Open Source Licensing Guide

This playbook provides a step-by-step approach to understanding, selecting, and applying open-source licenses. It addresses exploration of license types, the implications of using open-source code, and the best practices for licensing your software.

Step 1: **Research Licenses**

Investigate the various types of open-source licenses available. Look into common licenses like MIT, GPL, and Apache, and understand their terms and conditions as well as the freedoms and limitations they offer.

Step 2: **Review Codebase**

Review the software codebase to identify any existing open-source components and their respective licenses. Ensure compatibility between these licenses and assess the implications for licensing the composite software.

Step 3: **License Selection**

Based on the findings from the research, select an appropriate open-source license for the software. Consider factors like the desired level of control, attribution, distribution rights, and community adoption.

Step 4: **Compliance Check**

Ensure that all open-source code within the software complies with the selected license's obligations. This might include attributions, notices, and making source code available under the same license.

Step 5: **Apply License**

Apply the chosen open-source license to your software. Include a copy of the license text with the software distribution and apply license headers to the source code files where applicable.

Step 6: **Document Usage**

Create documentation explaining the use of open-source components within the software, the rights and responsibilities it entails for users, and guidance for contributing to the software if applicable.

General Notes

Maintain Records

Keep detailed records of all open-source components used, their licenses, and any correspondence with their maintainers, as this information can be critical for future legal reference or compliance.

Review Regularly

Regularly review the licensing strategy to accommodate changes in the software or the legal landscape surrounding open source. License compatibility and compliance should be an ongoing consideration.

Legal Advice

Consider consulting with a legal expert in open-source licensing before finalizing the license for the software. This step can help in navigating complex legal issues and ensuring full compliance.