Why We Join and Why We Leave Open Source Communities

Kevin Lumbard
Elizabeth Barron
Matt Germonprez
Sean Goggins
Wenyi Lu

Exploring corporate engagement with open source projects and communities

The Interview Protocol was developed to explore motivations, contribution barriers, project characteristics, organizational structure, and differentiation practices.

Interviews

- Completed 34 interviews (9-28-21)
- Target of 40+ interviews

Analysis

- Qualitative content analysis
- Pair coding method to extract themes related to corporate engagement

Questions

1. Are there certain characteristics of an open source project or community that you look for prior to engagement that may inform decisions about joining a community?
2. Are there certain characteristics of an open source project or community that might make you consider leaving that community?

Question 1 - Why We Join

Documentation

Active

Utility

Quality of activity

Project Governance

Licensing

Quality of code

Organizational Control

Usage

Security

Culture

Sustainability and Maintenance

Question 2 - Why We Leave

Utility or a better alternative   **Usage**

Licensing

Active

Sustainability and Maintenance

Politics

Project Governance

Organizational Control

Being managed

Culture

Building Community (It's a thing)

"Building community around projects that we use is important"

Investing in Project Stability

- Licensing must fit with organization policy and must be stable
- Understanding security and risk associated with project is critical
- Quality of code and Building an User-base

Investing in Project Sustainability

- People want active "live" communities and "more people are almost always beneficial"
- Maintenance and quality of activity
- Inactivity is a reason to leave a community - "we don't want to be left holding the bag"

Investing in Diversity Equity & Inclusion

- This is often view as a risk and sustainability issue
- Poor DEI is a consideration when joining a project and reason to leave a project
- Solidifies the importance of centering DEI in OSS projects

Thank You!