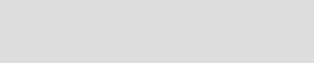
Starting a new project

COMP8440: FOSSD Lecture 13





Theory and practice

Burst of enthusiasm

- Many/most projects start with a burst of enthusiasm by one person
- Few projects actually think about all the issues of running a FOSS project at the start

Follow a recipe?

 Knowing the recipe helps, but a good cook also improvises!

Help or motivation?

- Do you need help to write the first version, or just motivation from enthusiastic users?
- If you need help, then setting up the infrastructure well is especially important

Things to decide

Think about

- What are the project aims?
 - Don't be too grandiose at first
 - World domination takes time start small!
- What structure do you want?
 - Usually start with a very simple structure
 - One committer, easy contributions
- What license do you want?
 - Don't invent a new license!
- Source code management
- Use a canned hosting site?
- Do you need a mailing list? IRC channel? Web site?
- How will you track bugs?

Working code

- Start with working code
 - Before the first announcement, get something working
 - Working code gives positive feedback from potential contributors and users
 - Working code doesn't mean perfect code!
- Follow common conventions
 - Look at how related projects handle build and coding issues
 - Follow their lead if possible
- First impressions matter
 - Make it very easy to build and try the first time

Announcing

Initial announcement

- Add the project to freshmeat.net
- Find mailing lists for closely related projects
- Don't spam every list!
- Be humble don't oversell the project
- Make sure you include vital project info
 - What is it for?
 - What programming language?
 - What platforms does it target?
 - What license have you chosen?
 - Where do people find out more?

Nurturing the project

Positive feedback

- The key to early success is positive feedback to contributors
- Answer every contribution, be encouraging!
- Answer email fast, encourage IRC discussions

Releases

- Get releases out fast and frequently
- Use snapshot releases if need be
- Post a summary of changes in each release
 - Give careful credit for all contributions

Encourage discussion

- Ask others' opinions
- Listen to the feedback you get

As the project grows

- Things to start considering
 - Packaging for major distros?
 - Do you want to do binary packages?
 - Should you write articles for magazines/web sites?
 - Should you have a development blog?
- Project structure
 - Regularly evaluate how the project is working
 - Do you want to formalise the structure?
 - If so, make sure to discuss it first!
 - Do you need to start defining project roles?

Scaling up

- FOSS projects can grow quickly
 - Is there too much load on one person?
 - Can you break the project into modules?
 - Use separate mailing lists for different parts?
 - Delegate! Find people you trust, and give them a role
- Things that can help
 - Post a regular development summary?
 - Start a project conference? Or a mini-conf?
 - Look at how other projects handled growth. Pick an approach that worked for them