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15 Years of Open Source: It's About the People

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About the Old, Fat Geek up front...

- Linux user since 1995; became a Linux advocate immediately

- Former Open Source columnist for <u>Infoworld</u>, <u>Processor</u> magazines

- Former weekly panelist on "The Linux Show"

- Wrote one of the first books on Open Source: <u>Embracing Insanity: Open Source Software Development</u>

- 30 years in the industry; 20+ years in software services consulting

- Currently Evangelist for the Xen Project (employed by Citrix)

What This Talk is About

- The term "Open Source" was coined by Open Source Initiative (OSI) in 1998

- In the past 15 years, the Open Source world has changed drastically – and not that many people seem aware of it

- It is normal for living things to grow and change, but a plant with neglected roots is doomed to die

  - We have become focused on the fruits of Open Source; we need to remember to tend to its roots

- I want to take you on a short journey through my memory so you can learn something of what I've learned in the past 15 years

My Open Source Journey

- 1995: Linux meets a simple need for me – and changes everything!

- 1997: My first conference – 1997 *Atlanta Linux Showcase*

- 1999: Big time at *LinuxWorld Conference and Expo*

- -2002: The suits take over the party

- 2004: Working for a start-up which was a Open Source consumer

- 2009: Purgatory

- 2013: Heaven: The Xen Project

  - The question arises: In an era when many people are paid to work with Open Source, has the heart of the movement been lost?

The Beginning: A Unix-like OS

- 1995: Linux was the answer to my need for Unix training

  - I was a Linux advocate before I ever used the software (somewhat prophetically)

  - Using it to solve problems brought about my epiphany

    - Everyone knew PCs sucked

      - They could do one thing at a time, and do it badly

    - But then I used Linux and it made the PC behave like a "real" operating system

    - Epiphany: PCs suck only because the software sucks!

Early Years: Fervor and Passion

- 1997: Lessons Learned from the *Atlanta Linux Showcase*

    - ~500 geeks (mostly of the fat, white, male variety) on a weekend

    - Cheap hotel, with all the sugar, fat, and caffeine you could stand (read: Wendy's)

    - Fire in the eyes and the bellies; true passion and enthusiasm

        - It wasn't about "a new model of commercial software development"

        - It wasn't even about the "Four Freedoms" (sorry RMS)

        - It wasn't about employment (just the opposite)

        - It was about self-realization

Early Years: Geeks Unleashed

- There was no one in the room to say, "No"

  - Huge step forward in the development of geek power

  - Until now, geeks were power tools of organizations

    - You could voice your opinion, but someone else decided what you could do (e.g., "Mordac the Preventer" from *Dilbert*)

    - Suddenly, FOSS enabled geeks to be legitimate decision makers

    - You did what you thought was right – and the ecosystem would judge if you were right or wrong

    - Geeks developed their voice, figuratively and literally (e.g., Miguel de Icaza)

Early Years: People Centerstage

- The Code: Incredibly important

  - It is the output of the work

- The Four Freedoms: Highly important

  - They enabled the movement

- But the People: They were the story!

  - FOSS people were truly what mattered

  - Projects could come and go, but the hearts of the people survived

  - Licenses could come and go, but freedom means nothing without the people who are free to do what they want

Early Years: The Brass Ring

- Few folks had a job working with Open Source

    - Neither as developers, nor as users

    - People developed code nights and weekends, on their own time

    - Open Source advocacy was a subject to be taught (and I did so)

    - Getting a job working with Open Source was "the brass ring"

        - A dream more than a goal

        - People who were paid to work with Open Source were held in awe; they almost had an "aura" around them

Transition: Legitimacy ...and Suits

- 1999: The first IT Analysts see FOSS in the datacenter's future

    - Until this, FOSS was seen as "fringe" with no Enterprise future

    - A **huge** breakthrough in the struggle for legitimacy

    - FOSS shows sprout everywhere; *LinuxWorld Conference and Expo* becomes the mindshare leader

- ~2002: Suits begin to take center stage

    - It's all about business, "booth babes", and swag

    - Suddenly, we are guests at our own party... and we don't know the hosts

And Then The Darkness...

- Like many in the movement, I signed on to a startup company working with Open Source

    - But it didn't produce Open Source (despite efforts to the contrary)

    - My participation in the community eventually dried up

- In the 1998 banking crisis, the company's runway shrank from 11.5 months to 3 weeks

    - Assets, including "human-compatible liveware," (to borrow a phrase from *Dilbert*) sold to an old-school software company

        - A place where FOSS was feared and loathed

The Light Once Again Dawns...

- 2013: Xen Project Evangelist

    - The job I had been searching for over a decade

    - Citrix pays the bills, but my goals are all Xen Project

    - Xen Project is the premier FOSS hypervisor

        - Used by Amazon, Rackspace (public cloud), Verizon, ...

        - 10th anniversary this year

        - In April, Xen Project became a Linux Foundation Collaborative Project

But FOSS World Has Changed!

- Attending the event where Xen Project officially became a Linux Foundation Collaborative Project in April:

    - The majority of attendees had the "brass ring": their day jobs involved Open Source

    - People were often identified by the company they worked for

    - Much fewer were working nights and weekends on Open Source

    - Many of my cohorts from 10-15 years ago were noticeably absent

        - There's a new crowd taking center stage

The Fearful Questions Arise

- Is Success Killing Open Source?

  - Do the new people understand the history of the movement?

  - Do they have the passion of their predecessors?

  - Do they understand what it is to do FOSS as individuals?

  - Is FOSS "just a job" to the new folks?

    - If they lost their job today, would they do FOSS tomorrow?

    - When they participate, are they using their own thoughts, or merely parroting the positions of their employers?

What I Have Witnessed So Far

- This year, I've been to several conferences:

    - Southern California Linux Expo, Linuxfest Northwest, Texas Linux Fest, Southeast Linuxfest, OSCON, Linux Collaboration Summit, LinuxCon North America and more

- Enthusiasm seems solid, even if the people are relatively new and most have FOSS-related jobs

- Most seem to only have a sketchy knowledge of FOSS history

- Not sure if they know what it is to work on their own time

- These people represent the cream of the crop; what of the rest?

What of the Rest Indeed?

- I've asked people at conferences if they would continue working with FOSS if their job went away, and most have said "Yes"

  - But a few have said "No"

  - And people who attend conferences frequently can be far more driven than those who do not attend

- What if these others are just "doing a job?" If their opinion belongs to those paying their paycheck? If they don't *really care* about Open Source?

- Can these transform Open Source into just another commercial software development model?

Open Source Can Lose Its Way

Unless...

Teach The Rest!

- We who care must take it upon ourselves to teach those in our locus of influence

- It's not about lecturing, brow-beating, or criticizing others

    - It's about informing them about the history, the passion, the purpose

    - It's about lighting the fire under people; getting them to discover the personal freedom and self-realization of Open Source for themselves

    - It's about the people; software of the people, by the people, for the people

Your Assignment: Let Others Know

- If the spirit of Open Source is to survive and thrive it takes *YOU* to get involved and *teach what you know*

- It's not academic; it's about letting passion flow out of you

- If you have a heart for Open Source, share it

- In Open Source, participation is key

  - Can be developer, user, writer, thinker, noise-maker...

  - It is about people working with people for the good of people

  - Stand up!

Thank you!

I appreciate your time and attention!
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http://www.XenProject.org/