

# Expanding Involvement of Women in F/OSS

Presented by Elizabeth Krumbach

*Philadelphia area Linux Users Group*

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- Linux Sysadmin for LinuxForce
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  - Americas Regional Approval Board
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  - Women
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# What this talk is *really* about

- The talk title is a bit of a red herring
- The key to getting more women involved is by enticing more people to involved in general
- This talk covers general ways that your group or project can encourage more involvement
- Yes, you can ask questions about the involvement of women specifically (since that's how I tricked you into coming), but I won't focus on it

# Expanding Involvement of **People** in F/OSS

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# Culture of F/OSS

- Independent
- Free
- Collaborative
- Fun!

# Some unfortunate terms used to describe the *real* atmosphere F/OSS

- Destructively critical
- Unprofessional
- Aggressive
- “RTFM” culture

# Positive Project Examples

- LinuxChix – Not everyone wants mean/macho culture!
- Ubuntu – See, it can be better!

# The LinuxChix Example

- LinuxChix is a community for women who like Linux and Free Software, and for women and men who want to support women in computing.
- LinuxChix has two rules:
  - Be polite
  - Be helpful
- Since founding, LinuxChix has attracted women and men from all walks of life who are interested in involvement but didn't like the culture of the general F/OSS world

# The Ubuntu Example

- The Ubuntu Code of Conduct
  - <http://www.ubuntu.com/community/conduct>
  - Boils down to: “Be nice and professional to each other”
- Successful distro built upon:
  - High quality software
  - Encouragement of contributions of all kinds
  - Mutual respect and support within the community which leads to long-term commitments by community members

# Keys to increasing involvement

- Make it easy to contribute
- Provide the proper tools for collaboration and development
- Be nice
- Be encouraging
- Reach out to non-standard contributors
- Value all contributions

# Make it easy to contribute

- Have clear “contribute/join here” links
- Teach your contributors!
  - Provide documentation
  - Provide *friendly* support
  - Provide training/classes
  - “*You can teach programming; you can’t teach passion or diversity.*” - Kirrily Robert

# Provide the proper tools for collaboration and development

- A technical environment with open sign-ups and code check-outs (of course commit access should be limited)
- Maintain a website and mailing list, forums or IRC channel for collaboration

# Be Nice

- Tempted to reply with “RTFM”? Say it in a nicer way, and point to the appropriate documentation
  - Consider this: they knew enough to find your forum/ mailing list/IRC channel, give them the benefit of the doubt and assume they did *try* to find the right documentation first
- Remember, we're almost all volunteers here!
  - If you treat your volunteers poorly they'll find a friendlier project to contribute to, for example...
- And call people on it when they're not being nice

# Be Encouraging

- Have a great contributor? Tell them so, in public.
- Have an energetic contributor who needs some direction? Provide it.
- When addressing mistakes, be constructive and work to take the time to properly correct and encourage, rather than being overly critical

# Reach out to non-standard contributors

- Developing accounting software? Find some accountants to consult with! Blogging software? Music software?
- Need someone to test your application? Depending on specificness and learning curve, testers can be almost anyone
- Survey: How did you get into F/OSS?

# Reach out to non-standard contributors

- Change the F/OSS marketing strategy
- F/OSS is not just for geeks

# Value all contributions

- Documentation is important!
- Support is important!
- Design is important!
- All contributions are important!
- Oh yeah, coders are important too :-)

# Conclusion

- Reach out to new people
- Be friendly and encouraging
- Provide tools and support for your volunteers
- ??
- ~~Profit!~~ Successful project!

Questions?

# Women in F/OSS Links

- Geek Feminism Wiki
  - [http://geekfeminism.wikia.com/wiki/Geek\\_Feminism\\_Wiki](http://geekfeminism.wikia.com/wiki/Geek_Feminism_Wiki)
- Geek Feminism Blog
  - <http://geekfeminism.org/>
- LinuxChix
  - International: <http://linuxchix.org>
  - Philadelphia: <http://phillychix.org>
- Ubuntu-Women
  - <http://women.ubuntu.com>