Lessons Learned

From Running an Open Source Project for more than a decade.



Dirk Deimeke

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Taskwarrior Academy @ LinuxERFA

Prolog

Taskwarrior – taskwarrior.org

Taskwarrior Philosophy

- Openness
- Low Friction
- No Penalty
- Methodology Agnostic
- Toolkit
- Extension Friendly
- Community
- Focus

taskwarrior.org/docs/philosophy.html

Lessons learned

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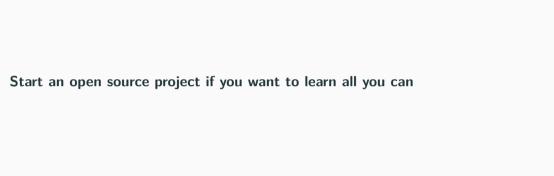
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It has been rewarding, enjoyable, and sometimes frustrating.

We learned a lot about users and Open Source expectations.

I will speak about our experiences and would like to hear yours.



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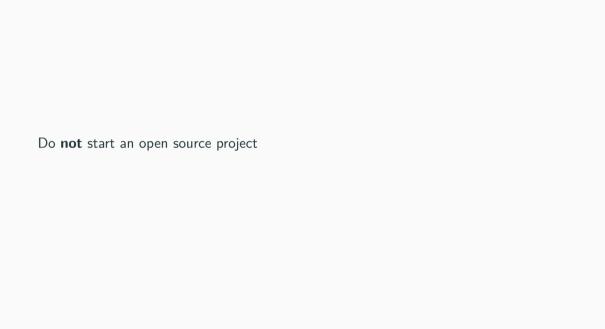
someone out there is benefitting from your work.

Start an open sou	rce project if you	want to learn all v	ou can about software

challenges, administrative challenges, compromise, and will be satisfied hoping that

design, development, planning, testing, documenting, and delivery; **enjoy technical**

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Do not start an open source project if you need praise, warmth and love from your fellow human beings.	

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Bold changes originate elsewhere.

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People will get excited about something a project doesn't yet support.
Deliver it, and they will get excited about the next thing.





There is a fine line between <i>richly-featured</i> and <i>bloated</i> .
There may not be a line at all.

If you demo two features, and talk about twenty more, users still only know about the two.

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Visual demonstrations have far greater impact.

Every change will ruin someone's day.		
They will be sure to tell you about it.		

Every	change	will	ruin	someone's day.

The same change will improve someone's day.

They will be sure to tell you about it.

You will not hear of this.



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People will disguise feature requests as bugs,
which means either they consider difference of opinion a defect,

or believe that calling it a flaw will force implementation,

but hopefully they just forgot to set the issue type to enhancement.



Some people find it very difficult to articulate what they want. It's worth being patient and finding out what they need.	

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What you keep out of a project is just as important as what you allow in to a project.

Many new users will submit feature requests,

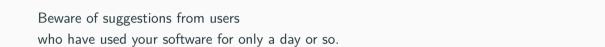
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Many new users will submit feature requests,
just to show that they are knowledgeable and clever.

They don't really want that feature, it's a form of positive feedback.

Beware of suggestions from users

who have used your software for only a day or so.



Be equally aware of suggestions from users

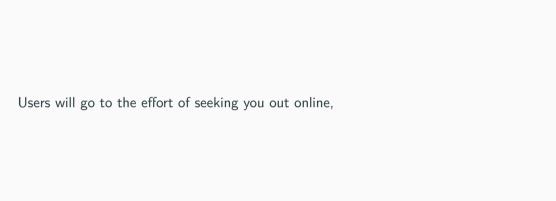
who have used your software for a long, long time.

People will threaten	to not use open sou	rce software because	it lacks a feature,

People will threaten to not use open source software because it lacks a feature, thereby mistaking themselves for paying customers.	

Many believe that if a change is small, it deserves to be in the project,	

Many believe that if a change is small, it deserves to be in the project, regardless of whether it makes sense for it to be there.



Users will go to the effort of seeking you out online, to directly ask you a question

animated GIF	will be watched	over and over,	scrutinized and	understood.

A looping,

A looping, animated GIF will be watched over and over, scrutinized and understood. A paragraph of text will be ignored.

Man pages are too densely crammed with information,
and too lengthy, for most modern humans to ingest.



The best question to identify time wasters:
What have you tried so far?

People will pick a fight with you about all your incidental choices.	

People will pick a fight with you about all your incidental choices.

Your issue tracker. your branching strategy,

and so on.

your version numbers,

the text editor you use,

You can choose the most permissive software license,
and people will still argue with you about your choice.

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It says a lot.

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Prioritize the complaints.

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That was more than ten years ago.
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Sometimes, what looks like an expedient shortcut is perfectly good.

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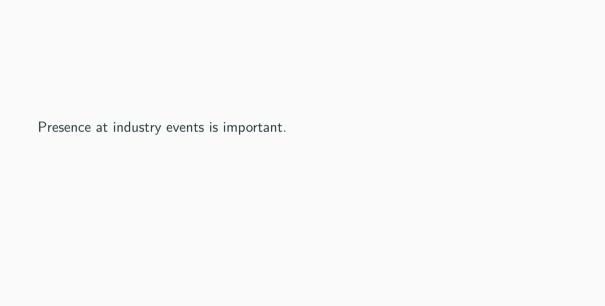
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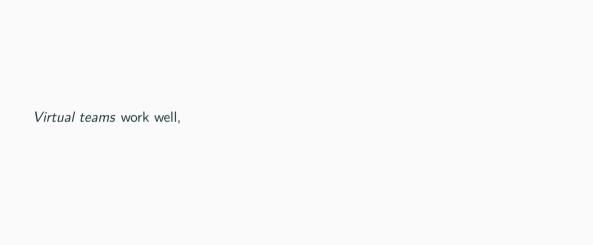
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No one ever mentioned this.

Keep your tutorials short.



Presence at industry events is important.
Offering talks and workshops helps make people aware of your project.



/irtual teams work well,	
out it gets even better after meeting in real life.	



It is good if the members of your team share the same sense of humor.	
If not, be careful writing messages with an ironic tone.	

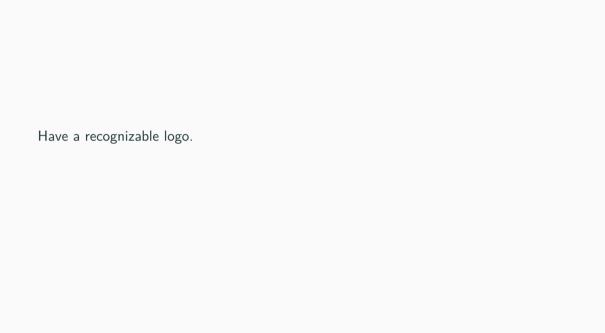
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A development-class machine is no indication	
of the kind of hardware and software your users are running.	

Dependencies and tools are often far behind the latest versions.

Respond to every means of communication.
It is worth it.



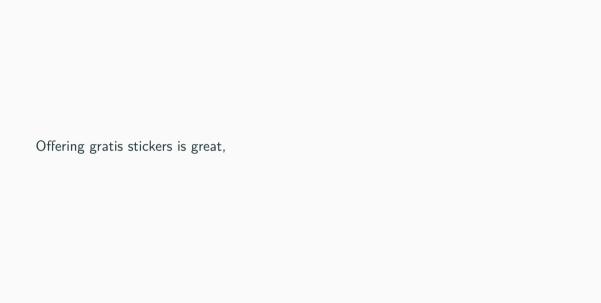
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Have a recognizable logo.	
Do not make the logo yourself, if you are not a designer.	

If you have no budget, ask a designer to judge your work.

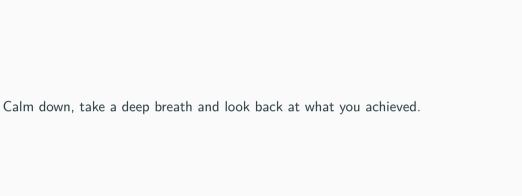


Offering gratis stickers is great,	
having SWAG – Souvenirs, Wearables And Gifts – users can choose from is even bette	r.

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People love to make mashups of two things, or add an extension to a thing.
Very few contributors want to work on the thing.

Create a website containing the philosophy behind your project to help people understand what your project is about.



Calm down, take a deep breath and look back at what you achieved.
Details, mistakes, compromises, incomplete plans and unfulfilled wishes

are only visible from inside the project. Be proud, and make new plans.

Epilog

That's all!

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