Thirty Years and Counting

Secrets to Enduring User Groups

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Made with LibreOffice on FreeBSD 14.1

Introduction: Michael Dexter and his Tribes

1985 – Present: Oregon Latvian Society, now a Board Member

1988 – 2016: Student/Neighborhood Government

2002 – 2009: Latvian Open Source Association

2003 – Present: BSD/OpenZFS Community Organizer

1998 – Present: Portland Linux/Unix Group Participant

PLUG Co-Organizer since 2009

pdxlinux.org

Introduction: Michael Dexter and his Tribes

Remarkably…

I will *not* be talking about:

BSD Unix or OpenZFS

Come to my FreeBSD on ARM64 talk or
ask me in the hallway

TONIGHT! Portland Linux/Unix Group

Kingpin of L0pht Heavy Inustries will be discussing

The World's Thinnest Boombox!

pdxlinux.org

Portland Linux/Unix Group

Alternative talk title: How the heck did PLUG get
Linus Torvalds *twice* when OSCON, LFNW,
and SCALE never did?

Point of Order: Ask questions at any time!

Community: I *still* love this quotation

"The reason why Ben was so involved in LugRadio,
why Neil ran the Linux User Group meeting, and why
thousands of other community members around the world
get together, comes down to one simple word: *belonging*."

Jono Bacon, The Art of Community

Community: I love this recent quotation

"Why do you care about the environment?"

"I live there."

Introduction: Motivations and Strategies

We all observe/perceive unique things around us

We all have our unique experiences and pain points

We all have our unique abilities to help

Introduction: Motivations and Strategies

Balance these to achieve sustainability

You can equally burn out from
listening as from helping

Introduction: Motivations and Strategies

My early strategy was to listen, ask questions, and cross-check what I heard

For years before taking action

Question everything!

TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS

Power corrupts...

Introduction: Motivations and Strategies

Listening and reading is *highly* sustainable

You can now do it on your phone
from just about anywhere!

Heck! I was *terrified* to speak in front of a crowd!

THEN THAT DAY COMES

Introduction: Motivations and Strategies

The day you realize that you're the only person on the list with the answer to the question

The day you see a request to deliver some things to a venue and… you have a car

Then suddenly…

Someone Thanks You

Introduction: Motivations and Strategies

Bring pizza and beverages to a hackathon and…

For a brief moment you are the single greatest contributor to the project in history

You had the right skill at the right time.

Introduction: Another fun quotation!

"If you think you're too small to have an impact, try going to bed with a mosquito in the room."

Anita Roddick

Introduction: Motivations and Strategies

It only takes two or more people to
rinse and repeat that to form a community

From there it's just a question of sustainability

So you have a community
of two or 2000...

Lesson from Latvia:

You can believe in Church or
You can believe in God

FOUR PINECONES IN THE FOREST

PRICELESS ALWAYS BEATS PRICE

Communities

PLUG is a domain name,
a web site, mailing lists, and a venue

Decades in…

I am not convinced that a public-benefit non-profit struggling to achieve a 70/30% programming to overhead is the answer.

"I just help people on the mailing list."

Communities

"Let's register as a non-profit" (In Latvian)

It's all a paradox.

All of it.

THE GLOBAL FREE SOFTWARE COMMUNITY IS A PARADOX

EMBRACE THAT FACT

Disruption!

THEN EVERYTHING CHANGED

A NEW CADENCE

Lockdown!

Masks! Come for the COVID19,

Stay for the wildfires!

Disruption!

Everything changed overnight

Except for the mission

Disruption!

Countless event cancellations...

OSCON? MeetBSD? VBSDcon?

Disruption!

In an instant…

We were all equidistant

Disruption!

Suddenly…

Only timezones mattered

Did lockdown hurt or help your community?

What Worked for Me

PLUG: Dabbled with online meetings

Software Projects: A *great* distraction

Conferences: I presented online

Bi-Weekly Project Calls: RAN WITH IT

Realization

The quarterly or annual conference cadence is really inefficient

My New Cadence?

Host three calls a week and attend
two to four others

CallForTesting.org

Totally transparent and open to all

World-writable agenda/minutes

Posted recordings

CallForTesting.org Required Skills

Mental Multitasking

Moderation

Recording and "Editing"

The New Era

Conferences became reunions

"You have legs!"

Online meeting *skills*

Sustainability

Skills and muscle memory are key

Make it look easy because it's *finally* easy

Build your team… *only timezones matter*

Um, Silverton?

Sustainability

So… I go to Canada to meet Oregonians

PLUG is a cockroach…

After timezones… it's just wetware issues
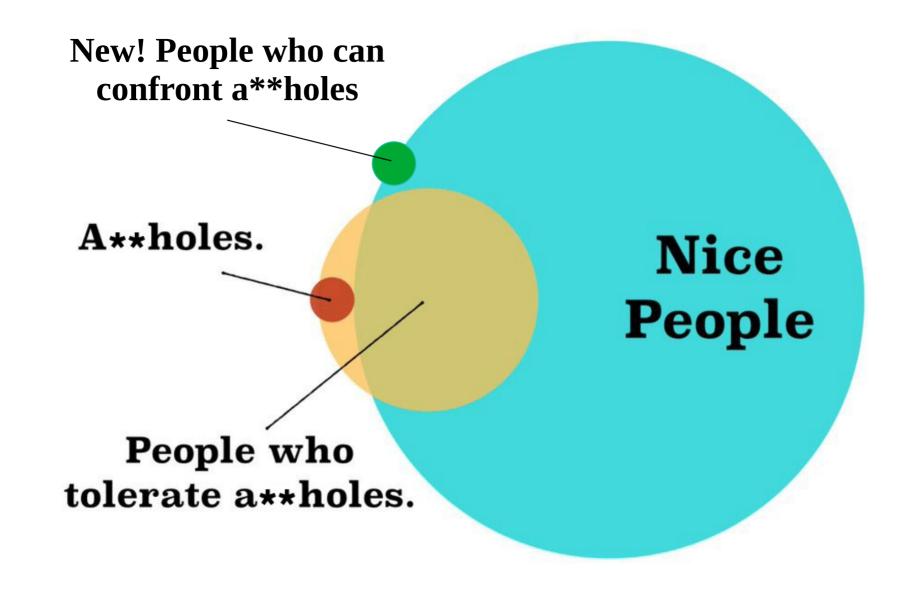
People. Sigh.

I *think* the new cadence weeds out jerks

There's a quotation for that...

Wetware Bugs

"If you want to know who the a**holes are in a community, suggest the adoption of a code of conduct. It's like a**hole kryptonite."

Ryan Grove @yaypie

And now masks!

New! People who can confront a**holes

A**holes.

Nice People

People who tolerate a**holes.

One. Single. Metric.

Malice

Wetware Bugs

Comunities are made of people...

It takes on person to destroy a community

This just might be the hardest skill

Sustainability

Keep it Simple
Anticipate Burnout
Identify Successors
This too shall pass…
Respond Swiftly
Thank People

Discuss

Right! Torvalds...

Thank You! ❤️

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