FLOSS projects management

Master on Libre Software (URJC)

`http://master.libresoft.es`

Felipe Ortega

jfelipe@libresoft.es
GSyC/LibreSoft, Universidad Rey Juan Carlos

January 2011

GSyC

Universidad
Rey Juan Carlos

Outreach strategy in FLOSS projects

Summary

1. Style and content.
2. Avoiding problems.
3. Outreach strategy.

Define your style

- Writing clearly is sometimes more important than programming skills.
    - Empathy.
    - Listening to othes.
    - Explaining one's point of view.
    - Use different channels.
- Different levels.
    - Developer-developer.
    - Developer-user.
    - Developer-manager (and vice-versa).
    - Etc.

Control your public image

- What you write will be archived, forwarded, retweeted, reposted...
- It should not be a permanent cause of concern, though...
- ...but it is always better to *"think before you type"*.

A real case example

- http://producingoss.com/en/communications.html#you-are-what-you-write
- By Jim Blandy: http://www.red-bean.com/~jimb/
- Top-notch contributor, we had never met him in person before...

  "Well, actually... I'm thirteen years old and I live with my parents."

Structure and formatting

- Different channels follow different rules.
- You should not write to a mailing list the same way you write an SMS...
- The "tempo" and depth of sentences and coversations is also different.
- This leads us to *netiquette* rules (we will come back to this topic later).

Content and tone

- **Be bold** with your colleagues...

  "Doing it that way would make the code totally unreadable. It'd be a maintenance nightmare, compared to J. Random's proposal..."

  "That works, but it's less than ideal in terms of readability and maintainability, I think. J. Random's proposal avoids those problems because it..."

Content and tone

- However, the leader may decide there is no other option...
- Linus Torvalds' answer to Alan Cox:
  http://lkml.org/lkml/2009/7/28/373
- Cox reduced his involvement after this.

> *"The problem is that you seem to be arguing against the _nicer_ fix, that also makes more conceptual sense, and that doesn't even depend on the whole low-latency hackery.*
> *And I don't see why you argue that.*
> *Furthermore, you have been CONTINUALLY arguing that emacs is buggy. Without any logic to back that up what-so-ever. You argued that just a few minutes ago. "*

Content and tone

- Your style can get terse as you become busier.
- Don't be rude.
- Avoid *ad hominem* attacks.
- Manage on-line faces.
    - Corporate e-mail.
    - Personal e-mail.
    - Aliases.
- Suppress long disclaimers when using corporate accounts.

Common pitfalls

- Posting without a purpose.
- Dealing with unproductive threads.
- Long threads for soft topics.
- Holy wars.
- Noisy minority.
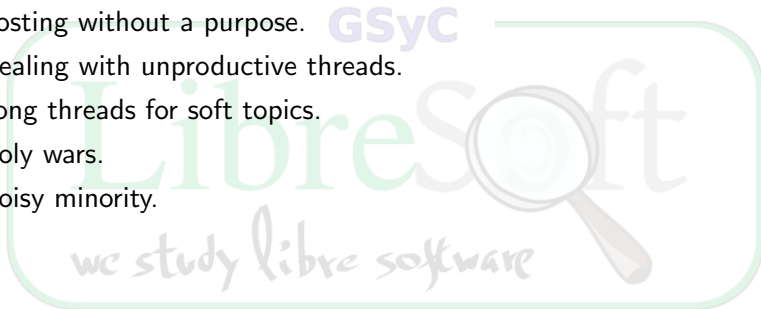
Some additional hints

- Planning your growth.
- Consider all resources as permanent (and replicable) archives.
- Record your tradition.
- Avoid Conversations in the bug tracker.

Publicity

- Website, home page.
- Social networks.
- Press relationships.
- Hosting facilities.
- Announcements.

Security issues

- Fixing (and admiting) problems openly.
    - CAN/CVE (Common Vulnerabilities and Exposures).
    - http://www.cert.org
    - http://www.securityfocus.com
    - Distribute solution publicly.
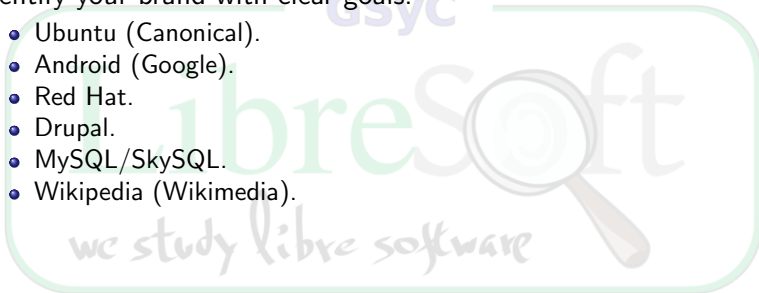
Releases and updates

- Create a detailed release plan.
  - Packaging.
  - Stabilization.
  - Testing releases.
  - Maintaing several release lines (e.g. Canonical: normal, LTS).

Branding

- Identify your brand with clear goals.
    - Ubuntu (Canonical).
    - Android (Google).
    - Red Hat.
    - Drupal.
    - MySQL/SkySQL.
    - Wikipedia (Wikimedia).

Presentation of the course
Outreach strategy in FLOSS projects
Style and content
Avoiding problems
Outreach strategy

References

- Producing OSS, by Karl Fogel (O'Reilly Media)
  `http://producingoss.com/`
- Art of Community, by Jono Bacon (O'Reilly Media)
  `http://www.artofcommunityonline.org/`