

# Leadership vs. Control

 THE **LINUX** FOUNDATION

## Loosen the Chains

- A good leader listens and empowers all participants to present their ideas, and contribute higher quality and imaginative work
- Popular leadership paradigm - **Benevolent Dictator for Life** (BDFL)
  - Can make the final decision (generally more efficiently than a majority vote or consensus of a committee), but that does not alleviate them from listening and giving proper consideration to debates in the community and even occasionally including changes and contributions they personally have problems with
- If the controllers of a project take and do not give back by mentoring and moderating, they are limiting what a project can accomplish

## Mentoring

- Depending on the size of the project, there may be one level of leadership or more, including subsystem maintainers whose responsibilities include:
  - Handling contributions efficiently
  - Knowing when to send patches back for revision
  - Sending them up the chain with or without revision
  - Discarding them with proper explanation
- Obtaining knowledge and skills necessary to become a good maintainer requires training, or more precisely **mentoring**, from those who have done it successfully before

## Mentoring (Cont.)

- Another level of mentoring involves new members of a project - if they can attach themselves to more experienced contributors, who may or may not be maintainers, they can learn the ropes with less pain:
  - How to produce patches in the proper form
  - How to phrase questions and proposals
  - How to acquire realistic expectations of how quickly their work might be considered and whether it has a chance of success
- Proper mentoring empowers people, leads to a more efficient workflow, and contributes to long-term vitality and growth of a project

## Building Trust

- Without **trust** an open source project cannot function:
  - Contributors must trust that their submissions will be treated with respect and given reasonably prompt consideration
  - Project leaders must trust subsystem maintainers are qualified and capable of doing their job; if they are not living up to their responsibilities, they can be tutored on doing a better job or be asked to transition out of the role
- Trust must be earned and must go beyond the benefit of the doubt
- As a project matures, reputations are earned and new members should be aware of the history

