

Money doesn't help much –
Support projects with
contributions

Niklas Merz

Agenda

1. Why this talk?
2. Facts about me
3. How many people get into Open Source
4. Getting invested
5. Advice for first time contributors
6. Onboarding new community members
7. Types of contributors
8. Is the project sustainable?

Why

- Critical look at every open source project you love
- Many projects have only a few maintainers
- Users and maintainers should be aware of the state of projects and *investments* made or required

Facts about me

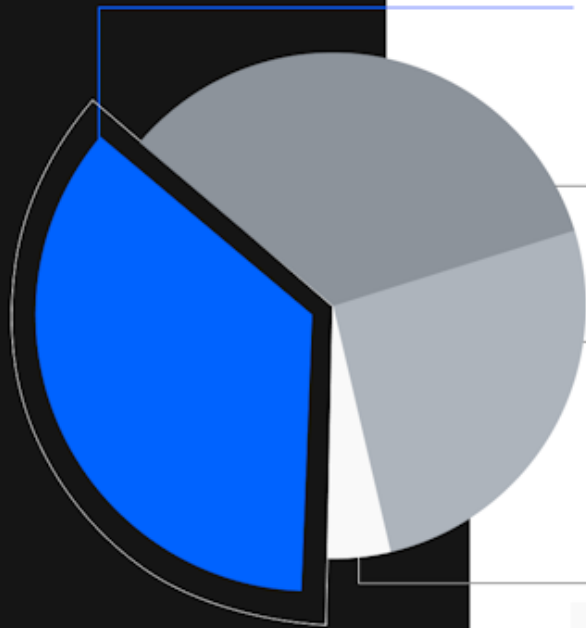
1. Apache Cordova User
2. Minor Apache Cordova contributor
3. Active Committer & PMC
4. No longer Cordova app developer
5. I suck at CSS
6. This presentation is styled using CSS



If you haven't contributed to open source, what's holding you back?

Total votes:

14,654



35.5% Imposter Syndrome

34% Lack of time

26.1% Can't find a project

4.4% Other

<https://us11.campaign-archive.com/?e=ca69183c1b&u=9d7ced8c4bbd6c2f238673f0f&id=f07f659a95>

First contact

- Add an open source dependency to their project
- Discover a bug in an open source project
- Need a new feature

What to do now?

Advice for first time contributors

- Be kind
- Be patient
- Read documentation: A lot of common questions should already be documented "somewhere"
- If in doubt, don't be afraid to ask
- **You need to build up trust, reputation, merit**

Support first timers as a maintainer

- Be kind
- Be patient
- Respond in a timely manner to keep motivation high and make contributions feel welcome

How people get invested

The open source project is now critical for their business

- Product is built on top of open source software
- Important pieces of their software, tooling or infrastructure stack is open source

-> **Issues arise that threaten their business**

- Sponsoring the core maintainers if possible
- Find someone to pay to do the work

-> **Think about doing the work themselves**

How to support here

- Make paid support options visible
 - Contributors working as freelancers
 - Consulting Companies
- Communicate that donations to the ASF cannot be used for development work
- Good and easy to find documentation on how to contribute
- Avoid too many "uncommon" steps and prefer existing tooling

From first time to casual contributor

- Contributors see value in their work for the project
- They learn to navigate the waters
- Quality contributions
- Continued interest and participation

Onboarding new community members

- Check and tell them if their contribution is valuable, maintainable and documented in line with the project
- Get a feel if a new contributor works in the "open source spirit"
 - Can be trusted to complete task from start to finish
 - Listen to feedback
 - Ask for reviews and feedback before doing something possibly breaking
 - Show trust early
- Review work and give advice
- Solid testing framework for fast feedback loops and safe code changes
- Documentations for internal dependencies and processes

Get to know the people to
understand the state of the
project

Types of maintainers

Silent hero

- Stays in background
- Does a lot of coding work
- Thankless tasks:
 - Releases
 - Updates, refactorings
 - Documentation
 -
- Drives progress

Helping hand

- Contact person for the community
- Answers a lot of user questions
- Issue triage and response

Advocate

- Voice of the projects
- Talks and promotions
- Website, Documentations etc.

Founder/Legend

- Started the project or contributor since "the early days"
- Lots of deep knowledge
- Knows the history behind things
- Sometimes hard to reach because they may have moved on to other things

Sustainability is more about the community behind the code

Is the project sustainable?

- People available for fixes and security issues
- Decisions are made and not stalled
- Getting releases out (votes)
- Technical debt is addressed, refactorings are done successfully
- Development getting stuck
- Maintainer burnout

Closing words

- Get to know the projects you love or need for your business
- Paid support options are in demand
- **Maintainers** please encourage contributions
- **Open source beginners** please just start contributing

Questions?

Niklas Merz

- E-Mail me: **`niklasmerz@apache.org`**
- Slides: <https://niklas.merz.dev/open-source-talk>