

What is effective community management?

Value of your community

Real world numbers

How can users manipulate open source developers?

Summary

Effective Community Management

Bryan Østergaard

October 24th, 2009

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Social Engineering 101

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Understand your goals

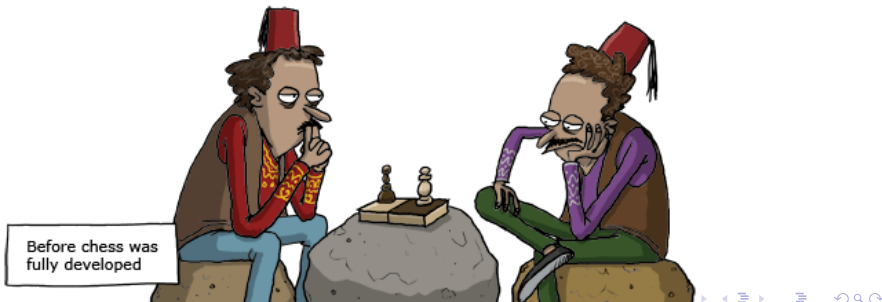
It's all about the people in and around the project

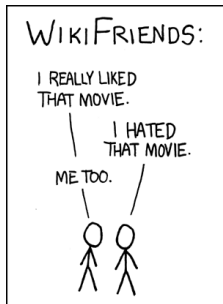
What do you expect from the community members?

Communities are supposed to help, not hinder the project

- ▶ Do you want more developers?
- ▶ Do you need translators or people to write documentation?
- ▶ Is your 'Helpdesk' overloaded with requests?
- ▶ Too many open bugs?
- ▶ Why?

- ▶ **Understand the need of community members**
- ▶ People often just want a 'better project' but what does that really mean?
- ▶ How can you increase the projects value for the community members?
- ▶ How can you help people reach their goals? And at the same time make sure they help you reach your goals?





- ▶ Do you expect them to participate actively in the development?
- ▶ Or that they come up with interesting ideas and feature requests?
- ▶ That they take care of (most of) the user support?
- ▶ Something else entirely?
- ▶ Is the difference between developers and users really that big?

- ▶ Decide how much time and effort the community is worth to you
- ▶ Try to avoid the most expensive situations in time and resources
- ▶ Many people can, with a little help, gain much more from your project by participating actively

- ▶ Most definitely and it's usually quite easy
- ▶ Have people help with trivial bugfixes - it's easy, doesn't require much effort from you and they're quite happy to help
- ▶ Make sure to credit people, even if it's not completely deserved
- ▶ Listen to peoples ideas (but steer them in a direction you're happy with)
- ▶ Help people gain respect in your community - respect is the primary currency between community members and developers

- ▶ Be open about the ways you manipulate people into being better community members
- ▶ People want to be involved - both technically and in the daily management
- ▶ I often talk about my methods I use to control the Exherbo community **and it clearly works**

- ▶ Exherbo was announced May 2008
- ▶ We're just below 100 people in the #exherbo IRC channel. About 65% have contributed patches to our official package repositories
- ▶ It gets slightly better if you start counting unofficial package repositories as well
- ▶ And even better if you also consider patches and updates for our website and other Exherbo related projects
- ▶ Even better - almost every contributor is a regular contributor instead of the one-time contributions you often see in other projects

- ▶ Gentoo just turned 10 years old
- ▶ About 1000 people inhabit the #gentoo IRC channel with another roughly 300 people in the #gentoo-dev IRC channel
- ▶ Maybe 150 active developers - Gentoo requires active developers to do at least one commit every 2 months which is a much looser definition than I generally apply to Exherbo
- ▶ The past month Gentoo gained 3 new developers but developers and users seems to leave the project in bigger numbers
- ▶ Users are generally only credited in ChangeLog files that hardly anybody bothers reading and very few users make more than a single or perhaps two minor contributions
- ▶ **There's hardly any personal gain from contributing to Gentoo**

- ▶ Open source developers are much like bike enthusiasts - they have fun working on the bike
- ▶ You can make the problem more interesting to developers by involving them directly
- ▶ Bad: Wireless networking is poor with your application
- ▶ Good: I need to use your application under following conditions .. blah blah. Do you have any ideas how this can be solved nicely?

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Understand what motivates open source developers

How not to file bug reports..

Developers can be just as bad when filing bug reports

Example of a good bug report or feature request

▶ Bug report:

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- ▶ Description: Yeah, I would firstly like to mention how absolutely pissed off at PHP I am. Your program must be the absolute worst programmed piece of software in all of the net. You compete with Bill Gates in that regard.

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- ▶ Description: Yeah, I would firstly like to mention how absolutely pissed off at PHP I am. Your program must be the absolute worst programmed piece of software in all of the net. You compete with Bill Gates in that regard.
- ▶ Now that I have that off my chest, let me explain why your program sucks. I have spent over 12 hours researching, reinstalling, etc etc etc etc etc ETCETERA... All trying to get mysql into php. It won't load the goddamn dll. Nothing in Event Log. Nothing anywhere, regardless of errors=E_ALL, or "REPORT_STARTUP_ERRORS". I have fucking done it all.

- ▶ ITS IMPOSSIBLE TO INTEGRATE PHP WITH MYSQL. THIS IS BECAUSE YOUR PROGRAM SUCKS, AND YOU SHOULD ADD SOME GODDAMN ERROR REPORTING SO WE CAN AT LEAST FIGURE OUT WHAT THE FUCK ____YOUR__ PROGRAM IS DOING WRONG. FIX YOUR SHIT. just fucking fix it.

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- ▶ Thanks. And fuck you sincerely, for making my life, and everyone else's life, an utter atrocity. I'm going to Cold Fusion 8; Fuck you.

- ▶ Expected result: Nothing. Your blasted PHP program doesn't even report error messages like it should.

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- ▶ Actual result: Yay! PHP Works. Oh wait... no it doesn't. It isn't loading .dll's, and it isn't reporting why not - maybe this is because PHP sucks? yup, i think so.

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▶ Response:

- ▶ Response:
- ▶ I wanted to send you a unicorn and a rainbow by way of apology, but realized you wouldn't be able to sign for it since your head is stuck so far up inside your ass.

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- ▶ As Gentoo users are generally an annoying nuisance in my IRC channel, I would like to be able to set a +b on `*!gentoouser@*`, in order to keep them out. In order to accomplish this, I would like Gentoo to set the default username to something Gentoo specific.

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- ▶ Reproducible: Always
Steps to Reproduce:
 1. Join an IRC channel
 2. Wait for a Gentoo user to come in, talk about how he "emerged" this and that and all the "optimizations" he used, but something still isn't working
 3. Mention that he should have read the FAQ before `/joining` and `/kick` him.

- ▶ Con Kolivas new BFS scheduler for the Linux kernel
- ▶ He described in a fairly detailed way what his goals for BFS is and which problems BFS won't solve
- ▶ He showed big improvements compared to existing schedulers in several benchmarks
- ▶ Really managed to get people involved in the design and development of BFS
- ▶ Lots of people discuss the design, create new benchmarks, tests on different systems and loads and so on
- ▶ **He's caught the interest of the developers**

- ▶ Make sure your goals are clear
- ▶ Understand your users' needs and wishes - especially the needs and wishes users don't express themselves / aren't aware of
- ▶ Help people with their first few commits - they'll be very grateful and (generally) quite happy to help with more contributions
- ▶ There's a huge untapped potential in trivial bugs and other easy work if you know how to turn it into something positive