Marketing for Open-Source Projects

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v1.0

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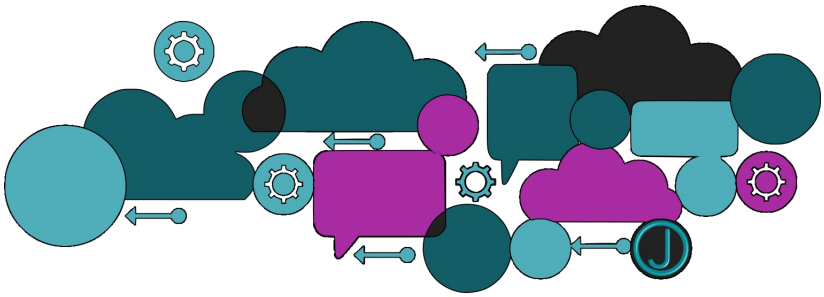
Nov 30, 2022



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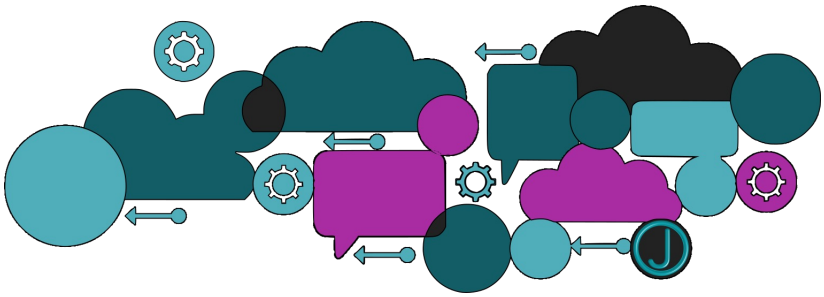
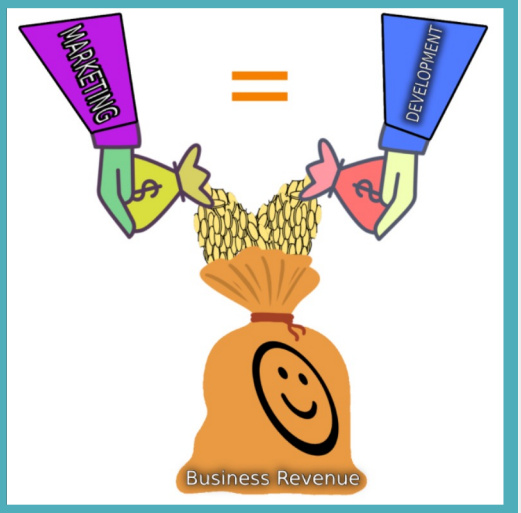
Marketing for Open-Source Projects



Marketing + Developers



It's not uncommon to hear that developers don't like marketing.

Ignore that. They just don't like certain baggage that usually comes with it:

- gimmicks
- irrelevant messaging
- things that don't actually address their problems/needs
- The fact is that even great code cannot succeed alone

- The growth of open-source software makes this very apparent:

- 80+ million GitHub repos

- MANY duplicates = lack of communication (marketing)

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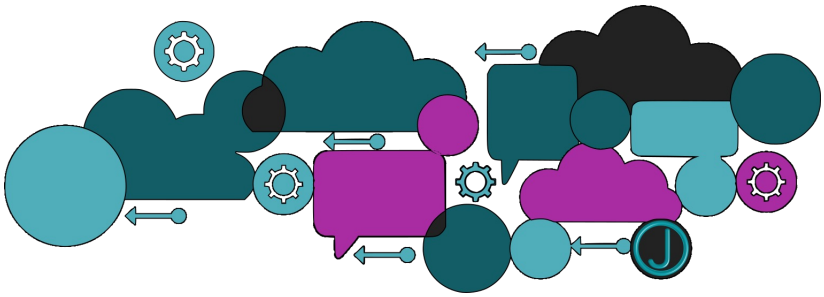

Open Source

OR

open-Source

Hyphenate open-source as an adjective preceding a noun, as in **open-source software.** Don't use open-sourced as an adjective.

Don't hyphenate in other instances, such as **Open source is a development model in which ....**

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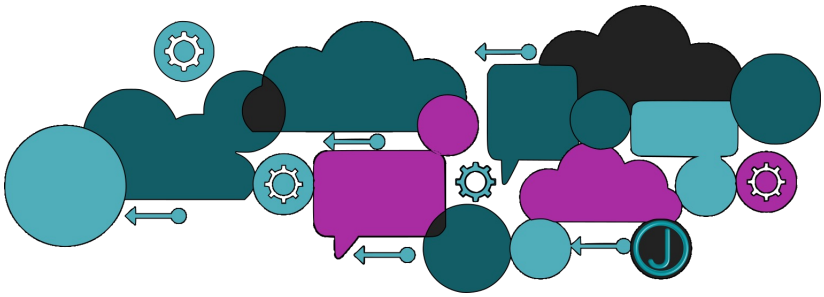

The Key

- **Promote first**
- **Remain authentic and true** to the open-source ethos of openness and transparency

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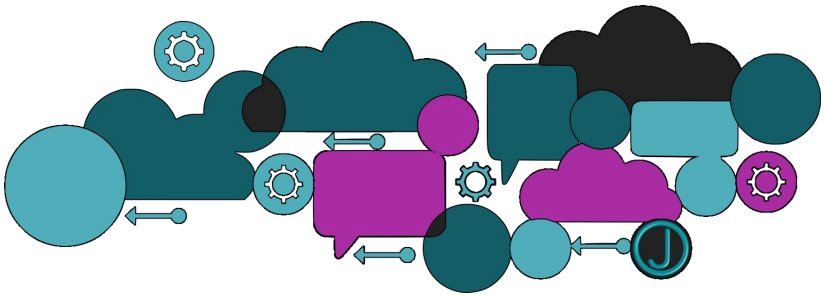


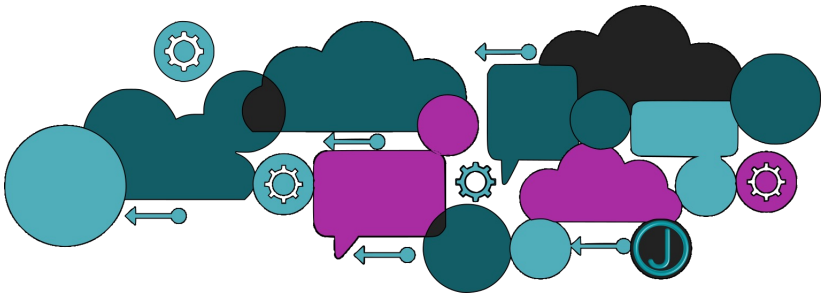
Goals:
Know The End To Find The Means

The main goals of marketing for your open-source software:

- Attract contributors
- Acquire users
- Raise the profile and credibility of your project

Notes:

Marketing for Open-Source Projects



But it's FREE,

so I don't have to try and SELL it,

right?

WRONG!!!

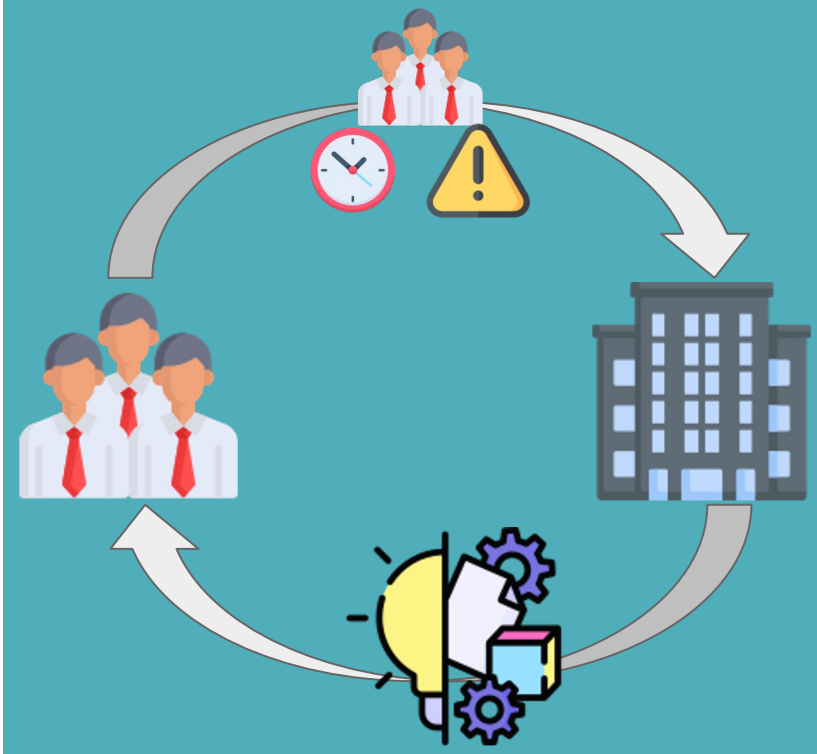
- You ARE selling, just not products, but ideas
- It is NOT free, in return you get people's time and attention

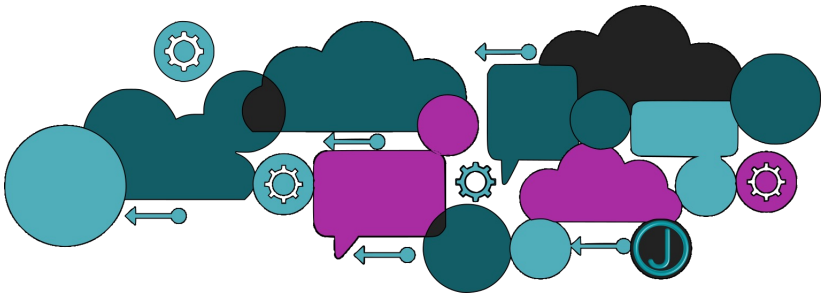
NOTES:

7

Commercial

Open-Source





Collaboration

&

Co-marketing

Collaboration

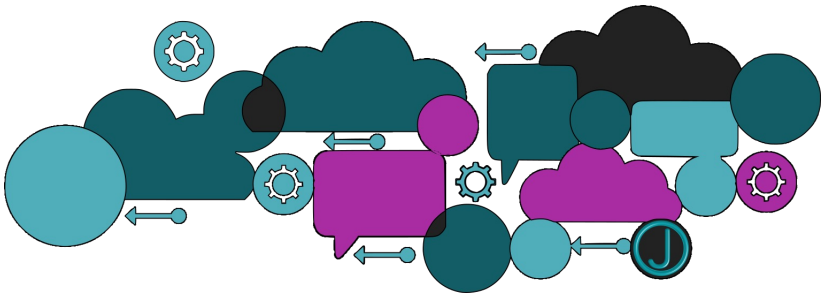
- Huge component to both open-source AND marketing
  - Two-way communication
    - Mailing-list with >48 hour window
    - Documenting + posting discussions
    - Occasional face-to-face events with planned meetups
- Bring on volunteers/staff to balance marketing and development resources (marketing is commonly overlooked)

Notes:

Collaboration

&

Co-marketing



Collaboration

- Funding will eventually be needed to take you further than a volunteer-fueled, bootstrapped, low-cost project

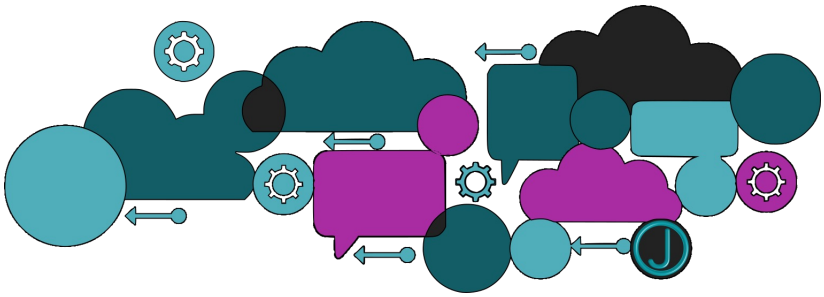
- COMMON SOLUTION: pool of resources from the community and corporate contributors or sponsors

Notes:

Collaboration

&

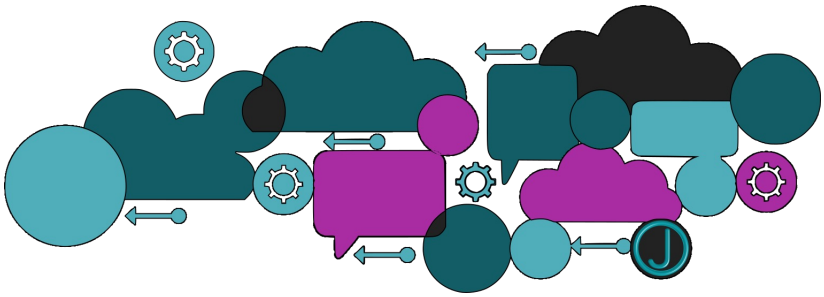
Co-marketing



Collaboration

- **Internal** - asking large companies that already use your software
  - Totally accepted
  - Usually through existing relationships between you and the company
- **External** - Umbrella organization and open-source foundations
  - https://opensource.com/resources/organizations

Notes:



Collaboration

&

Co-marketing

Collaboration

- Just that - collaborative
- CORE of open-source
- Therefore the marketing of it as well.
- Hence, soliciting support from businesses unrelated to you in some way is not common practice

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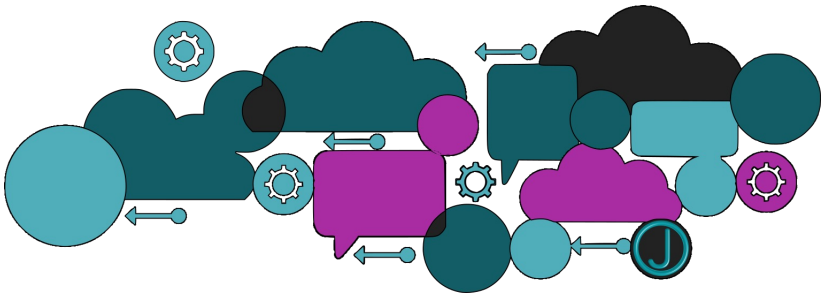


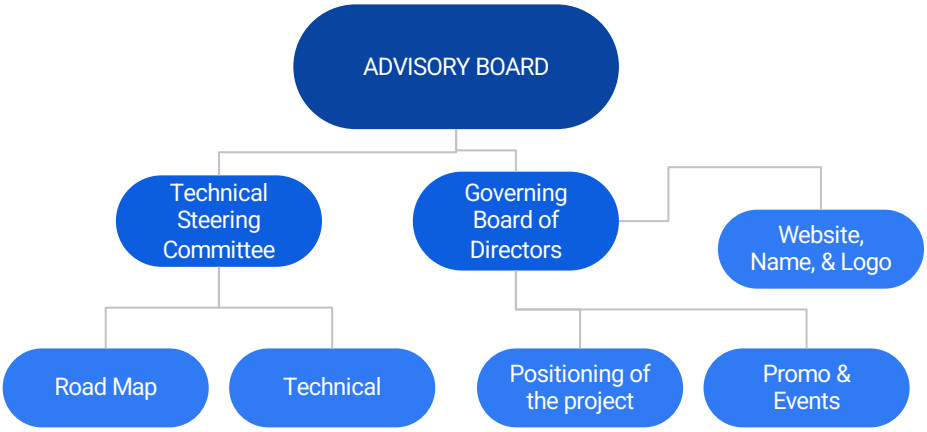
Collaboration

&

Co-marketing

Collaboration

- Funds ✓
- Now STRUCTURE is needed



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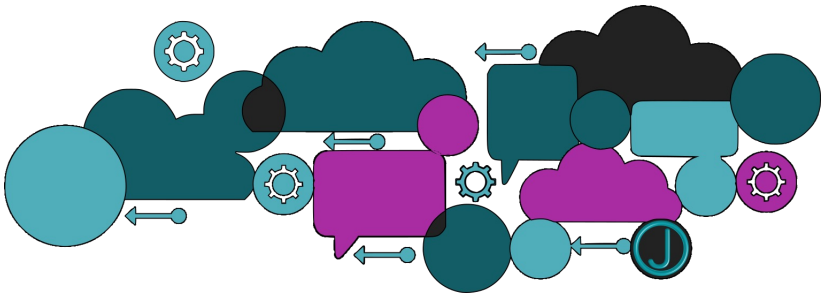


Collaboration

&

Co-marketing

Co-Marketing

- Get together with other companies also involved in the open-source project
- Talk over ideas with employees from companies as the success of the project is a shared interest
- Always be sure to follow community guidelines, develop your own marketing strategy, and devote resources accordingly.

Notes:

Commercial

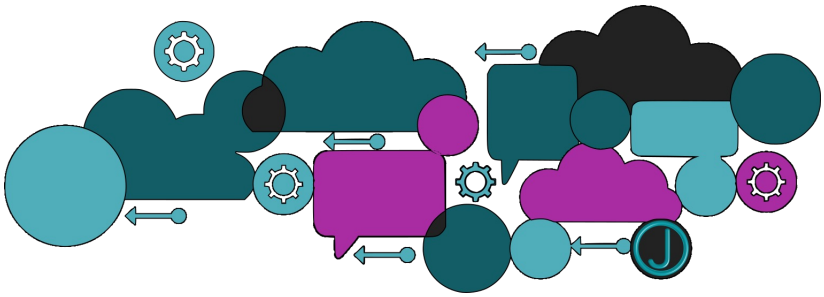
GOAL: acquire **customers** who then buy the product and thus grow the company's revenue

TACTICS: Slick ads, videos, and other materials

open-source

GOAL: acquire **users (contributors)** to make software more useful for more communities and continue to contribute for software to advance.

TACTICS: Authenticity, transparency, and a real solution to a real problem



Create A marketing strategy

NEEDS are the building blocks of creating a marketing strategy plan for an open-source project.

Grow my user base

Grow a contributor base

Raise money for this project

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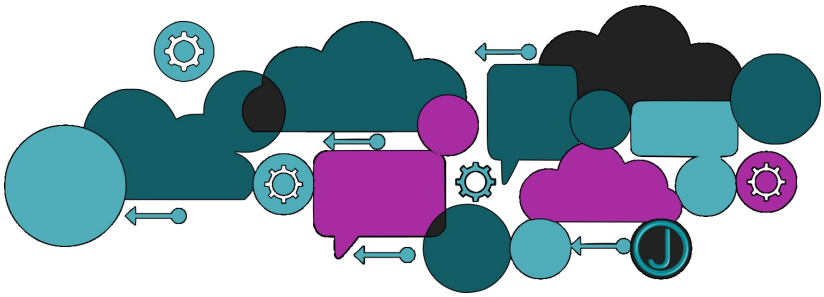
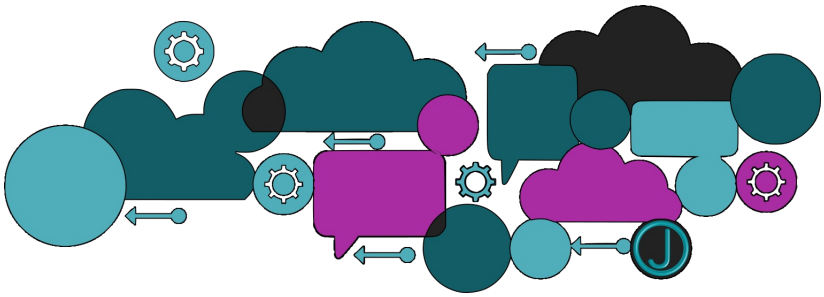


Create A marketing strategy

"The marketing strategy dovetails a bit on the structure of the project. If the marketing strategy dovetails directly into what the project is trying to accomplish, then things should work pretty seamlessly," **-Dawn Foster , OSS Strategy Lead at Pivotal Software.**

NOTES:



Create A marketing strategy

Internal Resources

Volunteers
-individual tasks

Governing Board
-budget
-keep distance between investors and decisions

Member Companies and Contributor Companies

- balance can be hard as they are also contributing $$ + other resources

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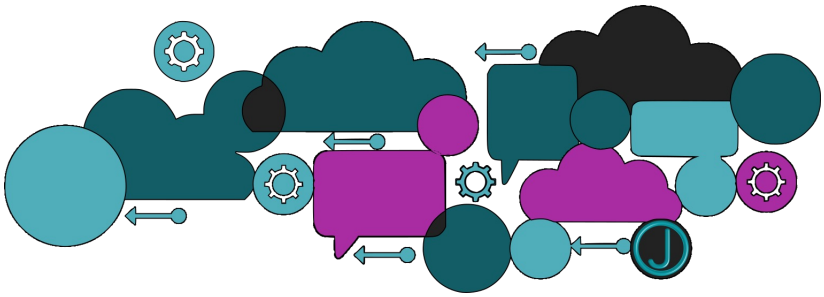

Create A marketing strategy

Budget Management

- Budget mostly from M + C Companies
- Stretch It Out!!!
  - Community pitching in
  - Volunteers
  - Using websites and social media to boost outreach
  - Leverage entire community
- Document

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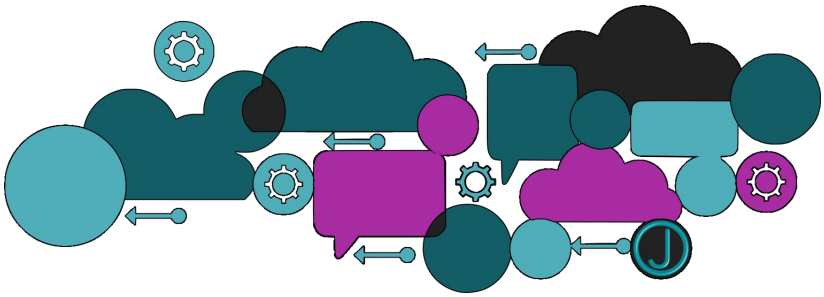

Create A marketing strategy

- Set specific goals
  - More users → 200 users by Jan 1
  - Users are an important asset to pay attention to when setting goals
    - They can upgrade to contributor
    - Contributor can upgrade to maintainer
  - This in itself (growth of the project) can be a goal using this roadmap
    (user → contributor → maintainer)

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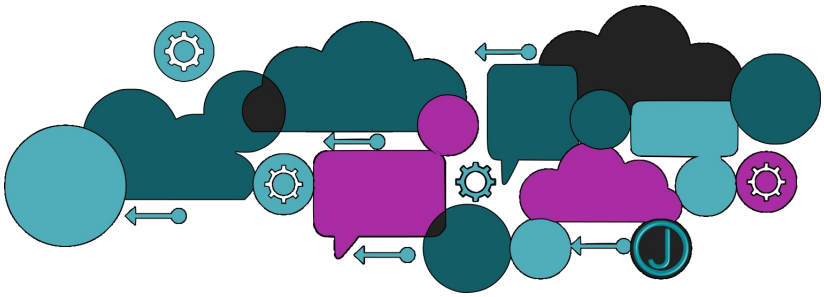

Create A marketing strategy

Measuring Success

- Specific Goals → What You Measure
- Then, find metrics and tools to measure and track marketing plan's performance:
  - https://chaoss.community/kb-metrics-and-metrics-models/
  - https://docs.github.com/en/rest/metrics
  - https://github.com/amzn/oss-dashboard
  - https://metricswatch.com/pricing/
  - https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1008015?hl=en
  - https://www.hotjar.com/pricing/
  - https://semrush.sjv.io/ZdYGnR
  - https://piwik.pro/pricing/

- Focus on how many of those people became users and contributors.

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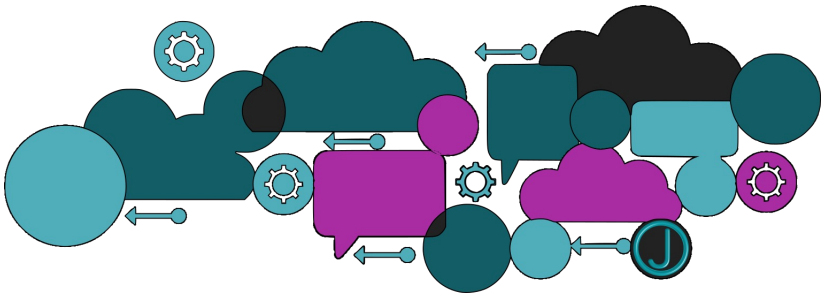

Branding

Branding

When you start branding, leverage the value of the open-source brand.
By nature it sells your project as:

- Transparent
- Authentic
- Community-related
- Innovative
- Fast paced
- User involvement options
  - See code
  - Contribute
  - Change
  - Modify

NOTE: You must uphold the openness, authenticity, and integrity of the brand

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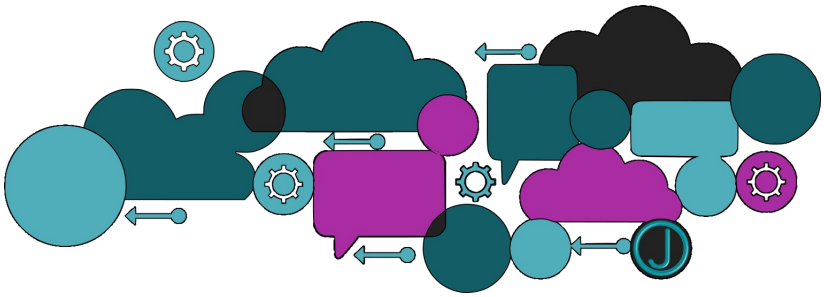
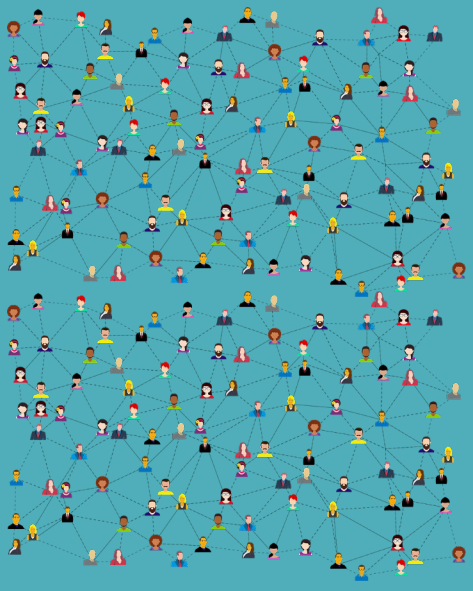


Getting the word out



- Raise the profile of your organization
- Build a solid reputation
- Use word-of-mouth
  - Answer Qs in mailing lists, wikis, forums, events
- Make it easy for new devs to get up to speed and start contributing
  - Use a Code of Conduct (see next slide)

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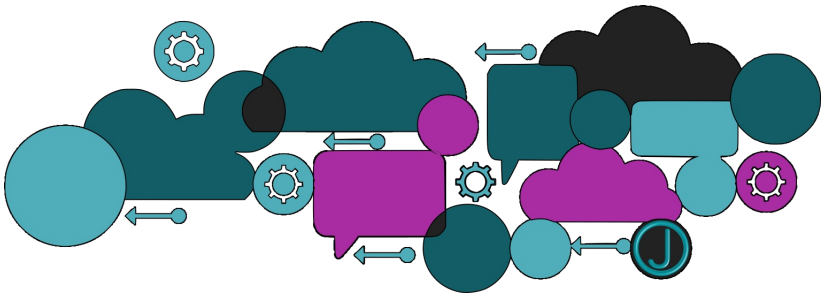

Getting the word out

Code of Conduct Suggested Content

- Readme document that clearly explains what the project is
- Documentation that clearly explains how to get involved
- Instructions on how and where to make a contribution
- A FAQ to answer small or common issues quickly
- An outreach effort to help people get involved and help them stay onboard
- A strong inclusive culture that does not tolerate discrimination or mistreatment of participants.

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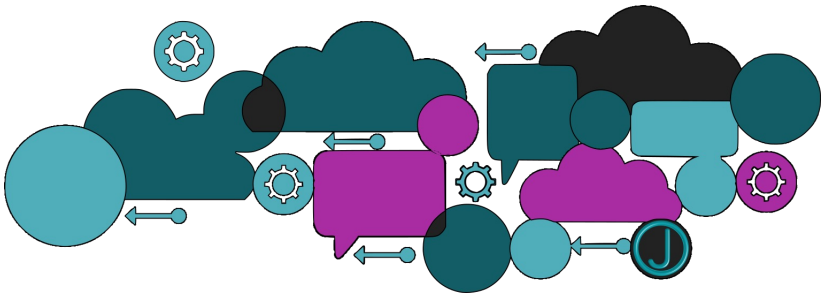
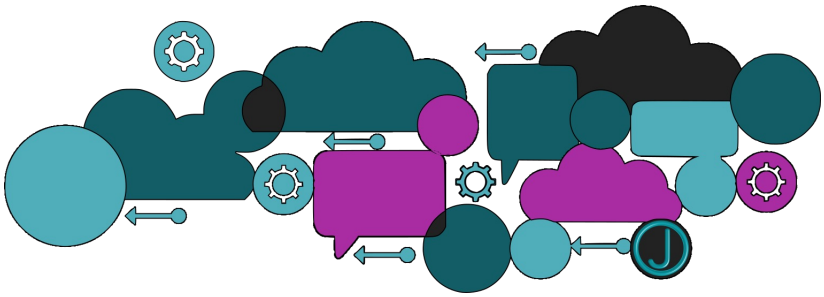


Getting the word out

- Host hackathons
- Social Meetups
- Community Events
- Audio Spaces
- MeetUp Groups
- Pay Attention & Reward Loyal Contributors
  - T-Shirts
  - Invites to events
  - Public recognition
- Ambassador Programs

Notes:



Getting the word out

- Webinars and Communities
  - Include participatory agenda
  - Meetings disseminate afterwards
- Ex: Kubernetes - frequent public meetings where everyone is welcome and newbies can present their ideas
  - Then repurpose into a video (ease of discovery and dissemination)

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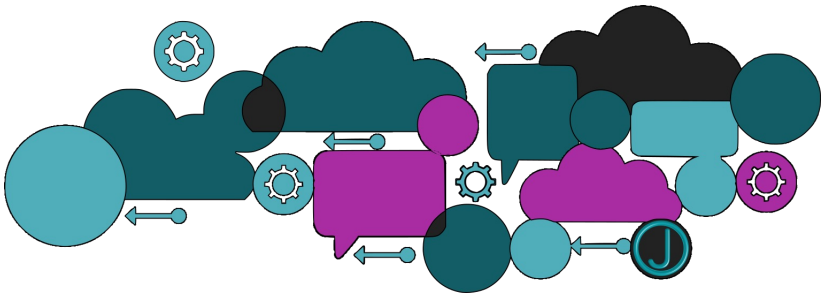

Getting the word out

Connecting With Outside Communities

Methods and Proven Practices:

- Attending, sponsoring, presenting, or hosting events
  - Gathers developers and users in one place
- Social media
  - Online events
  - More communication
  - Multi-purpose posts → CONTENT

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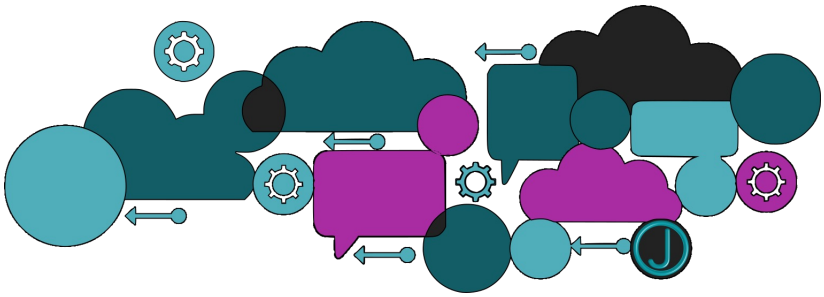

Code of Conduct Suggested Content

Methods and Proven Practices:

- Blog posts, tutorials, demos, whitepapers, and videos
  - Share info on project
  - Serve as instructions on contributing
  - Keep current
- Direct marketing
  - Emails & online advertising
  - Catch those who slipped through the cracks
- SEO

Notes:

LINKS & RESOURCES

https://opensource.com/resources/organizations
https://chaoss.community/kb-metrics-and-metrics-models/
https://docs.github.com/en/rest/metrics
https://github.com/amzn/oss-dashboard
https://metricswatch.com/pricing/
https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1008015?hl=en
https://www.hotjar.com/pricing/
https://semrush.sjv.io/ZdYGnR
https://piwik.pro/pricing/
https://todogroup.org/guides/

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