of your actions

If you don't like what you see, don't complain,

take responsibility and change it

Believe in your products purpose

- Making a good product is key!

- But making a useful product is even more important

- Wikis are an important tool, they help spread Knowledge

- Enterprise Wikis helps empower individuals and give them more freedom

- In 2016 we also believed **"Protecting Privacy"** was an important task

To stay motivated 20 years, believing in your software is a good idea

But? How do you fund it?

Speed,
Comfort

**Raising money
(Open Source
Startup)**

Crypto Plays

**Bootstrapping
as a Company**

**Open Source
Independent
Professional**

Donations

**Open Source
Volunteer**

Independence
More FLOSS
Sustainability
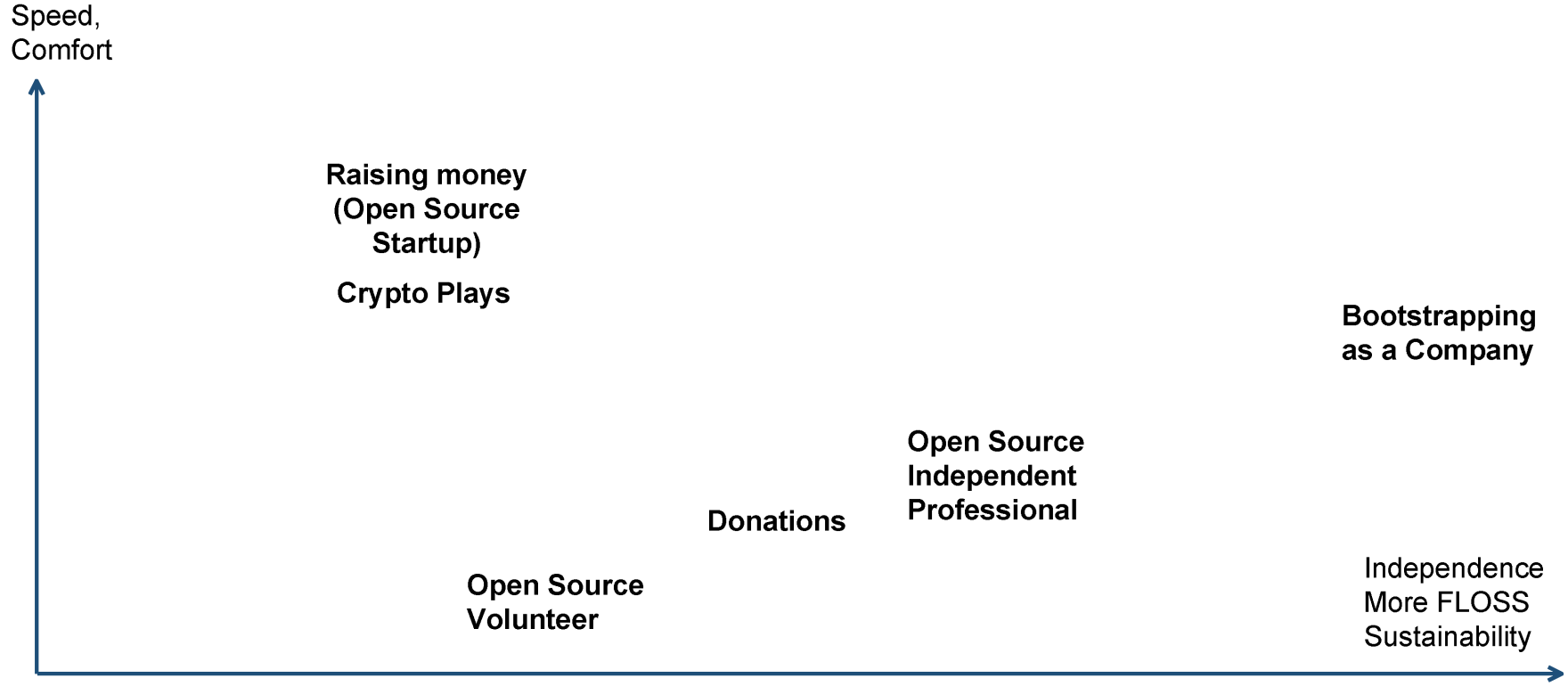
Investors?

- It took time to realize it's not what I wanted

- Who is the real BOSS?

- Are we talking about the same goals?

- While investment can contribute to FLOSS, companies risk facing pressure to increase financial results at the expense of the FLOSS involvement

Money is a mean, not a goal

Bootstrapping

2003	2006	2008	2010
0k	250k	800k	1,1M

- Build on other Open Source software
- Community support helps you build a great product
- Service is a good way to finance the first steps
- Build the community (Open dev)
- First clients interested by Innovation

- French "Crédit Impôt Recherche"
- European Research Project
- XWiki SAS: more than 10MEuros funding through Research Funding over 20 years
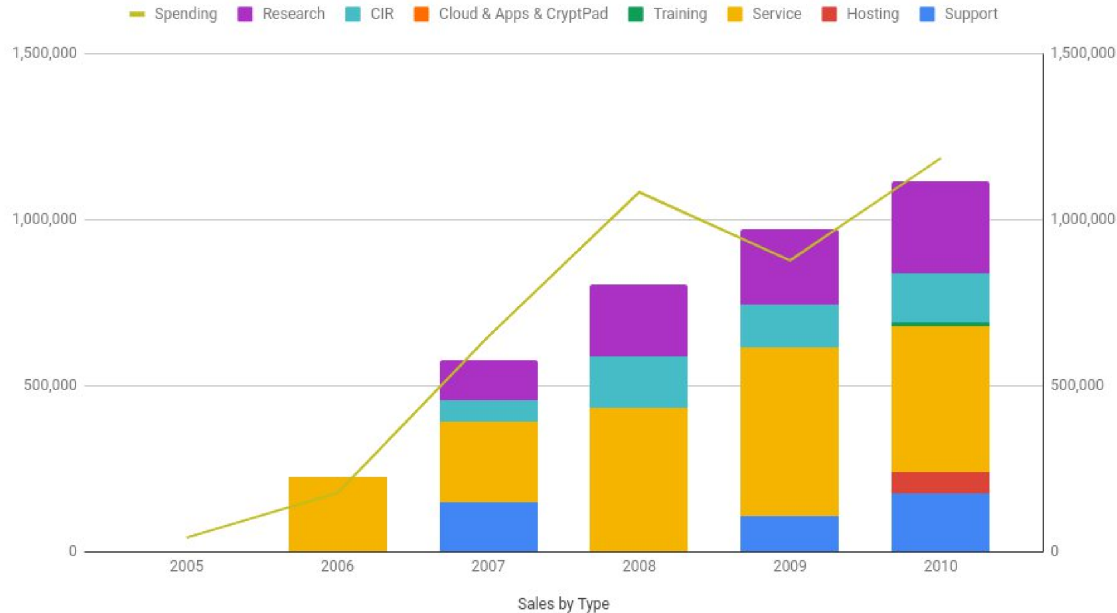- The Public is our VC, we are giving back our code to the Public

Romania

- In 2006 we went to Romania

- Initially through the Google Summer of Code

- Then creating a subsidiary there

- 25 people in Iasi, Romania

- One of the rare FLOSS companies

- We also have a significant amount of Women in the team, compared to almost zero in other countries

- Also 5 couples happened after meeting at XWiki, including 3 cross-border

Finance!

The first million is the hardest to get?

XWiki SAS 20 Years - 2005 - 2010

Spending | Research | CIR | Cloud & Apps & CryptPad | Training | Service | Hosting | Support

Sales by Type

Recurrent revenue going up from 0% to 20%, 250k

No success in Open Source without a good Product

- Find the money … but ...

- Always think about the **product,** it needs to be competitive

- It's too easy to think you can't fund your Open Source because of the business model

- Strategies to direct revenue towards the Product

Condition the service on support

Or sell the product and give service

Make sure to focus revenue towards the roadmap

Building the Community

- The Community is both your marketing, your insurance and your recruitment tool

- But most importantly, it's also key to being a good Open Source citizen

- However don't expect participants to develop the product instead of you

- Closed Community governance shows you are not interested in making things Open

- Open Community governance shows you are here for the Freedom

- XWiki uses Apache Software Foundation votes for discussions

- At XWiki, when we select modules including community governance

Bringing your product to a foundation is also possible

Customers and Open Source

- Customer revenue is the best!

- But Open Source is not the priority for them

- Marketing of Proprietary Products and short term vision clouds Customer's judgment

- However Open Source validates your product

- And of course they like the price!

A progress in Europe because of the Digital Sovereignty Issue

FLOSS as a Goal

- Discovering FOSDEM!

- Being part of a community

- Open Source is good for technology

- But Free Software is a good for society

Freedom is a goal
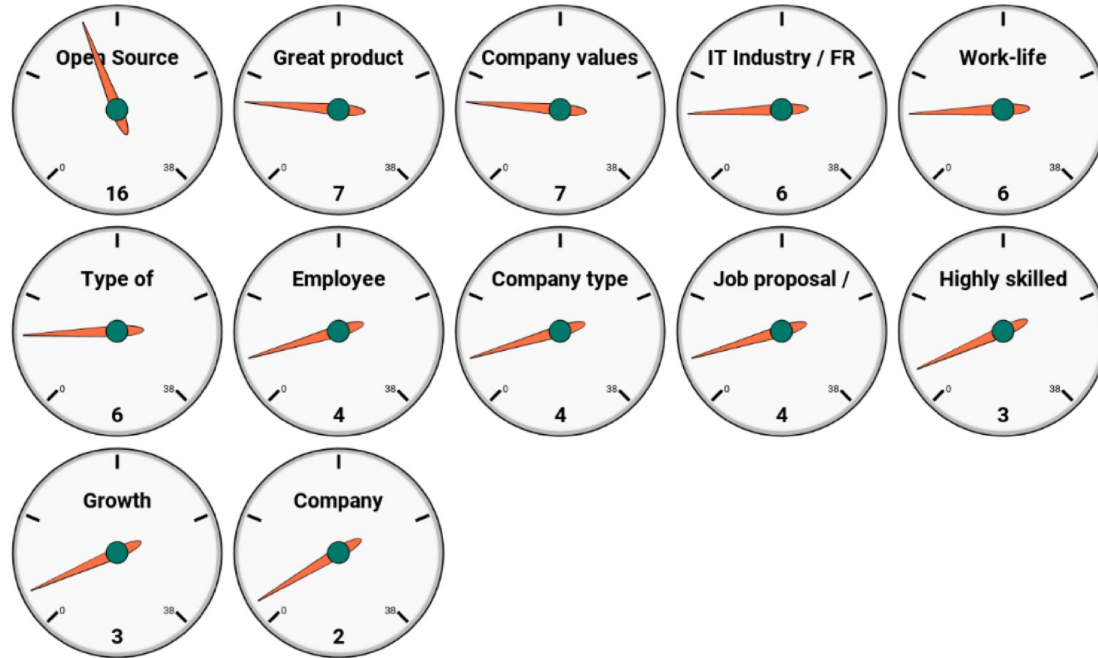
Finding a balance

Community & Customers

Happy Team

Product

Open Source

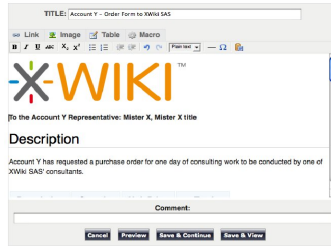**Knowledge, Privacy**

Main reasons to join XWiki (2024)
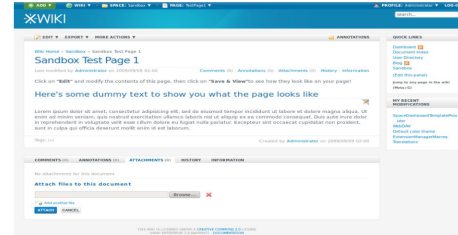
Support revenue is key

Bootstrapping

2011

1,5M, 360k recurring

2013

1,6M, 574k recurring

2015

2.1M, 800k recurring

- **Failed at building Partnerships, trying to build multiple products on XWiki, though it did fund development**
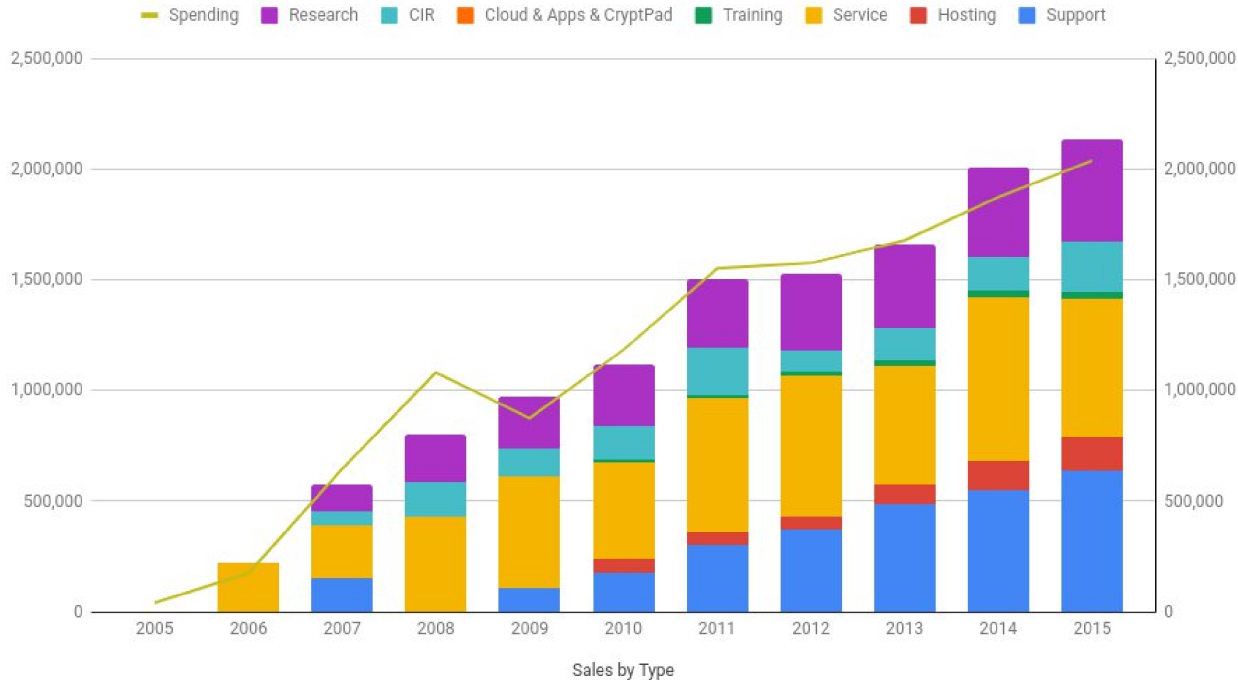- More research funding
- International sales

- v3 - v6 Extension Manager
- **First XWiki Cloud (failed)**
- Large service projects
- Growing support sales
- First European Projects
- First Applications (Free)

Focused on one product and making it known

Finance!

Product revenue is coming progressively

XWiki SAS 20 Years - 2005 to 2015

Legend: Spending, Research, CIR, Cloud & Apps & CryptPad, Training, Service, Hosting, Support

Sales by Type

Recurrent revenue going up to 35%, 800k

Closed Source competition is tough

- Atlassian Confluence took most of the Wiki Market (at least the developer one) and progressively raised their price

- Wikis also were added to larger collaboration Platform as component (Sharepoint and others)

- JotSpot got bought by Google and the team worked on Google Docs

- Some Open Source companies raised money and grew and died: Mindtouch, Twiki.net

- Some community wikis continued to grow (Semantic MediaWiki, Tiki) but some stalled with developers going to do something else (DokuWiki)
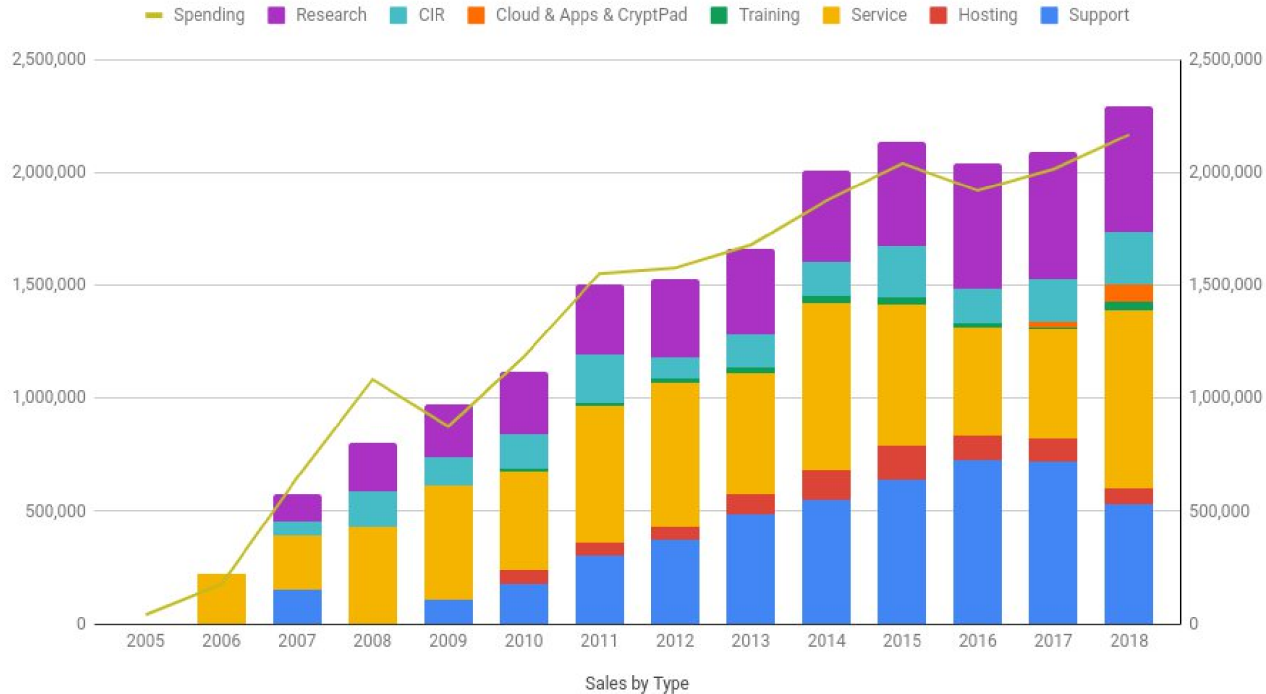
Stay true to your goals! Wait!

A challenging period

A challenging period

Product revenue is growing too slowly

Recurrent revenue flat at 35%, 800k

XWiki SAS 20 Years - 2005 to 2018

Spending · Research · CIR · Cloud & Apps & CryptPad · Training · Service · Hosting · Support

Sales by Type

Difficulties

- Product is getting less competitive

- SAAS competition is strong, new competition (Notion)

- Custom is less demanded as standard products get better

- Open Source is not free!

- R&D funding in France is going towards different sectors

- **A big mistake: trying to do like Open Source Startups**

Task Forces to transform XWiki

- Believe in your capacity and be ambitious

- Rethink if people would want this product

- Build on your strength and improve the product

- Relaunch a competitive SaaS offering

- From Open Source to Paying Customers

- Reward customers paying the product, while being fully Open Source

Involve the team, they are up to the task!

Open Source is not free

- Applications cannot compete on quality if all offers are free

- Open Core however makes you move away from Free Software

- We decided to build installable extensions payable by App Store

- Extensions are included in Support Contracts

- We also adapted our pricing to reward long term clients and clients of support (30% more for service without support)

- Other approaches also possible: SAAS offers, bundling paying features, no service without support
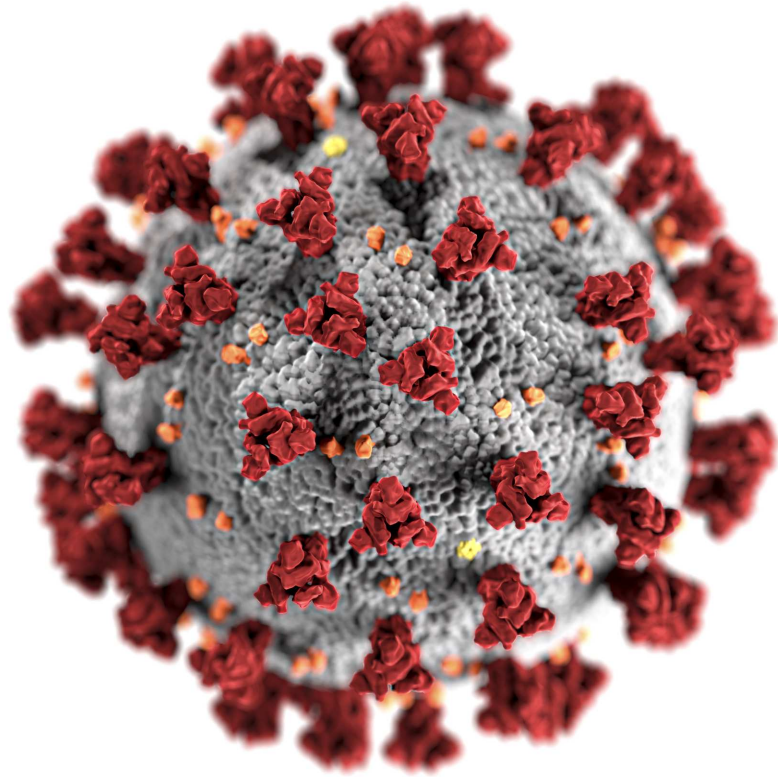
Launching CryptPad in 2016

- CryptPad is launched as part of a research project in 2016
- Additional funding found with a larger project
- Developping a full "e2ee" collaborative suite
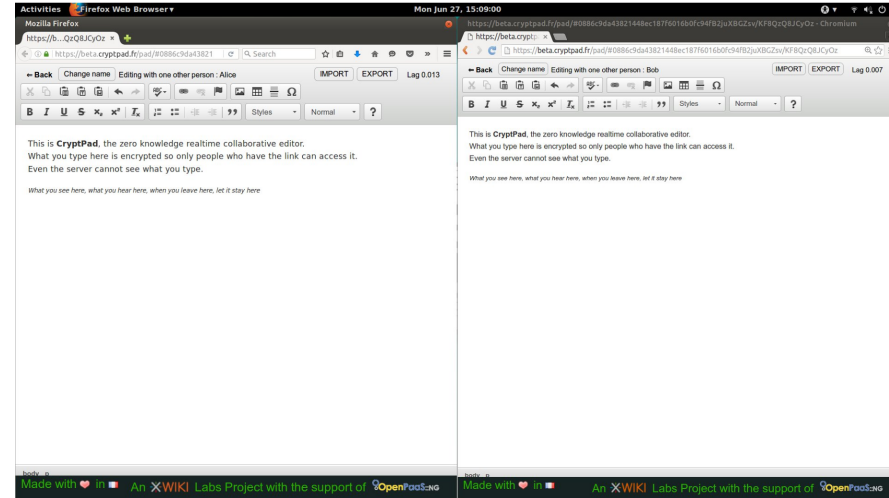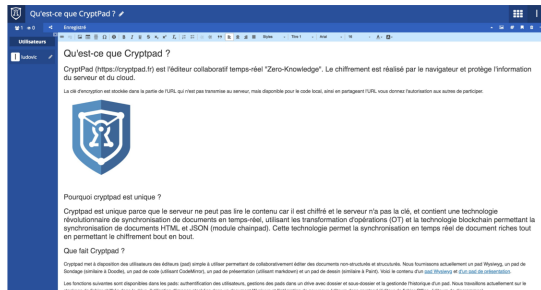
2020

Challenges and Opportunities

- From remote friendly to full-remote and now "do what you want"

- Tools readily available

- Knowledge available in XWiki

- Developping CryptPad (quadruple free usage)

- But as any company we wondered what will happen → small slowdown for some orders and then back to normal and growing

European Digital Sovereignty

- COVID-19 showed what can happen with supply chain issues

- Ukraine war showed world stability is not guaranteed

- Europe measures the lack for Digital Sovereignty, especially on Cloud & Collaboration markets, but also Hardware, OS, Mobile

November 2020: somehow Atlassian thought it was a good time to ask more money from their Clients

- Pushing Clients to Cloud, stopping Confluence Server

- Since 2022, we have more and more Atlassian clients coming toward XWiki

**When investor backed companies want to cash in
this is the time for SMEs and Open Source**

2023 – Maturity & Digital Sovereignty

- XWiki & CryptPad are selected in the German Open Source Sovereign Workplace (project openDesk)
- XWiki & CryptPad are selected in 3 funding projects by French BPI to build "Sovereign Cloud Collaborative Suites" (projects are not Open Source)
- Confluence revenue continues to grow
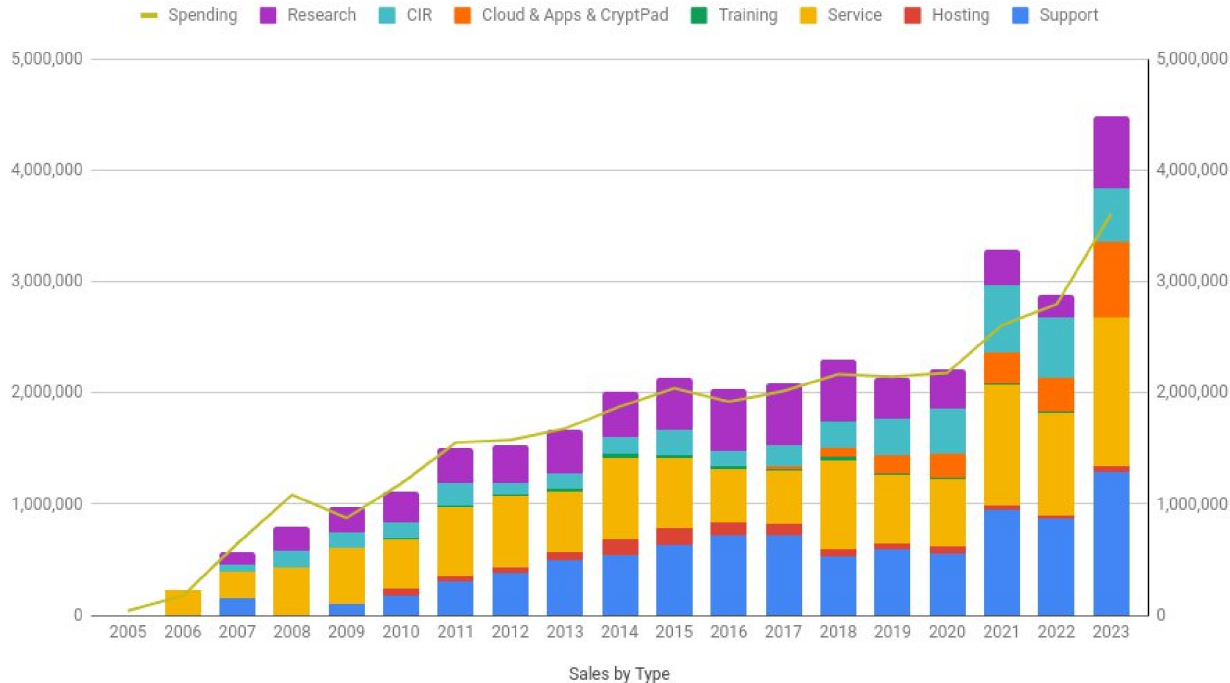
3.3M sales
1,6M+ of recurring revenue
3.6M of budget (+30%)

The rise of the Sovereign Workplace: OpenDesk – Your open source alternative to Microsoft and Google

Open Source has long term value

XWiki SAS 20 Years Revenue and Spending

Legend: Spending · Research · CIR · Cloud & Apps & CryptPad · Training · Service · Hosting · Support

Sales by Type

Reaching 50% recurrent revenue, 1,6M

The Future

AI/LLM is coming

- LLM are taking the tech world by storm

- All software providers are rethinking how their tools will be impacted

- New startups are coming with potential massive funding

- Do we really still need humans to gather information? A challenge for Wikis?

- Open Source and Data Privacy are very relevant subjects in the AI context
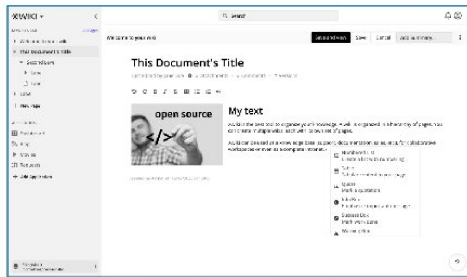
- ethical AI

**We are working on it!
See our LLM integration**

**Open Source is a new
subject again**

Software Modularity and integrations

- Open Source's secret sauce is to allow building on previous Open Source software

- In order for Open Source to be a better global solution we need integrations

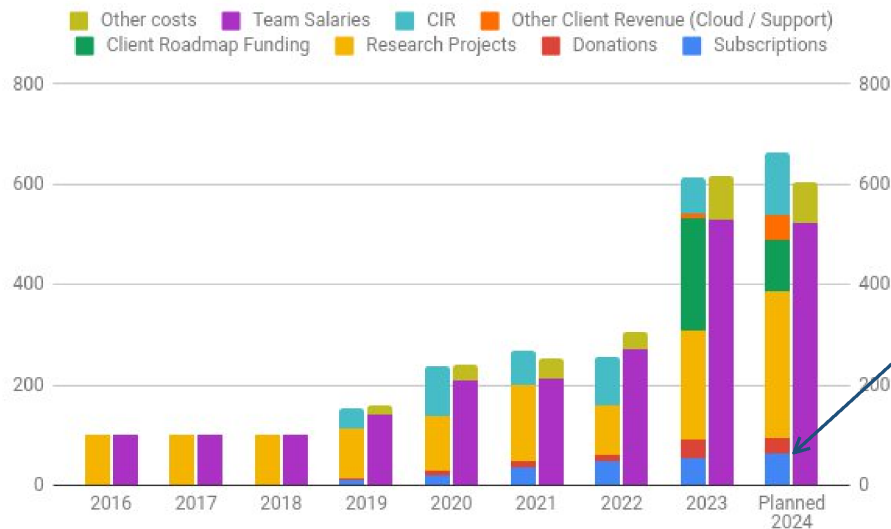**XWiki building a new project "Cristal - One Wiki UI to rule them All"**

Participating to the openDesk project of an Open Source collaborative platform
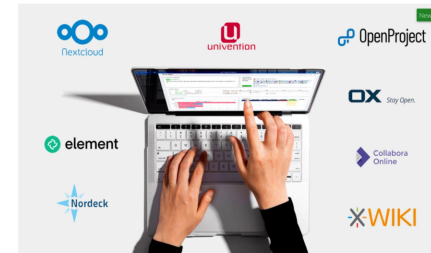
The rise of the Sovereign Workplace: OpenDesk – Your open source alternative to Microsoft and Google

Doing with CryptPad what we did with XWiki

From 0% to 20% recurring revenue, 100k (only)

Donations and subscriptions: you can have an impact on the cryptpad team size

Continue to fund CryptPad with research funding

Finding the right product that we can sell to generate sustainable revenue

40

Giving back

Our own software. Please take subscriptions, or make donations

Continue sharing our knowledge about how XWiki got sustainable

FOSSFund
1% recurrent revenue to give back to projects we use

Participating to industry groups APELL, CNLL and integration projects openDesk

Conclusion

Building a bootstrapped Open Source company is a long roller-coaster ride

But the outcome of building a sustainable team running an Open Source Community is priceless

It would not have been possible without the great team!

**200+ people since 2004
7 xwikiers with 15+ years
15 xwikiers with 10+ years
jobs@xwiki.com**

Also not possible without the funders and big clients