Listening to the Needs of Your Global Open Source Community

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- Been organizing Open Source communities since 2002 (starting right here in Philadelphia!)
- Spent 6 years on the Ubuntu Community Council
- Going on 4 years on the OpenStack Infrastructure Team
Our starting point:

My open source project is no longer a cabal

(or, I don’t want it to be)
Tip 1

Provide a simple way for contributors to contact project owners
Lots of options

• Email! Mailing list, or list of contacts
• Bug/ticketing system
• Chat channel *(but be sensitive to time zones)*
• Forum
Tip 2

Acknowledge every piece of feedback
Even if you don’t like the feedback, and want to hide
Even if you have a *Very Good Reason* for the way you’re doing things
Even if it makes you feel unappreciated
An actual exchange

“I’m curious as to why the infra team keeps ignoring the issue we are trying to bring to you attention for past three days?”

“well, the last two days were the weekend”

“That sounds like a reply I would get from IT from the 1990s”
And yet...
Don’t let it fall into an unresponsive black hole.
One contributor contacting you is likely an indication of many contributors experiencing trouble.
Tip 3

Stay calm
It’s not personal.
They’re likely very frustrated.
Acting out of the goodness of your heart, or something

Thanklessly Maintaining Open Source Software

Source: https://twitter.com/ThePracticalDev/status/765215047580807168
In the end, the project will benefit!
Tip 4

Openly communicate potential changes and ask for feedback
Mailing list thread
Poll of your community
Meeting topic
“it seemed like one of those things where giving folks a heads up and/or a time to give feedback before pulling the trigger would be friendly.”

- Monty Taylor

Tip 5

Check in with teams
Our current schedule:

- 2016-07-21 - Desktop 17:00UTC - Developer Membership Board 17:30UTC
- 2016-08-04 - Ubuntu GNOME 17:00UTC - Snappy Team 17:30UTC
- 2016-08-18 - Xubuntu Team 17:00UTC - Ubuntu Studio Team 17:30UTC
- 2016-09-01 - Ubuntu Technical Board 17:00UTC - LoCo Council 17:30UTC
- 2016-09-15 - Doc Team 17:00UTC - QA Team 17:30UTC
- 2016-10-06 - IRC Council 17:00UTC - Canonical Community Team 17:30UTC
- 2016-10-20 - Kubuntu Council 17:00UTC - Membership Board 17:30UTC
- 2016-11-03 - Ubuntu Mate 17:00UTC - Lubuntu 17:30UTC
- 2016-11-17 - Ubuntu Core/Phone/Desktop 17:00UTC - Server/Cloud team 17:30 UTC
- 2016-12-01 - Ubuntu Governance 17:00 UTC
- 2016-12-15 - Forums Council 17:00UTC - Core Apps/Phone 17:30UTC
- 2017-01-05 - QA Team 17:00UTC - Translations Team 17:30 UTC
Check In Questions

- Do you have any problems with tooling?
- Do you have any problems with processes?
- Do you have the resources you need?
- If one thing could make your life much easier, what would it be?
- What is working well?
Tip 6

Document your processes
...but don’t beat people with the documentation
Tip 7

Read between the lines
You have a way for people to communicate with you
You acknowledge feedback
You document things
And still...
“By the way...”

> Note that this will only be true if the change's parent commit in
> Gerrit was the branch tip at the time it landed. Otherwise (and
> quite frequently in fact) you will need to identify the SHA of the
> merge commit which was created at the time it merged and use that
> instead to find the post job.

Without wanting to diverge too much from the topic at hand, I believe this
is why those of us who only occasionally want to look at post job output
usually just give up! Keeping this in your head for the once every few
months it's needed is hard :(
Workaround tool

I could never remember the formula for constructing the URL either, so I built this to help me: https://pypi.python.org/pypi/git-os-job
Workaround DIY

“I’ve been downloading several gigs of logs to do local analysis.”
Tip 8

Stick to your principles

...the “customer” is not always right ;)
But first you have to have some principles
Developing principles

Have clear software choices

Do you only use open source?
Other tooling restraints?
Cost considerations?

Provide clear support instructions to set boundaries

We’re able to support you in these ways...

Define what you’re willing to compromise on

Threshold in which you’ll consider a rework

Trust your high-level view

You know a lot about the project, use that
In Conclusion

- Provide a simple way for contributors to contact project owners
- Acknowledge every piece of feedback
- Stay calm
- Communicate potential changes and ask for feedback
- Check in with teams
- Document your processes
- Read between the lines
- Stick to your principles
Questions?

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