

Open Source Is Not Just About Code

Effective Strategies for Collaboration and How Not To Drive Maintainers and Contributors Away

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Hi! I'm Ben Greenberg



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Lifelong Geek, Second Career Developer

Previous Career: Rabbi, organizer and educator

@rabbigreenberg

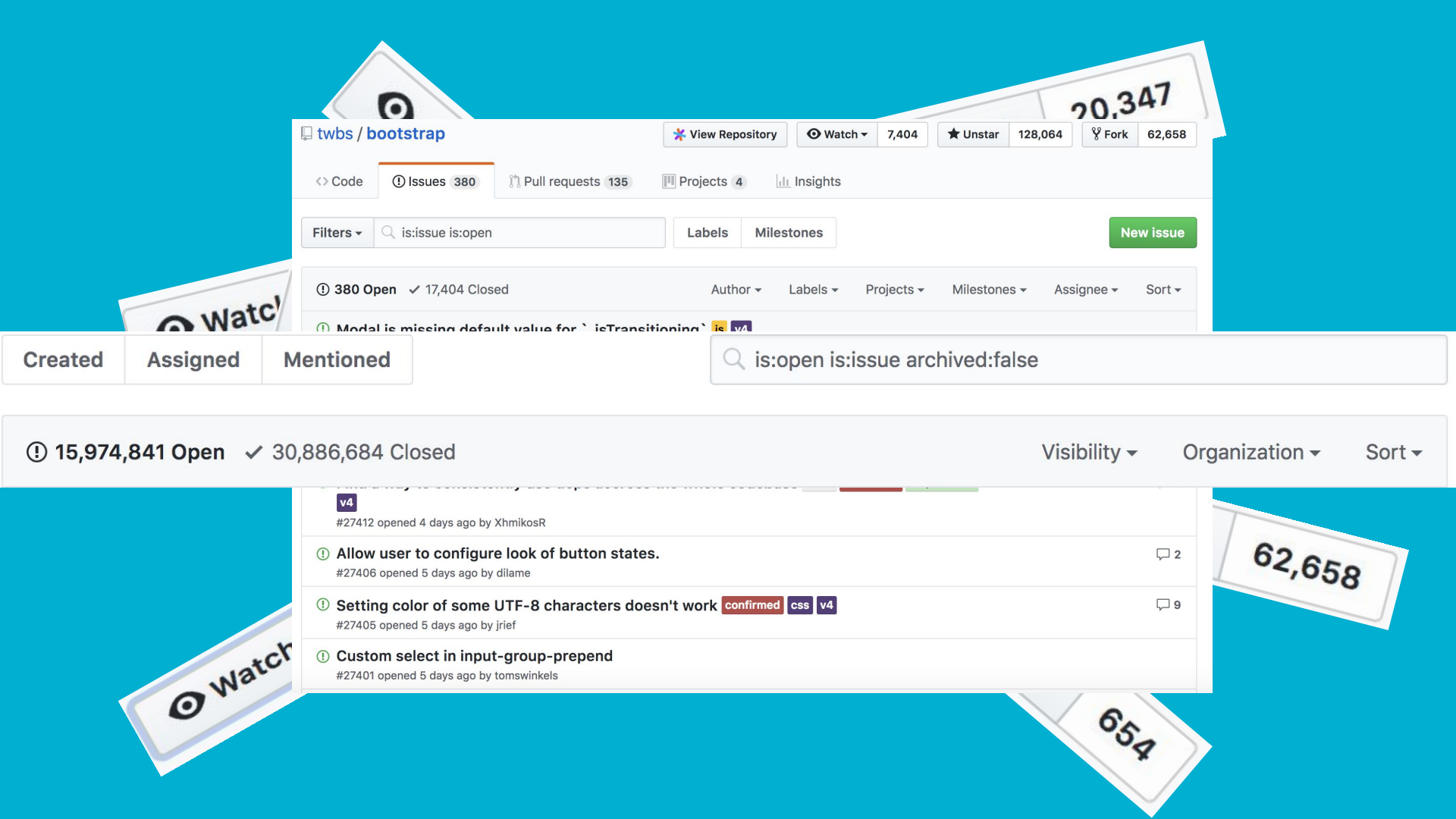


*Tell me and I'll
forget, show me
and I may
remember,
involve me and
I'll understand*

- Anonymous

Writing good code can be
challenging

So can
collaboration



twbs / bootstrap

View Repository

Watch

7,404

Unstar

128,064

Fork

62,658

<> Code

Issues 380

Pull requests 135

Projects 4

Insights

Filters

is:issue is:open

Labels

Milestones

New issue

380 Open 17,404 Closed

Author

Labels

Projects

Milestones

Assignee

Sort

Modal is missing default value for `isTransitioning`

is v4

Created

Assigned

Mentioned

is:open is:issue archived:false

15,974,841 Open 30,886,684 Closed

Visibility

Organization

Sort

v4

#27412 opened 4 days ago by XhmikosR

Allow user to configure look of button states.

#27406 opened 5 days ago by dilame

2

Setting color of some UTF-8 characters doesn't work confirmed css v4

#27405 opened 5 days ago by jrief

9

Custom select in input-group-prepend

#27401 opened 5 days ago by tomwinkels

62,658

654

What We Are Going To Do

1. Diagnose the problem

2. Offer Strategies for More Effective Collaboration

3. Offer an example

Diagnosing the problem



#SchittsCreek



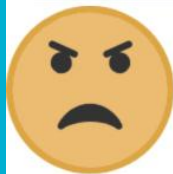
Communication

Shitty website ! #1

🔔 Open



opened this issue on Apr 4 · 1 comment



commented on Apr 4

Contributor



This website looks horrible, I can only recommand you to `npm install` a cool design m8

Maintainer's Time



Michael Heap @mheap · 20h

Can we talk about [#hacktoberfest](#)? I love the concept and have contributed to various projects over the years because of it

However, there's a real sense of people doing it just for the swag. This is my first year as a maintainer going through it, and it's painful.

💬 1 ↻ 1 ❤️ 7 ✉️

[Show this thread](#)



Michael Heap @mheap · 20h

So many people clone a repo, run a spell checker over it and commit the results.

The other common PR I've seen it adding emoji to the README, or adding badges (which is at least partially useful)

The best one though... let me tell you about the best one

💬 1 ↻ 1 ❤️ 3 ✉️

[Show this thread](#)



Michael Heap @mheap · 20h

I just read a PR that had a substantial amount of code and (in my opinion) fantastic commit messages

As I was reading it, I realised that it felt familiar - very similar to how I would have implemented the feature

It turns out, that's because I did. It was my code from a branch

💬 1 ↻ 1 ❤️ 5 ✉️

[Show this thread](#)



Michael Heap @mheap · 20h

They'd taken a WIP branch that I was working on and raised it as a PR. The only comment they added was:

> just for [#hacktoberfest](#)

So, whilst I love the idea of contributing, how can we help people make meaningful contributions rather than taking time away from maintainers?

💬 6 ↻ 2 ❤️ 5 ✉️

[Show this thread](#)

Contributor Paralysis

gatsbyjs / gatsby

673 Open 3,762 Closed 403 Watch 27,094 5 Forks 3,268

Code Issues 873 Pull requests 381 Projects 8 Insights

Labels Milestones New Issue

673 Open 3,762 Closed

Absolute Imports Only Work Locally [Status: needs more info](#)

Tutorial: Add list of official plugins and official starters to end of tutorial [See change](#)

Tutorial: add "gatsby-image" [Hacktoberfest](#) [type: documentation](#)

Exclude pages from having Google Tag Manager (GTm) code added [Status: help wanted](#)

[EPIC] Community-driven Ecosystem Improvements [See](#) [@Ecosystem](#)

alias "develop" script to "start" in all starters and gatsby applications [Hacktoberfest](#) [Status: Closed](#) [good first issue](#) [type: feature or enhancement](#)

Gatsby V2 can't handle the generation of BIG sites. [Status: confirmed](#) [type: bug](#)

gatsby-plugin-subfont build errors (can't find SW files) [Status: broken to review](#)

All search results on Google (only mobile) now have "no-cache=1" appended

Help with using UIKit [Status: needs more info](#)

Using a Gatsby app as a package within a monorepo works

Update documentation for Build Sequence and Client Sequence [type: documentation](#)

gatsby new site from template don't work on ie 10 [type: question or discussion](#)

White page on some devices randomly- no way to see anything in production [Status: needs more info](#)

Documentation for adding Gatsby to an existing repo/project [type: documentation](#)

Add <https://www.gotmlk.com/> to the site showcase [Hacktoberfest](#) [Status: Closed](#) [good first issue](#)

Update "gatsby-core-philosophy.md" [See change](#) [type: documentation](#)

Metrics setting for .org redesign - Ecosystem page [@Ecosystem](#)

Docs: Clarify that when using "gatsby-plugin-layout" you can't refactor any components to the new "Layout" [type: documentation](#)

target selector not re-running

Followed the v2 upgrade guide. Site builds, but is just blank (with no errors?) [Status: needs more info](#) [type: question or discussion](#)

[gatsby-source-wordpress] using deleteNode() in onCreateNode() [Status: broken to review](#)

Multiple installations of Google Tag Manager detected [Status: awaiting author response](#)

[G] Is it okay to return Promise[] to gatsby-node createPages for multiple queries [type: question or discussion](#)

Build source plugin for Marvel API [See change](#) [type: feature or enhancement](#)

Previous 1 2 3 4 5 26 27 Next

PreTiPi normalization will show everything without a milestone.

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No Code of Conduct
Abusive Behavior

Issue Not Pull Request
Inrelevant

Frustration

Missing README
Same Questions Over and Over

No Moderation
Hostile To Newcomers

Strategies to Collaborate More Effectively





"The Starfish and the Spider is a compelling and important book."
—PIERRE OMIYAR, CEO, Omidyar Network; founder and chairman, eBay Inc.

THE STARFISH AND THE SPIDER



THE UNSTOPPABLE POWER OF
LEADERLESS ORGANIZATIONS

ORI BRAFMAN and ROD A. BECKSTROM

BEYOND THEIR DISTINCTIVE SHAPE, SEA STARS ARE FAMOUS FOR THEIR ABILITY TO REGENERATE LIMBS, AND IN SOME CASES, ENTIRE BODIES. THEY ACCOMPLISH THIS BY HOUSING MOST OR ALL OF THEIR VITAL ORGANS IN THEIR ARMS. SOME REQUIRE THE CENTRAL BODY TO BE INTACT TO REGENERATE, BUT A FEW SPECIES **can grow an entirely new sea star just from a portion of a severed limb.**

[National Geographic](#)



WITH NO BRAIN OR BLOOD IT SEEMS CRAZY TO THINK STARFISH CAN SURVIVE IN THE DEPTH OF THE VAST OCEAN... SEAWATER IS PUMPED THROUGHOUT THEIR BODY AS A REPLACEMENT FOR BLOOD... **The use of water saves space as there is no need for a complex blood system, also since seawater is highly abundant they will never run out of it.**

visitsealife.com



Let's be like *starfish*

1. Decentralized System
2. K.I.S.S.
3. Quick to Adapt
4. Can Scale Up (or Down)
5. Everyone Contributes

Decentralized Systems

“... open systems can't rely on a police force... you have added responsibility: ... You become responsible for your own welfare and that of those around you.

When you put people in an open system, some of them will get high, dance all night long and attack street signs. But most people will create elaborate art, share snow cones, and try as hard as they can -- in their own way -- to contribute to the community.

The Starfish and the Spider, pg. 80



**When you
give people
freedom, you
get chaos, but
you also get
incredible
creativity.”**

K.I.S.S.

WHAT DO YOU WANT PEOPLE TO KNOW?

WHAT DO YOU WANT PEOPLE TO DO?

WHY SHOULD PEOPLE CARE?

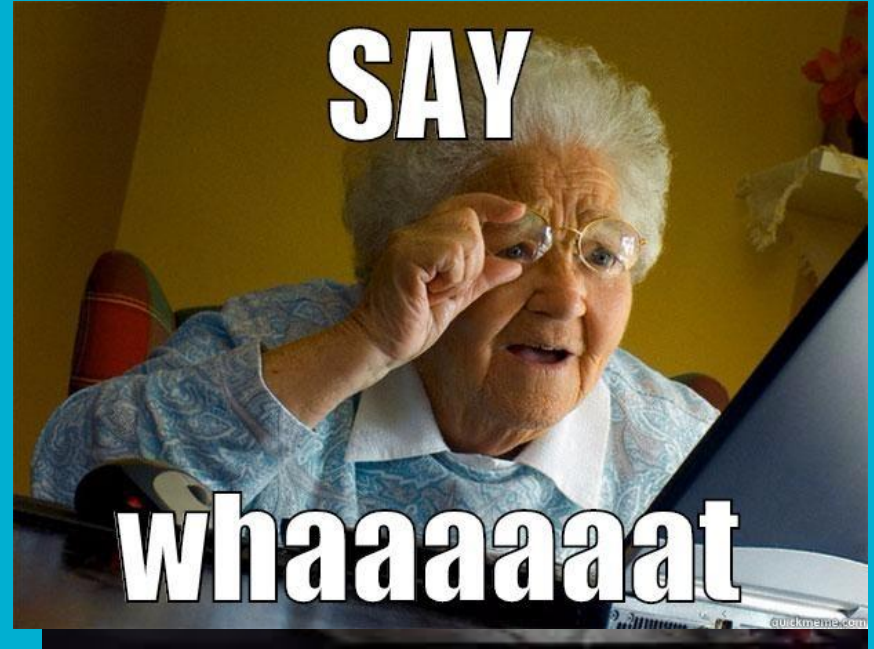
Quick to Adapt

"Hey, let's see a movie tonight!"

"Great! Do you want to go out and get one?"

"Sure! Where do you want to go?"

"Let's go to..."



Can Scale Up (or Down)

"RATHER THAN INVESTING AUTHORITY IN A SINGLE LEADER, SPANISH OFFICERS HAD TO CONTENT WITH THE **decentralized political structure** OF THE APACHE BANDS."

Apache Adaptation to Hispanic Rule, pg. 177

APACHE SOCIETY **scaled UP** TO VILLAGE LIFE
and **scaled DOWN** TO NOMAD LIFE

** without filing a form with management first*

Everyone Contributes

“WIKIPEDIA OFFERED LOW TRANSACTION COSTS TO PARTICIPATION, AND IT DE-EMPHASIZED THE SOCIAL OWNERSHIP OF CONTENT.”

“

If you want user contributions, build platforms that are familiar and easy. **Lower the barriers** to participation; focus on helping users to understand what you want from them...

His research highlights the value of platforms that **invite rather than challenge** — and the validity of contributions made for the collective good rather than the individual.

[Nieman Lab](#)



ויקיפדיה
האנציקלופדיה החופשית

An Example

DEV

WHAT DO YOU WANT PEOPLE TO KNOW

“We are a for-profit company. *We're working our butts off to grow a big, profitable dev network. I mention this because open source is sometimes conflated with non-profit. The transparency that comes with open-sourcing* **should add accountability** *and will help ensure we remain aligned with the community and* **un-evil as we grow.”**

WHAT DO YOU WANT PEOPLE TO DO

Refactoring code, e.g. improving the code without modifying the behavior is an area that can probably be done based on intuition and **may not require much communication** to be merged.

Fixing bugs may also **not require a lot of communication**, but the more the better. Please surround bug fixes with ample tests. Bugs are magnets for other bugs. Write tests near bugs!

Building features is the area which **will require the most communication** and/or negotiation. Every feature is subjective and open for debate. **The product roadmap should be a good guide to follow**. As always, when in doubt, ask!"

WHY SHOULD PEOPLE care

*“If you are coming from elsewhere on the web, and are not familiar with dev.to, we are a large online community of software developers committed to **teaching one another, building our careers, and generally making software development a more collaborative, humane endeavor...***

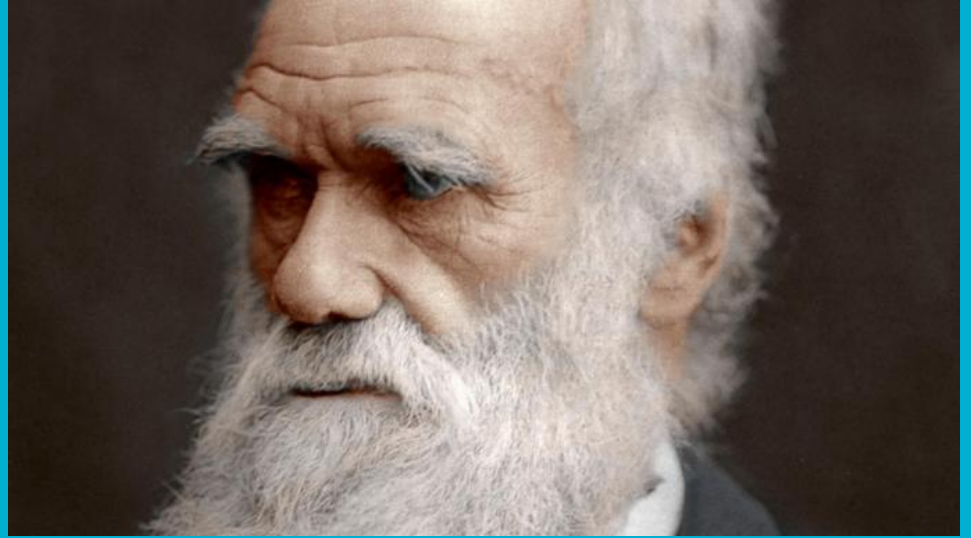
*Our members write posts, start discussions, and **build their professional profiles.**”*

To Put It All Together...

1. Balancing between centralized and distributed decision making
2. Answer (and re-answer) the three basic questions
3. Be responsive to the changing needs of the community
4. Invite participation thoughtfully

”

It is the long history of humankind (and animal kind, too) that those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed.



”

Charles Darwin

THANK YOU תודה

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