

Tens Years of NYC*BUG in Perspective



New York City *BSD User Group
A forum for discussion and a bridge for learning

How it All Began...

- A couple of meetings December 2003, January 2004
- Last NYC LinuxExpo January 24 BoF
- First meeting February 4 on “OpenBSD Security”
- Lots of essential planning, but plans are useless

What Was Clear

- No to “Hobbyism”
- No to “Professionalism”
- No to “Sales”
- Neither a software project or technical meritocracy
- Free, open, loose
- Viewed ourselves as part of a wider community, whether they liked it or not
- Needed LOTS of planning (mailing list stats)

And Became Clearer

- Hands-on approach
- The Unix Tradition
- Bridge between developers and “end-users”
- We really didn't know what we were doing, but we wanted to do something
- There are BSD projects, but fundamentally more in common than dissimilar

And UGs Suck

- Political infighting, cliquishness
- Treated as pet projects grasped tightly
- Shills for businesses
- Open or surreptitious platforms for member (s) promoting own business
- Something for the socially awkward to fill their time with
- Gender and cultural diversity are distressing

Our Direction

- Focus on activities: mailing list, meetings, cons, raising money, enabling
- New speakers welcome, we're a training ground
- BSDCan 2004, NYCBSDCon 2005

NJADG

The Organizational

- Who's a member?
- Who's on admin?
- Starfish versus the Spider
- Assets, formal organization, not-for-profit
- Activity-based, not organizationally based: titles, procedures, assets

Our Goal

- Popularize (?) the BSDs
- Remain BSD agnostic (thus, the *)
- Strengthen the projects in various ways
- “A forum for discussion and a bridge for learning”

Accomplishments

- Thousands raised for projects (\$4k each 2008 Con)
- An enabler for several people to get commit bits?
- Colocation for lots, including mirrors
- Role in FreeBSD east coast mirror
- Speaker launchpad
- Devs and “End-users” under one roof
- Beck comment

And is it possible?

NYC is a BSD city

Ways it isn't

- Bellwethers are Linux
- It's Berkeley, not Brooklyn
- One BSD group, 14 Linux ones
- Few Dragonfly or OpenBSD devs here, which matters in terms of our approach and foundations
- NetBSD people are drinking less

Ways it is

- Some significant firms using it
- A bunch converted to it
- We have NYC*BUG, cons, an UG presence
- Plus our accomplishments (as in above)

Not in Isolation

- OSX
- OpenSSH
- pf, pfSense, FreeNAS

Uphill Battle

- Slashdot View of the World
- BSDs have lost ground
- BSDs not flashy

How to Get a BSD City?

- Individuals matter: Netflix example
- NYC*BUG assists the individuals
- Strengthen the projects in various ways
- “A forum for discussion and a bridge for learning”

Details

- Developers
- Systems Administrators

Our Role

- Acclimate: lexicon, etc.
- The Network
- Human Fodder
- Money
- Software
- Services
- Physical versus virtual world

Continuing Dev

- “Can I do \$project?”
- Framework we provide

Some Hurdles

- Gender and cultural diversity
- Spread out responsibility more?
- More flash
- More cash
- Preparing with new experience and amateur speakers
- Relating to broader NYC UG community: HOPE, etc.
- More effective enabling framework: “Bazaar”, colo, mentoring, what?

Future

- We could do more, but we can't declare edict
- Relation between BSDs matters (license, civil wars)
- Conveying meeting discussions beyond
- Connecting to end-user interests
- Accept the waves and troughs are fine
- We do what perceived consensus wants to do
- We can be whatever active participants want us to be, within the parameters

How We Enable

- Blue Sky? No way
- What comes out of garage can usually stay there
- Modest, concrete role
- Jobs list and informally
- Hardware contacts?

Wouldn't it be nice?

- A few dozen similar BUGs around the world
- Conveyor belts for more devs
- And for more users
- To raise money which has no strings attached
- Utilize contacts (hardware, services) for the broader community
- Finding and converting to BSD would be easy

Some \$0.02 of advice

- Start modest
- Mailing list collaboration over substituting yourself
- Develop a good core, build from there
- Leadership is organizational, not technical
- Formalities, titles are the best way to build an empty shell
- Adapt to your scenario? NYC or Tokyo versus provincial village in Wyoming
- Keep the big picture in mind, in practice
- Reach out
- No one will die

Thanks

- Huge numbers of people have had a role: meetings, lists, colo, and beyond
- Dozens who've passed through admin@
- “The broad core”
- Helpful remote people from projects and others
- Expatriate members
- Meeting and con meeting space providers. It's NYC dammit.
- Sponsors along the way, even though we aren't some mass audience looking for sales spiels, but they do find quality

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