THE 5 KINGS OPEN SOURCE MANIFESTO · VERSION 1.0

Why We Believe in Open Source

Ten years of defining, testing and back-testing marketing services on open-source technology — and why we will not build a client's growth on anything they cannot audit, own or leave.

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WEB
5kingsmarketing.com/open-source/

THE POSITION

Read this first

> 5 Kings Marketing runs on open-source software and always has. Ten years of building, measuring and back-testing marketing services produced a simple conclusion: the work is only as durable as the foundation under it. Open protocols built the internet; open software should run the business that lives on it. That means software you can audit, data you keep, costs that stay predictable, and an exit that never needs permission. Every service we sell is specified, tested against real data and published with its acceptance criteria before anyone can buy it. This page is the position behind that practice.

ONE

The internet was built on open protocols

Nobody owns HTTP. Nobody can switch off email. The web became the most valuable commercial surface in history precisely because its foundations were public, inspectable and free to implement. Every business that has grown on the internet inherited that gift.

Marketing software mostly did the opposite. The last fifteen years turned analytics, email, CRM and storefronts into rented surfaces, priced per seat, per contact and per event, with your customer data living somewhere you cannot read and cannot leave. We think that trade was a mistake, and we have spent a decade building the alternative.

TWO

Ten years of building services the scientific way

Our services were not designed in a pitch deck. Each one was defined, run, measured and redefined on live accounts, on open-source infrastructure we controlled end to end. Over ten years that produced a repeating loop, and the loop is now the product:

01 **Define the service as a specification**

Each service starts as a written spec: the input we need, the work performed, the deliverables, the acceptance criteria, and the measurement window. If we cannot write the spec, we do not sell the service.

02 **Instrument before we touch anything**

Baseline capture first: crawl state, index coverage, structured data, analytics events, revenue attribution and call tracking. A hypothesis without a baseline is an opinion.

03 **Run it on real accounts**

Playbooks are executed on live data, in cohorts, with holdouts where the platform allows it, so the effect can be separated from seasonality, algorithm churn and paid-media spillover.

04 **Back-test against history**

Before a service is offered commercially, its logic is replayed against historical data: previous migrations, prior catalogues, old SERP sets, archived crawl snapshots. A pattern that does not survive the history does not make it into the product.

05 **Codify the result**

What survives becomes a standard: the check, the threshold, the failure mode, the fix. Standards are published, versioned and linked from the service that depends on them.

06 **Re-test on a schedule**

Standards decay. Ranking systems change, platforms ship breaking releases, tracking deprecates itself. Every standard carries a review date and gets re-run, not remembered.

THREE

What “back-tested” means before you can buy it

Back-testing is the part most agencies skip, because it is expensive and it kills ideas. We replay a playbook against history before it reaches a client: archived crawl snapshots from previous migrations, prior catalogue structures, old SERP sets, historical analytics exports. If the mechanism does not survive the replay, it never becomes a line item in the catalogue.

That is also why the catalogue is specific. A service ships with a written spec, a defined input, a deliverable, acceptance criteria and a measurement window. You are buying a specification, not a vibe.

FOUR

Why open source is the substrate, not the ideology

We are not interested in open source as a personality. We are interested in it because it is the only foundation that survives contact with a client's own future. Four reasons, in the order they actually matter:

01

Audit it before you trust it

Open code can be read. When we tell you a tag manager fires an event, that a redirect rule matches a path, or that a schema block is valid, you or your developer can verify it without asking us to open a dashboard. Closed platforms ask for trust. Open ones earn it.

02

Your data is yours, physically

Analytics, CRM records, email lists, order history and call logs live in databases you can dump, move and delete. No vendor holds your customer list as leverage. When an engagement ends, you leave with the raw material, not a CSV export of the parts someone decided you could have.

03

Predictable cost, not metered anxiety

Open-source infrastructure bills for compute, not for permission. There is no per-seat tax on adding an analyst, no per-contact tax on growing a list, no per-call tax on a tracking plan. Budgets get planned instead of discovered.

04

Software that outlives the vendor

Every closed platform eventually changes its pricing, its API, or its owner. Open-source software keeps running when that happens, because nobody can unilaterally switch it off. Longevity is a feature you cannot buy from a vendor, only from a licence.

FIVE

The stack we actually run

This is not a logo wall. These are the layers we deploy, operate and hand over, and what each one protects for you.

LAYER	OPEN-SOURCE TOOLS	WHAT IT PROTECTS
Content and commerce	WordPress, WooCommerce, PrestaShop, OpenCart, Magento Open Source, Shopware	The catalogue and the content live in software you can self-host, fork or migrate. No proprietary storefront owns your merchandising.
Marketing automation	Mautic	Behavioural automation, segments and campaign history are stored on your infrastructure. Your contact database is not a rented list.
CRM and pipeline	SuiteCRM	Accounts, leads and opportunities stay queryable. Exports are not a product tier.
Analytics and attribution	Matomo (self-hosted), server-side event streams	Raw visit and event data stays yours, retention is your decision, and consent can be enforced at the source instead of trusting a third party to honour it.
AI operations	Self-hosted LLM routing, self-hosted vector search, self-hosted prompt and trace observability	The agentic layer we build for clients runs on infrastructure we can inspect and you can host. Prompts, embeddings and evaluation data do not become somebody else's training corpus.
Interoperability	schema.org, sitemaps, llms.txt, MCP, A2A, OpenAPI	Open protocols are how search engines, answer engines and shopping agents read a business. Closed integrations cannot be crawled.

SIX

The standards are the product

A method nobody can audit is a method nobody should trust. Ours are published, versioned and linked from the services that depend on them:

- **The Integrity Standard** — How we scope, measure and report work so you always know what changed, what it moved and what comes next.
  5kingsmarketing.com/integrity-standard/
- **Service level agreement** — The response and resolution commitments that back every retainer, in writing.
  5kingsmarketing.com/sla/
- **Product specifications** — The published spec behind every catalogue item: scope, inputs, deliverables, acceptance criteria.
  5kingsmarketing.com/product-specs/
- **Data and access security** — Least-privilege access, scoped tokens, audit logs, clean offboarding.
  5kingsmarketing.com/data-security/

SEVEN

Teaching is the point

We defined these services, and we now spend real time educating the audience that reads this site about them: what they do, when they fail, what they cost and how to check our work. That is not generosity, it is an editorial position. A buyer who understands the method asks better questions, and better questions produce better engagements.

- **We publish the method** — The standards on this site are the working documents, not a marketing summary. If a competitor reads them and improves, the discipline of the industry improves with it.
- **We contribute upstream** — Fixes, patches and operational recipes go back to the projects we depend on, including the WordPress, WooCommerce and Mautic ecosystems we run client work on.
- **We fund the maintainers** — Open source is maintained by people, not companies. We direct money and engineering time at the projects our client infrastructure actually depends on.
- **We teach before we sell** — The free audit exists so a business can see its own gap without buying anything. Education is the top of the funnel we actually believe in.

EIGHT

What we will not do

- × We will not build your growth on software you cannot leave.
- × We will not hold your data, your accounts or your analytics hostage at the end of an engagement.
- × We will not sell a service whose acceptance criteria we have not written down.
- × We will not publish a benchmark we cannot reproduce from your own data.
- × We will not resell somebody else's audit with our logo on it.
- × We will not let a platform's pricing model decide your marketing budget.

NINE

Frequently asked questions

Is open source actually cheaper than a proprietary stack?

Not automatically, and we will not pretend otherwise. Open source moves cost from licences to engineering: you pay for implementation, hosting and maintenance instead of per-seat and per-contact fees. For most businesses the total is lower at scale and far more predictable, because growth does not trigger a new pricing tier. The real saving is optionality: you can change vendor, host or agency without migrating a decade of data out of a walled garden.

What happens to our data if we stop working with you?

You keep it. Analytics, CRM, email and order data live in databases on infrastructure in your name, and our handover standard requires a documented export plus a working restore test before an engagement closes. There is no exit fee and nothing to negotiate.

Do you only work with open-source platforms?

No. We work on Shopify, BigCommerce, Salesforce Commerce Cloud and SAP Commerce Cloud where that is genuinely the right fit, and we say so plainly. The distinction we hold is about lock-in, not licensing: we tell you what a platform will cost you to leave, before you commit to it.

How do you back-test a marketing service before selling it?

We replay the service's logic against historical data: archived crawl snapshots, previous migrations, old catalogues and prior SERP sets. A playbook only becomes a sellable service when its effect survives that replay, and each one ships with acceptance criteria and a measurement window so the result is falsifiable rather than a story.

Where can we read the standards themselves?

The Integrity Standard, the service level agreement, the product specifications and the data and access security policy are all published on this site and linked from the services that depend on them. They are the working documents our team is measured against.

TEN

Where this leaves us

Big ideas only survive contact with reality if the foundation underneath them is yours. That is the whole of it: open technology, specified services, measured outcomes, and an exit that never needs our permission.

Read the standards
5kingsmarketing.com/integrity-standard/

Start with an audit
5kingsmarketing.com/5kings-seo-audit/

Talk to a strategist
hello@5kingsmarketing.com