



# Running a Successful Open Source Project

Rob Reynolds  
Puppet, Inc





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# Rob Reynolds

- Senior Software Engineer on the Windows Team at Puppet  puppet
- Creator of Chocolatey 
- Enjoys long walks on the beach and designing solutions that make hard things easy
- Co-wrote infrastructure framework known as the Chuck Norris Framework 
- Over 10 years experience in infrastructure automation 
- Obsesses over user experience





# Open Source Software Experience

- Work on Puppet
- Work on Chocolatey
- Work on RoundhouseE and other Chuck Norris Framework tools
- Contributed to numerous OSS projects





# Topics

- Success?
- Passion
- Go It Alone
- Decision Structure
- Legal
- Versioning / Release Structure
- Time Management
- Documentation
- Contributors / Committers
- Learn to Take Critical Feedback
- Collaboration
- The Long Haul
- Finding New Owners
- Final Thoughts





# So How Do You Run A Successful OSS Project?



**PHASE 1**

**PHASE 2**

**PHASE 3**

---

Collect  
Underpants

?

Profit



# Define Success

- What does it mean for you when working in open source?







# Defining Success for Rob

- Solving a Problem
- Building a Community
- User Experience





# Find a Passion

- You must be passionate about your project
- No one else will be for you
- You must be a user of your project





# Go It Alone

- “I know, I’ll open source this and get help” <- The wrong idea



# Decision Structure

- Benevolent Dictator?
- Small Group?
- By Vote?
- Design By Committee?







# Decision Structure

- Recommendation - Benevolent Dictator
- "Open Source is not a democracy."
- Standards Committees





# Legal

- Pick a Friendly Open Source License - <https://opensource.org/licenses>
  - Recommend Apache 2 or MIT
  - GPL if you want Copyleft
- Contributor License Agreement
  - <http://harmonyagreements.org/>





# Versioning / Release Structure

- Semantic Versioning - <https://semver.org>
- Where will your releases be?
- Will you offer multiple versions at a time?
- Do not force someone to upgrade
- ChangeLog - What breaks, how to mitigate







# Time Management

- Set some time aside
- “If you are not good at time management now, learn to be.”
- Email Filters
  - Still many messages per day
- Find Community Members To Help
- Documentation





# Documentation

- Docs are usually most hated thing to do
- Very important
- “An Ounce of Documentation Saves A Hundred Requests”





# Marketing

- You must tell folks about what you are doing
- Blogging, showing it to prominent folks for them to blog
- Put it on package managers for discovery
- Build info/demo into talks at conferences
- Develop an elevator pitch
  - Does it make sense to non-technical folks?





# Contributors / Committers

- Set expectations
- Document processes
- Document Code Design
- Provides direction for folks



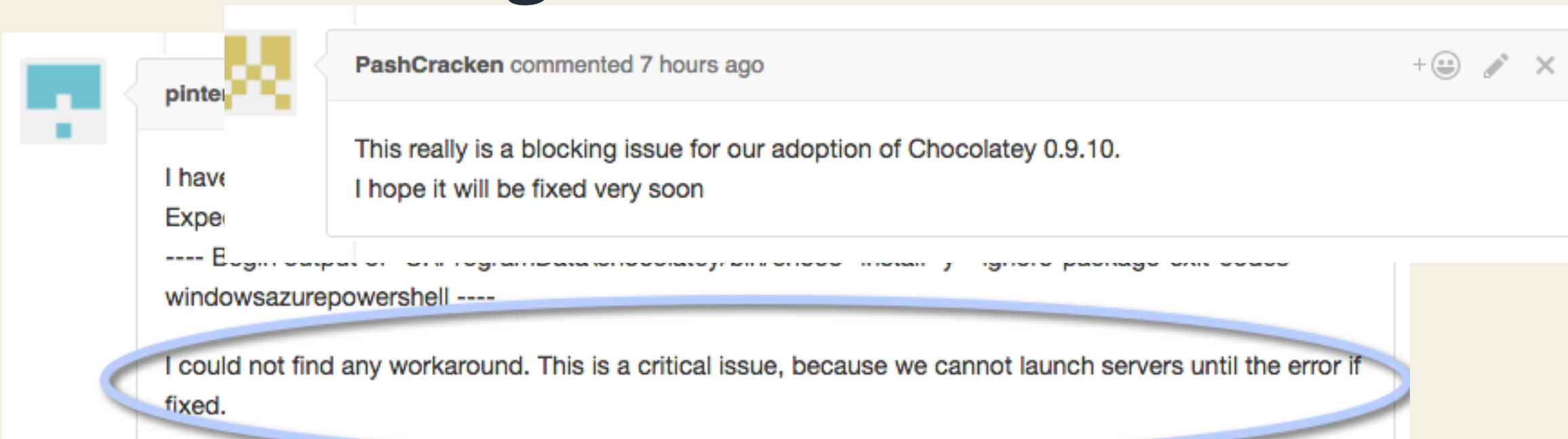
# Learn to Take Critical Feedback

- Project is Your Baby
- “Not everyone will think your baby is beautiful.”
- Most feedback is helpful
- Some negative feedback is helpful once you get to issue
- Some folks are just trolls
- Know the difference between abuse and feedback





# You Are Going To Break Stuff



A screenshot of a GitHub issue page. The main content is a comment by user **PashCracken** from 7 hours ago. The comment text is: "This really is a blocking issue for our adoption of Chocolatey 0.9.10. I hope it will be fixed very soon". Below the comment, there is a blue oval highlighting a line of text: "I could not find any workaround. This is a critical issue, because we cannot launch servers until the error is fixed." To the left of the comment, there is a snippet of code from a PowerShell script, which includes the line "windowsazurepowershell ----".

**PashCracken** commented 7 hours ago

This really is a blocking issue for our adoption of Chocolatey 0.9.10.  
I hope it will be fixed very soon

I could not find any workaround. This is a critical issue, because we cannot launch servers until the error is fixed.

- ☐ **Ignore ValidPackage Exit Codes for Real** 3 - Done Bug Priority\_HIGH  
#827 opened 19 hours ago by ferventcoder 0.9.10.3
- ☐ **Cache folder running under SYSTEM account should be C:\Windows\TEMP** 3 - Done Bug Priority\_HIGH  
#826 opened 21 hours ago by ferventcoder 0.9.10.3
- ☐ **Hold pending check for 10 seconds / provide means of explicitly overriding the transactional install cleanup** 3 - Done Enhancement  
#822 opened 2 days ago by pauxus 0.9.10.3
- ☐ **Successful installer exit codes not recognized by choco should return 0** 3 - Done Bug Priority\_HIGH  
#821 opened 3 days ago by ferventcoder 0.9.10.3
- ☐ **NotSilent fails with "Cannot bind argument to parameter statements because it is an empty string"** 3 - Done Bug Priority\_HIGH



# How Not To Collaborate





# How Not To Collaborate

- <http://lkml.iu.edu/hypermail/linux/kernel/1510.3/02866.html>

*> the case it's predominantly small driver fixes all over the place.*

Christ people. This is just sh\*t.

The conflict I get is due to stupid new gcc header file crap. But what makes me upset is that the crap is for completely bogus reasons.

This is the old code in net/ipv6/ip6\_output.c:

```
mtu -= hlen + sizeof(struct frag_hdr);
```

and this is the new "improved" code that uses fancy stuff that wants magical built-in compiler support and has silly wrapper functions for when it doesn't exist:

```
if (overflow_usub(mtu, hlen + sizeof(struct frag_hdr), &mtu) ||
```







# How Not To Collaborate

- <https://lkml.org/lkml/2012/12/23/75>

```
-----
Subject: Re: [Regression w/ patch] Media commit causes use
(was: Re: Linux 3.8-rc1)

On Sun, Dec 23, 2012 at 6:08 AM, Mauro Carvalho Chehab
<mchehab@redhat.com> wrote:
>
> Are you saying that pulseaudio is entering on some weird loop if the
> returned value is not -EINVAL? That seems a bug at pulseaudio.

Mauro, SHUT THE FUCK UP!

It's a bug alright - in the kernel. How long have you been a
maintainer? And you *still* haven't learnt the first rule of kernel
maintenance?

If a change results in user programs breaking, it's a bug in the
kernel. We never EVER blame the user programs. How hard can this be to
understand?

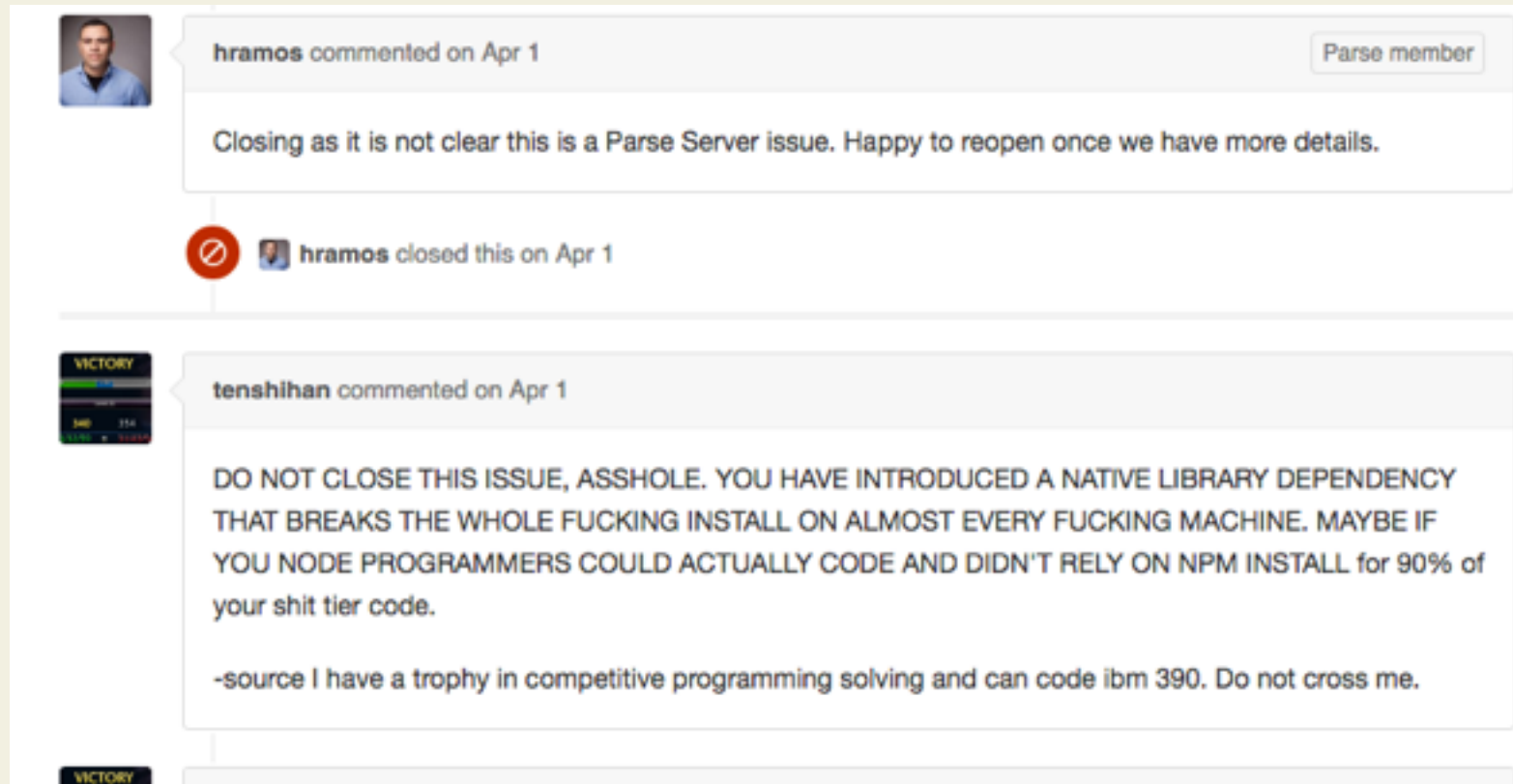
To make matters worse, commit f0ed2ce840b3 is clearly total and utter
CRAP even if it didn't break applications. ENOENT is not a valid error
return from an ioctl. Never has been, never will be. ENOENT means "No
such file and directory", and is for path operations. ioctl's are done
```





# How Not To Collaborate

- <https://github.com/ParsePlatform/parse-server/issues/1050>



The screenshot shows a GitHub issue page for `ParsePlatform/parse-server` issue #1050. It displays two comments and a status change.

**Comment 1:** User `hramos` (Parse member) commented on Apr 1: "Closing as it is not clear this is a Parse Server issue. Happy to reopen once we have more details."

**Status Change:** User `hramos` closed this on Apr 1, indicated by a red circle with a white slash icon.

**Comment 2:** User `tenshihan` commented on Apr 1: "DO NOT CLOSE THIS ISSUE, ASSHOLE. YOU HAVE INTRODUCED A NATIVE LIBRARY DEPENDENCY THAT BREAKS THE WHOLE FUCKING INSTALL ON ALMOST EVERY FUCKING MACHINE. MAYBE IF YOU NODE PROGRAMMERS COULD ACTUALLY CODE AND DIDN'T RELY ON NPM INSTALL for 90% of your shit tier code. -source I have a trophy in competitive programming solving and can code ibm 390. Do not cross me."

The user `tenshihan` has a profile picture showing a "VICTORY" trophy.





# Collaboration - The Art of Being Nice

- Be Humble
- Be Friendly
- Understand Context Prior to Judgment
- Learn to Say No - <https://blog.jessfraz.com/post/the-art-of-closing/>



# Collaboration - Fixing Issues





# It's Not All Sunshine and Roses

- <https://sethvargo.com/leaving-chef/>
- <https://plus.google.com/+LennartPoetteringTheOneAndOnly/posts/J2TZrTvu7vd>





# Collaboration Mediums

- Mailing List
- Stack Overflow
- Chat - Gitter, IRC and/or Slack





# The Long Haul

- Does this project have costs?
- How do you plan to pay for those costs?
- Your time and effort
- Monetize? Sponsorship? Or Both?







# Finding New Owners

- Life Events
- New Projects
- Passions Shift
- No Longer a User





# Finding New Owners

- No Owners
- Letting the Project End
- Backing Off - Is the community strong enough?



# Getting Started - Contributing

- When In Rome
- Ask
- Documentation
- Smaller Things - Get Familiar
- <http://up-for-grabs.net/>



# Final Thoughts

- Open Source is Rewarding
- Notoriety
- Opens doors for new careers
- "It's amazing to hear when folks find what you have created useful."

