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On “making it”

Tony Mobily

Before starting Free Software Magazine I talked to John, a friend of mine nearly twice my age. He sometimes has a rather bleak view of the world, and we disagree on many things. However, I always take pay great attention when people I generally don't agree with turn out to be right. When I told him about the idea of creating Free Software Magazine, he said “it will take a long time to make it successful. Magazines take a while because people, readers, need to build up trust in them; and that, Tony, is not easy. You need to be consistent, and consistently good. Not easy. Not easy at all”.

Some two years later (!), and after a lot of personal and professional “events”, here we are. A few similar magazines have come and gone, but we are still here. We are approaching 1 million page views per month (and that's *real*, human page views!), we are consistently ranking in the top three most popular Drupal sites, and yes, we have become a point of reference for the free software world.

To quote John's words, we were consistent, and consistently good—or, to be a little more modest, at least good enough. We had the courage to change the magazine according to our readers' requests (and sometimes demands!), which is not an easy task. We gave the magazine a much more practical approach (in fact, from this issue on the section “Mind Set” is gone) and moved the more philosophical articles to the web site. Plus, the web site itself has changed drastically twice: today, it is now a hub for well known bloggers who talk about freedom and free software. Advertising sales are finally starting (some two years later!), and we are

receiving media kit enquiries more and more often.

The core members of the Free Software Magazine team (myself, Dave, Gianluca and Alan) now all feel that we “made it”. Here, “making it” means that we are one of the few publication projects that lasted this long, and managed to provide free (as in freedom!) information for an extended period of time. And, things are looking bright right now. We have learned a lot in the process about the free software world, the community, marketing (!), system administration, ourselves, and another few hundred other things. But, this success would have been impossible without the fantastic help of the people who supported us along the way. Amongst those people, there are: the contributors who stuck with us since day 1; the other non-writers who kept us going; the angels at Open Hosting who gave us a fantastic deal *before* we were famous, and who helped us administer the server more than once for free; the established people in the free software world, who kept on sending us kind words of encouragement; the publishers, who believed in us and sponsored us *before* we had made it, hence giving us the possibility to get this far; and our readers, who supported us, helped us market the site, and gave a meaning to this whole project. There certainly are hurdles and challenges ahead of us. But, right now we will just sit back for a second—just for a second—and enjoy our achievements.

Thank you all.

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