

# Portuguese IT and LibreOffice Open Manual

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## ABSTRACT

In this paper, it is described the evolution of the Portuguese IT and LibreOffice Open Manual from the 1st edition to the project of its 3rd edition. It also focuses the growth concerning IT availability in Portugal together with the needs of trainers and professors regarding open content. It finally addresses the relevance of the Creative Commons License and the importance of involving the network in these kind of projects.

## General Terms

Documentation, Experimentation, Human Factors, Standardization, Languages.

## Keywords

LibreOffice, Documentation, Manual.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since 2007, Portugal has had a big growth in IT availability with the “Technological Plan for Education”. This plan urges to install internet connections in all of the high schools and universities, together with a project that celebrates a series of partnerships to provide good laptops at a very low price. Since the birth of the project “e-escolas” and “e-escolinhas”, many Portuguese students and also teachers and professors, from primary to university now have their own laptop [1].

## 2. STATUS QUO

Small courses and IT basic certifications were developed for the teachers, not only for the ones who work in primary schools, but also for those who are in high and professional schools. The project covered a big gap between the digital natives (students) and the migrated digital (the “old” professors). And this is a small status quo of the IT in the Portuguese Education [2].

The success of the project included the idea of a mini laptop for primary school children (at a time that the OLPC was the main topic). An agreement with Intel and the Portuguese Government gave birth to the “small” Magalhães, assembled by the Portuguese company JP Sá Couto [1]. The Magalhães project, in

its second version, had such a success that JP Sá Couto will export half a million to Argentina.

Also in Portuguese education, the Microsoft lobby pursues Government, professors and students. The overall preference for Microsoft products remain and this happens because there is either a lack of support or a lack of knowledge.

The current crisis makes us all think about other options, students and teachers started to realize that there are many costs involved, especially when Microsoft released two new versions of their Office suite in three years. Only few have money to upgrade, and the market started to look at other options.

Fortunately, last year, the Portuguese government established the adoption of open standards in the computer systems of the State [3]. A first step to other options that the government made already in the year 2012.

## 3. THE PROJECT

Adriano Afonso, a Portuguese trainer and professor, decided to build the first open manual of IT and OpenOffice.org (before Sun acquisition). The reason came from two needs: first because most trainers need to build their own manuals for some courses; secondly: there is not many literature options including open source.

In Portugal there is a huge lack of reference materials for free software and open source to help and support teaching and training for sessions/classes. Most of the manuals that can be found are in Brazilian, they share a lot of open materials, but the language is quite different. Trainers, Teachers and Professors complain about this lack, but, still, the Microsoft lobby wins [4].

After gathering much information available in his own language around IT and OpenOffice, Adriano developed a project where many people contributed with their own materials and the e-book has already hit the 2nd edition [5].

This edition won the recognition of various Portuguese entities and it was shared in many sites, including the OpenOffice.org Portugal site.

### 3.1 The 3rd Edition

The 3rd edition of this manual wishes to go one step further. With more help from other IT trainers and teachers, not only does it aspire to be accepted as a school manual, offering an option for teachers, professors, trainers, students, and professionals, but it also aims at being the first manual of LibreOffice in the Portuguese language.

The manual best fit the needs of training and scholar, there was a selection of IT contents based on a project of Portuguese

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government, the "National Qualification Catalog" from " National Agency for Qualification and Professional Teaching". This catalog explains which objectives and contents should be given in sessions and classes.

### 3.2 The concept [creative commons]

This manual is running against the river flow of the Portuguese publication market. Instead of having a copyright license, which forbids every copy, obligating to pay taxes when students want to make photocopies, it allows the copy and redistribution through a Creative Commons License. Of course there are Portuguese books with open licenses, but there isn't any manual available.

If one of the objectives for the 3rd edition is accomplished, the printed version, it will be the first book that is contradictory to every printed market standard in Portugal.

### 3.3 Development

Today technology gives us the possibility to work together with many people, in different places, at different times, the development of the 3rd edition is based on three platforms:

**Google Docs-** to coordinate and assign different responsibilities or chapters to each author.

**Dropbox-** A shared folder where each author has his working .odt file based on a template.

**E-mail-** through Google Docs, every author has access to everyone's contact, allowing team working, sharing ideas and information.

Every author selected the content that is more suitable for his competences or his knowledge. There are already teams working on the same file, using the revision functionality improved by the LibreOffice suite.

## 4. HOW TO BUILD SUCH PROJECT

The initialization of this project is a mix of perseverance, resilience, dedication and a spirit of entrepreneurship.

The initiation of any project starts when a need is detected. The idea grows by itself with time and the experiences shared. A café with friends, partners or clients can bring ideas and solutions for a problem. Involving the free/open community when the project is free/open is always a good way to open the mind and receive other opinions.

Although a good way to start something is by yourself. The 1st edition of the manual was only to meet a need, but with time, the idea developed. Using your professional network you can invite

some of your colleagues to help or contribute to the project. The 2nd edition [5] is a good example of a resulting product involving the network.

The raising awareness for free software and open source is still hard work in training centers and schools, but if you have something built by you, that met needs or expectations and creating an opportunity to change, half of the work is done.

Spreading the word with your connections through blogs, social networks etc., making some presentations, (again) raising awareness, entering the community related to the free/open software you are making the document, are all excellent ways to make your project known.

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