

OpenSocial/W3C - Evolving with Web Components

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Background

The OpenSocial Foundation is an industry-recognized standards body dedicated to advancing the social web through community innovation and open source. Established in 2008, the Foundation provides the leading and most mature standards-based component model for SaaS-delivered social business applications.

Widely supported by a majority of leading consumer and enterprise social platforms, such as IBM, Jive, and SugarCRM, the OpenSocial specification fosters the development of a growing set of socially-aware off-the-shelf applications. Through open source projects such as Apache Rave and Shindig, it provides a well-defined way for 3rd-party applications to richly interact with users directly in their activity stream.

In this proposal we will cover the existing use cases, gaps and challenges, and position future specification work aligning with the broader ecosystem around web component models, adjacent standards and open source.

Existing Use Cases

The OpenSocial Foundation currently targets the following core sets of use cases.

Embedding of third-party applications: This builds on a set of use cases for extending a UI framework to third-party applications supporting traditional dashboard scenarios to more dynamic embedding supporting a number of extensions from menus to sharebox scenarios.

Incorporating social context into existing applications: There are several approaches to extending social context into existing applications.

1. Developers can leverage the application model as a way to embed social applications (i.e. profile, Activity Streams, etc) into existing containers.
2. Developers can also leverage the REST API from an OpenSocial container to incorporate social data (i.e. profiles, Activity Streams, etc.)

Leveraging activity streams as a means to share updates and business events: The API provided by OpenSocial also provides a mechanism to post updates and business events from any application allowing the surfacing of business events into an Activity Stream for broader visibility and social commenting.

Embedding of actionable content (Embedded Experiences): Embedded Experiences

provides a set of APIs that allow application to associate application with context around an event. The primary usage of this today allows applications to post updates to the Activity Stream or Email allowing a user to launch the application in context of the event without having to switch context and leave the current view.

Gaps & Challenges

While there have been significant adoption of these standards, there are inconsistencies and challenges around social integration:

- Barrier of entry and container dependencies
- Challenges with IFrame support (e.g. Mobile)
- Managing extensibility across various providers
- General fragmentation in open source
- Inconsistent on-boarding for developers

Proposal

OpenSocial Gadgets were defined as a means to extend rich functionality for the embedding of applications with a set of apis and framework that build around IFrames. Recently, the Web Applications Working Group at the W3C has released a working draft of “Web Components” which outlines a core set of HTML5 capabilities including Templates, Decorators, Custom Elements, Shadow Dom and Imports. These core components provide a natural complement with many of the use cases that we currently have around social integration and use cases. We will focus on:

- Alignment of container and applications models with current Web Components efforts at W3C leveraging ShadowDom, Custom Elements and Templates
- Gaps supporting security supporting single sign on, CORS, etc
- Timelines, deliverables and gaps
- Options for additional metadata
- Establishing mobile use cases
- Alignment with open source