

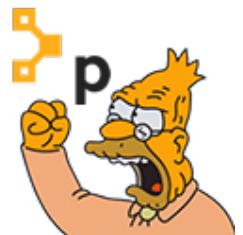
It's all about the ecosystem
Ben Ford



authored in binford2k.github.io/showoff

Who Am I?

- Worked at Puppet for more than 13 years
- When I started, we were creating our first Enterprise product with an OSS core....
- Wore many hats over the years
 - Pro Services, Developer, Education, Community, Product, Podcaster, Dev Relations
- Some fun projects:
 - Node Encrypt -- in-catalog encryption
 - Manifold -- pattern based resource relationships
 - Showoff -- advanced interactive presenter
 - Tons of developer experience tools



Why do I care so much about community?



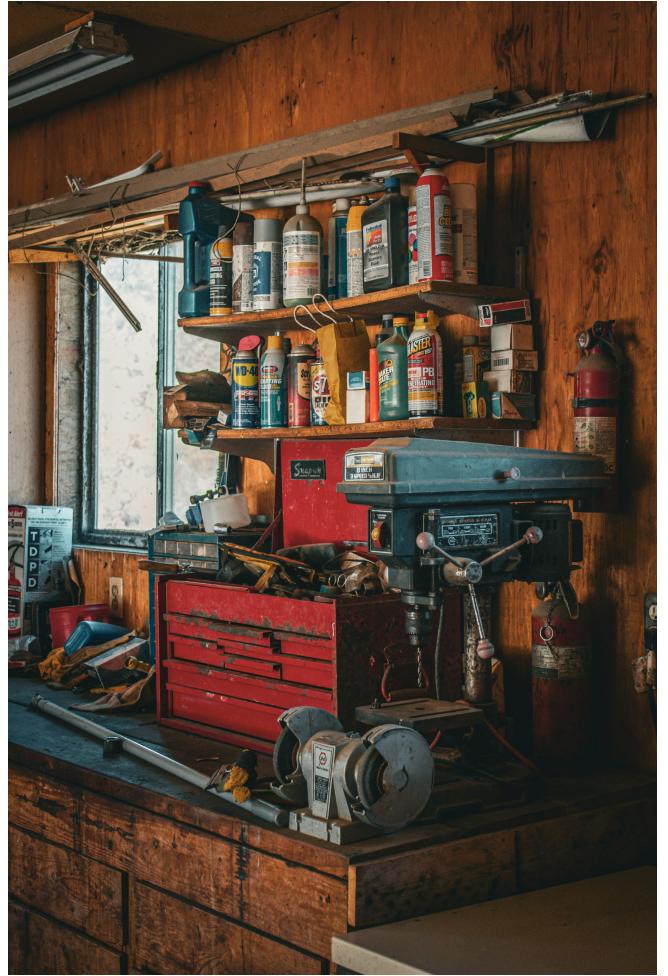
- Involved with and led community my whole life
- LUG president and advisor
- Running Club
- Roller Derby
- Conferences and meetups
- Inspired by Portland's creative spaces
- OMSI maker's markets
- Local craft faires
- Soap box derby
- Maker concept -- build and **share**

Content Ecosystems

- Some things you buy for their own uses
 - Bicycle, automobile, clothing, etc
- Some things don't really have their own intrinsic value:
 - Puppet, Ansible, Nintendo Switch, Spotify, waffle maker, web browser, etc.
 - Their value comes from ecosystem of content or things you can create
- If all you could do with Puppet was what it came with ***then nobody would buy it.***



Content-enabling products are not solutions on their own.



Enabling Content

- The value of a platform is in its ecosystem of content
- "Developers, developers, developers!"
- Why MS and Apple give away dev tools
- Why Apple invests so much in ecosystem
 - Enabling content developers
 - Cultivating that maker mentality



“ Steve Ballmer said that "I'm trying to tell people at that time that third parties really mattered" hoping to drive home a simple message: ***Microsoft needed third-party developers to survive.***

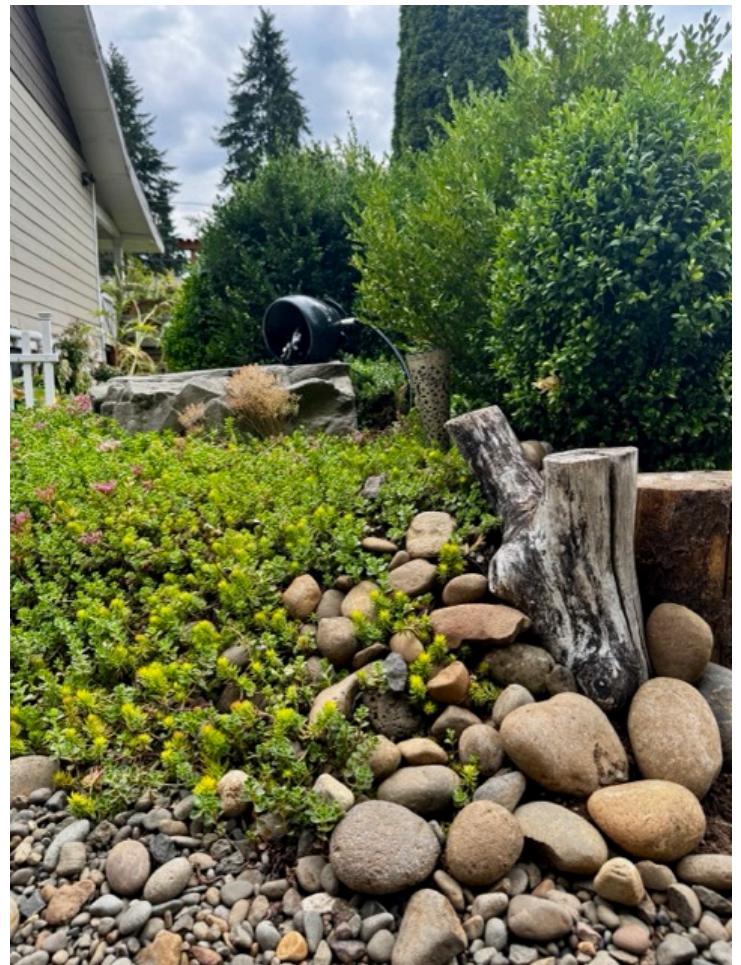
Maker spaces

- All the good conferences are actually maker spaces
 - WWDC
 - relInvent
 - Kubecon
 - LinuxWorld
 - DevOpsDays
 - cfgmgmtcamp 
 - Not about the vendor or product, but what you can build and create with it
 - Or share and see what others have created!
-  None of the platforms are viable without a robust content ecosystem!



Cultivating an Ecosystem

- Without the right conditions, not even the best seeds will grow.
- Water, light, the right nutrients
- Same applies for communities
- Fertile environment and the right incentives
 - Money (*sometimes*)
 - Autonomy
 - Sense of belonging and appreciation
 - Accomplishment and recognition



A New Venture

(and an immediate pivot)

- Some of you know about the company I'm building -- consulting, custom development, maybe build some things
- Right now was when I was going to tell you about the products we're building
- *But things don't always go the way they're supposed to....*
- Perforce closed Puppet development and EULA-walled access to OSS Puppet
 - No packages and can only run on 25 nodes!
 - Jump through hoops to build modules and tools for the ecosystem and in exchange you get..... nothing
 - Treated module authors like they were being granted some kind of favor by being **allowed** to write code for the Puppet platform.
- *And we needed open source Puppet to exist in order to build on!*



So we pivoted to keeping the ecosystem alive.

cold hard cash

- Didn't actually change a lot just yet – we're still building community
- But we're building OpenVox community, subsuming the original Puppet community
- Started out by seeking grants, sponsors, contributions
 - Stipends for conference travel and speaking
 - Robust bug bounty program
- Revenue to keep the company alive.



But money is not the biggest driver for most contributors

So let's talk OpenVox

- Puppet closed development -- the APL-2 license allows that 😐
- Overlook InfraTech immediately built and released open package versions
- Worked with Vox Pupuli to stabilize a fork and immediately people swarmed to help
- Opportunity to once again feel like contributions matter and are appreciated
- Suddenly people are excited to be involved again



Give people a way to make a difference and *they will.*



Back to Open Source Roots



dream of.

- Solve your own problems
- Contribute to something larger than yourself and make a difference
- Share with others and be recognized and appreciated for it
- Equitable exchange of value -- get as well as give.
- Original community is becoming increasingly irrelevant

85% or more of engagement now happens in the new Slack^{*} space and our pipeline improvements already let us move at a velocity that the legacy project can only

Companies going Sideways

- They've practically got a roadmap so why do so many companies get lost?
- OSS gets you to market much faster
- At first returns are fast and easy so the value is obvious
- But then there's process... and investors to answer to... and because OSS value is so obvious nobody thought they'd have to document why
- And so over time this knowledge is forgotten about.



As most businesses mature, they lose sight of the value of OSS and lose the employees and community members who care enough to do something about it.

Crumbling Foundation

- We've forgotten about the countless companies who let their ecosystems die
- and then collapsed without that foundation to build on
- Dotan Horovits has a talk series about the "Dark Side of Open Source" that tells many of these stories
- Private equity makes it worse by laser focusing on nothing but short term profits



Avoiding this demise requires a drastic shift in mindset...

“ Ecosystem is the product!

The thing you sell only enables the ecosystem.

Whether it's free or very very expensive.

Treat your ecosystem *like a product*



1. Understand customer needs
2. ... so you can define requirements
3. ... and then work with cross-functional teams to deliver
4. ... *a successful product that meets goals and provides value*

A seat at the planning table



- Ecosystem should have equal weight in planning sessions
- Will features lower friction or increase it?
- Will features encourage or discourage community engagement?
- Will features enable third-party content or "capture market space"?

“

When the suits start throwing around words like "*monetize*", make sure they know what it is that they are monetizing.

Our Business Ethos

- The fork we're supporting and any products we end up building on it are OSS from top to bottom
- We won't sell access to products, but enable success with them
- Public benefit company encodes ethos into business structure & bylaws
- Fiduciary duty includes community benefit and not just shareholder returns
- Sharing the abundance
 - profit sharing with the contributors who've enabled this success
 - work with other players in the space rather than cannibalizing it all



**Overlook
Infratech**

Business Incentives

- Not incentivized to build things that we can sell and artificially gate access to
- Are incentivized to find most effective & efficient solution to customers' problems
 - Improve and reuse existing tech
 - Partner with other companies
 - Build if we have to, but contribute to Vox Pupuli and everyone benefits
- Avoid "prisoner's dilemma" because we sell solutions, not things



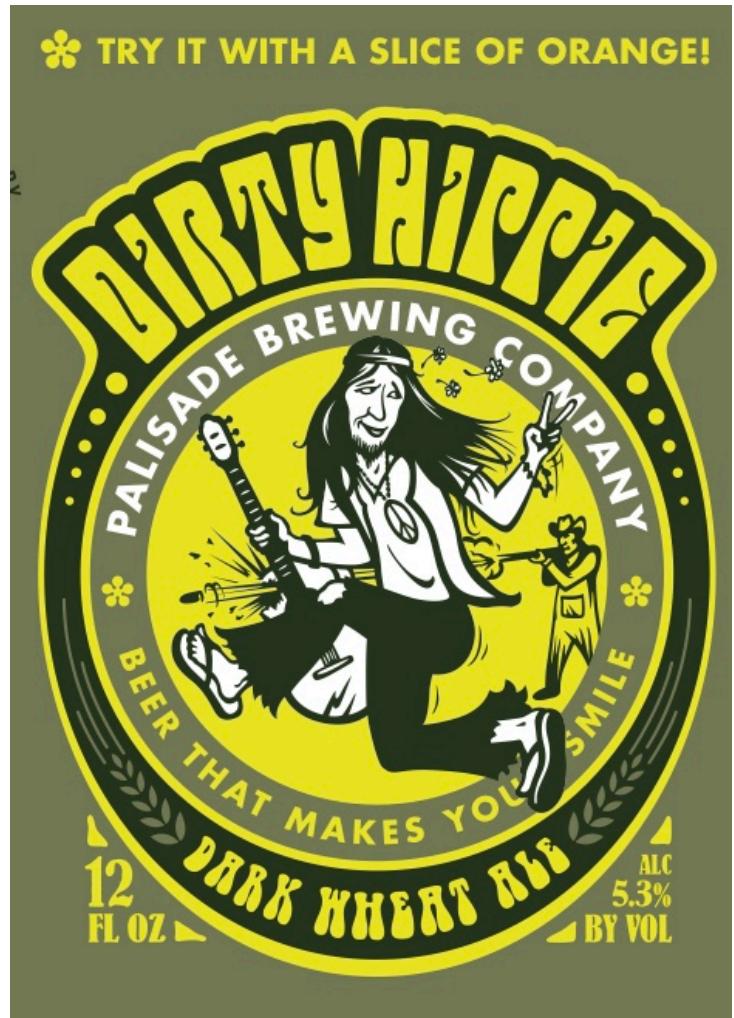
Not the path to a 10x unicorn, but to long-term sustainability and community benefit. And we're already making some decent headway.

Yes, I'm a dirty Hippie

- I don't think that American style capitalism is sustainable
 - Enclosure & artificial scarcity
 - Perpetual expansion -- a cancer
 - Incompatible with choice
 - Commodification of labor, land, and money
- Wasteland of half-completed abandoned projects and community churn



There is a better future!



Questions?
