Project Management in Free Software Projects

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Project Management in Free Software

- Some claim that there is no management in FOSS
- There is only self-coordination and self-assignment of tasks
- True to some extent – but not the whole picture
- Decrease of coordination requirements is good
- But coordination is still needed

Seriously, what is "Project Management" anyway?

- Leadership
- Coordination
- Organization
- Planning
- Motivation

- It's important to know ones limits!
- Project management also important for developers

What is an "open source" project?

- "Open Source" and "FOSS" really just refer to a license
- The classical model: distributed (global), done by volunteers
- Now it's not so clear anymore

A FOUR-SQUARE DEPICTION OF FLOSS ORGANIZATION

|	Distributed	Co-located
Volunteers	Prototypical FLOSS dev	'sprints' and 'hackathons'
	eg Perl	eg Zope and Apache
Non-volunteers	Virtual work teams	Traditional Workplaces
	eg Ximian	eg MySQL

(Figure by James Howison)

- It's easy to start a project (see SourceForge)
- Duplication of effort
- NIH (Not Invented Here)
- Choice of programming language
- Underestimation of effort
- Legal questions (e.g. license)
- Competition might be good

- Raymond's Bazaar model
    - Thousands of contributors
    - Peer review
- You cannot start a project in the bazaar
- Logical conclusion: migration from cathedral to bazaar

| Cathedral phase | Transition phase | Bazaar phase |
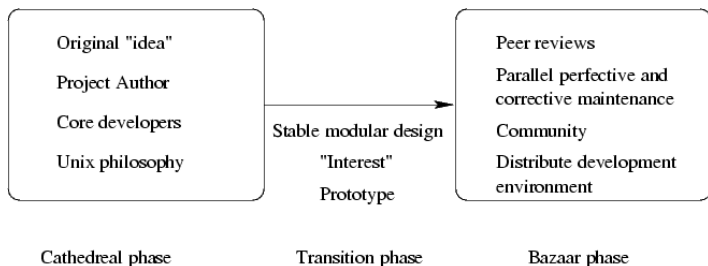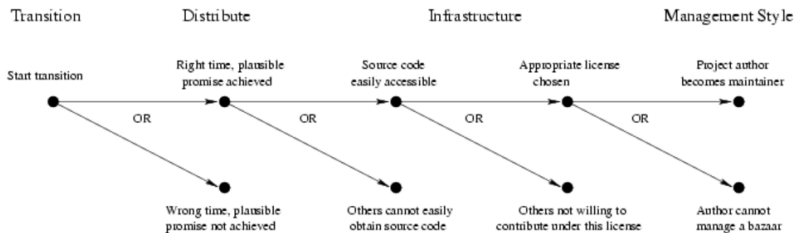
You have to:

- attract the interest of others
- give them control
- coordinate
- make it fun!

- Documentation
- Attracting volunteers
- Joining a project, group etiquette
- Infrastructure
- Quality assurance, release management

- Different management styles
- Do coordinate
- Ask people in private, not on mailing lists
- Know your people: what they're good at, what their personal circumstances are
- Getting rid of people (incompetent, trolls, inactive, busy)
- Mentoring people

- developer/hack sessions: can be effective
- social/pub: can be motivating

- Downsides: not everyone can participate
- Write minutes
- Do not make major decisions in real life

Corporate Involvement

- Paid people vs volunteers
- How can your project benefit from corporate involvement?
- And how do they benefit?
- Create a win-win situation

- Growth
- Control
- Dependence on core maintainer: run over a bus, growing up, letting lose
- Inactive and incompetent volunteers

Conclusions

- Ask many questions
    - Do you need to start a project?
    - How can you get involved in an existing one?
    - What can you do? What are they lacking?
- Coordination is important
- Self-coordination too
- Look at other projects
- Be a good example!