



**Give a Cat a Scratching Post
and Watch It Claw Your Sofa**

or

Building and Managing Communities

Etherpad FAD

Olin College

Needham, MA



Yo, 'Sup



- **Strong interest in community and collaboration both in FOSS and Day Job**
- **Also:**
 - **Amarok Hacker**
 - **KDE Sysadmin**
 - **KDE Community Working Group**



Construction



What is a community?

- **A group of people working towards a goal**



KDE is ours.



**Change the world?
Together, I like our odds.**



- **Three kinds of communities:**
 - **FOSS Developer (FDCs)**
 - **Commercial Developer (CDCs)**
 - **User (UCs)**
- **CDCs \sim FDCs + Money**



Communities are not
Factories



- **Factories have inputs and outputs:**



(http://theoatmeal.com/story/eat_horses)

Jeff Mitchell <mitchell@kde.org>, 2010



It's Not Linear



- **Communities work differently**
 - **Inputs : Outputs not 1:1**
 - **This includes money**



Inputs



- **Inputs are people**
- **Communities are only as _____ as the people in them**
 - **Productive**
 - **Valuable**
 - **Strong**



What It's All About



- **Community manager's job:**
 - **Find the right people**
 - **Connect the right people**
 - **Keep the right people happy/motivated**
 - **Give the right people the right resources**



Not All The Same



- **The right people are not all the same:**
 - **Time**
 - **Skill**
 - **Motivation**
- **This is okay (in fact it's good)**
- **Success comes from getting different kinds of right people working together**



- **Meet our contestants:**
 - **The Loyals - motivated by interest**
 - Internal motivation
 - **The Fickles - motivated by money/gain**
 - External motivation
- **This applies to both developers and users**



Let the Right One In



- **Hint:**
 - **FDCs cater to Loyals**
 - “I want to help because I care about it.”
 - **CDCs cater to both**
 - “I like it...especially if it makes me rich.”
 - **UCs cater to Fickles**
 - “You want me to **pay** for that?”



- **Money does not solve problems**
 - **Not a motivator for Loyals**
 - **Very temporary motivator for Fickles**
- **It **can** help though**
 - **Conference travel**
 - **Sprints**
 - **Server costs**



FDCs + Loyals



- **KDE**

- **After pruning, ~1600 active developer accounts**
- **Less than ten* are paid to work on it full-time**

* that I'm aware of



CDCs + Both



- **(Not a bad thing)**
 - **We all want to live, eat, and have fun**
- **Established companies tend towards Loyals**
- **Startups tend towards Fickles**



- **Newsday**

- **Bought for \$650m; 2.2 million unique hits per month**
- **Spent \$4m on a redesign**
- **Put behind a paywall; asked people to pay \$5 a week**
- **3 months later: 35 subscribers**



Who Do You Work For?



- **Everyone grapples with this:**

Am I working for myself, or for the users?

- **Working for yourself lets you shape things as you want them**
 - Can be hard to convert users to new devs if you don't attract them
- **Working for users means dealing with Fickles**
 - Many will leave and slander your good name at the drop of a hat if displeased



Find the Balance



- **Middle ground:**

- **Work enough for yourself that it stays interesting in the face of trolls**
- **Work enough for the users that their expectations and desires keep you**
 - **Challenged**
 - **Agile**
 - **Motivated**

(making others happy is great for this)



Out of Dodge



- **If you can't find that middle ground,
get out**

Not productive?

Not enjoying it?

→ Not the community for you



Diversion: Infrastructure



Click It or Ticket



- **IT Infrastructure needs to support the community, not dictate it**
 - **Nothing more sad and lonely than a mostly-empty, unmaintained wiki**
- **“Best practices” are what works for *your* community's needs**



Think Short, Plan Long



- **“It'll do for now”**

[It'll never be changed]

vs.

- **“This needs a lot of research”**

**[After a year of waiting we'll use the
“it'll do for now” solution]**



Keep It Real, Holmes



- **It's a hard balance**
 - **“Find the right people” includes real sysadmins**
- **Never forget that someday you may have to scale**



Infrastructure: Not Just Iron



- **Infrastructure includes non-IT parts of the community**
 - **Community Managers**
 - **Board of Directors**
 - **Working Groups**



You're Not Congress



- **They **all** need to scale**
 - **How many people/groups**
 - **Community rules**
 - **...**
- **Perversely, you can scale too much**
 - **Too many rules**
 - **Bureaucracy**



Ways to Kill a Community



“It's my vision, not yours”



- **Members of FDCs and CDCs don't just want to be told what to do**
 - **Social animals like teams**
 - **Want to help build something bigger**
 - **Want recognition for it**

- **Adobe knows this:**

Ps

ADOBE® PHOTOSHOP® CS3 EXTENDED

Version 10.0.1

Thomas Knoll, Seetharaman Narayanan, Andrew Coven, Julie Knoch, Scott Byer, Russell Williams, Marc Pawliger, David Howe, Christopher Haupt, Julie Meridian, Joe Ault, Christopher Bailey, Vinod Balakrishnan, Ralf Berger, Jeff Chien, Jon Clauson, Michael Clifton, Chris Cox, Alan Erickson, Pete Falco, Paul Ferguson, Todor Georgiev, Jerry Harris, Chintan Intwala, Edward Kandrot, Sarah Kong, Darin Krauss, Aravind Krishnaswamy, Tai Luxon, Mark Maguire, John Penn II, John Peterson, Tom Pinkerton, Dave Polaschek, Tom Ruark, Geoff Scott, Steve Troppoli, John Worthington, Tim Wright, Rick Wulff, Jackie Lincoln-Owyang, Yukie Takahashi, Barry Young, Kelly Davis, Lisa King, John Nack, Ashley Still, Pam Clark, Maria Yap, Kevin Connor, Nkono Boyomo, Yinghong Zhang, Rose Lu, Carol Johnson, Haruko Furudate, Del Schneider, Jose Joseph, Morten Nilsen, Bettina Zengel, Gary Jing



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“It'll take care of itself”



- **Communities aren't perpetual**
 - **Require maintenance**
 - **Managers need to put in time and effort:**
 - **Event organization**
 - **Schedule coordination**
 - **Dispute resolution**
 - **Output promotion**
 - **...other “tion”s**



Speaking of Dispute Resolution...



- **Conflicts **will** come up**
 - **Larger communities \sim = more conflicts**
 - **Good options:**
 - **Community Charter/Code of Conduct**
 - **Community Working Group**
 - Choose neutral, fair-minded people
 - **Watch out for repeat offenders**
 - **Some constantly stay on the border**
 - **Sometimes kicking someone out is truly necessary, but always a last resort**
 - (You probably haven't tried hard enough)



- **Watch for the Rockstars**
 - **Strong personalities can take your community to success or to ruin**
 - **Good/Bad Press**
 - Blogs/Tweets!
 - **Domination of weaker personalities**
 - Discomfort, feelings of not belonging, etc.
 - **Being seen as the official voice of the community whether true or not**
 - **Keep an eye on egos - make them constructive**



One more thing...Forking



Shoulda Called it “Spork Me”



- **GitHub has made “fork” a confusing term while in pursuit of a brand**
- **Technically correct, socially awkward:**
 - **Pre-GitHub: “Your community is so foul/development so stagnant that I must split off and start anew.”**
 - **Post-GitHub: Either the above, **or** “I want to commit a patch.”**



So 2007



- **Be careful of the context**
 - **You don't know how people may mean it or take it**
- **Forks aren't necessarily bad:**
 - **GCC**
 - **X.org**
 - **Boxee**
 - **Inkscape**
 - **Joomla**



But maybe...



- **As a community manager, you need to**
 - **Understand (and prevent, if it makes sense) why someone may fork your project**
 - **Understand when it may be time to lead a fork of another project**



Questions?



KDE is watching.



We strongly suggest using KDE.