Strategies for Building Healthy Open Source Communities

FOSDEM Community Feb 2024
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https://chaoss.community/
https://github.com/chaoss
@CHAOSSproj

https://fastwonderblog.com/
https://github.com/geekygirldawn
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Thank You!

ALFRED P. SLOAN FOUNDATION
Whoami

- Geek, traveler, reader
- 20+ yr tech career focused on community & open source (VMware, Intel, Puppet, ...)
- OpenUK Board
- CHAOSS Board and Maintainer
- CNCF TAG Contrib Strategy co-chair
- PhD on Linux kernel collaboration

Photos by Mom, Josh Bancroft, Don Park
The Problem is Hard

Humans are squishy.
We have feelings
and bad days.
The Problem is Hard

Action: Be proactive and encourage people to participate.
Agenda

- Strategies for Building Healthy Communities
- Goals-Based, Strategic Approach to Metrics
- Metrics for Measuring Project Sustainability
- Resources and Final Thoughts
Strategies for Building Healthy Communities
Motivation

Squishy humans have complex motivations. We want to feel useful and appreciated.

contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/community/contributor-growth-framework/motivation

Photo by Prateek Katyal on Unsplash
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Motivation

Action: Work in the open, but be proactive and ask specific people for help with individual tasks.

contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/community/contributor-growth-framework/motivation

Photo by Prateek Katyal on Unsplash
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Governance is all about the Humans

Set expectations for how people collaborate & make decisions

contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/templates/governance-intro
Governance is all about the Humans

Action: Clearly document project governance

contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/templates/governance-intro

Image by the CNCF CC BY-NC 2.0
Be Explicit

Explicit, documented governance makes it easier for the humans to contribute.

Photo by Andrew Watson - CC BY 2.0
Onboarding Docs

Good docs for onboarding new contributors is step #1 toward scaling maintainers.

contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/templates/contributing/
Onboarding Docs

Action: Make sure to include dev env setup, running tests, and other requirements.

contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/templates/contributing/
Roadmaps

Working in the open to collaborate on project plans, goals, and next steps.

contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/community/contributor-growth-framework/open-source-roadmaps
Roadmaps

Action: Make sure that your roadmapping process is aligned with your other processes and set aside time to keep it up to date.
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Build a welcoming and inclusive community.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Action: Be proactive about including people and moving them into leadership roles.
Contributor Ladders

Defining a ladder of leadership roles helps recruit new humans to reduce maintainer workload.

[Link to CONTRIBUTOR_LADDER.md](github.com/cncf/project-template/blob/main/CONTRIBUTOR_LADDER.md)
Contributor Ladders

Action: proactively recruit new humans to move up the ladder into leadership roles.

github.com/cncf/project-template/blob/main/contributor_ladder.md
Path to Emeritus

Set your project up for success after maintainers move on.
Path to Emeritus

Action: Be proactive about promoting new humans so that maintainers can move into emeritus roles.

Photo by Matthew Brodeur on Unsplash
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Strategic, Goals-Based Approach to Metrics
Start with Goals

What is important for your project?

Photo by Markus Winkler on Unsplash
Use the Right Metrics

Start with your goals and find the right metrics for your project.
Be Strategic

Think about where you can best spend your time to grow your community while achieving your goals.

Photo by Elena Popova on Unsplash
Be Strategic

Action: Find people to help with documentation, marketing, community, and similar activities.
Measuring Project Sustainability

https://chaoss.community
Contributors submitting PRs with no one to resolve / close them -> may need to move more people into leadership.

Responsiveness

https://chaoss.community
Responsiveness

Time it takes for maintainers to close PRs / issues is increasing

-> may need to move more people into leadership.
Types of Contributors

Few casual /regular contributors -> improve onboarding docs.

https://chaoss.community
Bus / Lottery Factor

How big of an issue is it?

- Person 1: 80 commits
- Person 2: 6% commits
- Person 3: 2% commits

https://chaoss.community
@geekygirldawn
Bus / Lottery Factor

Who might be ready to move into a leadership position?

https://chaoss.community
Measure, Improve, Monitor

Step 1: Starter Project Health
- Responsiveness (First Response & Change Request Closure Ratio)
- Bus Factor
- Release Frequency

Step 2: Improve Specific Areas as needed using related models
- **Improve Responsiveness:**
  - Development Responsiveness
  - Community Activity
- **Improve Bus Factor:**
  - Project Engagement
- **Improve Release Frequency:**
  - Collaboration Development Index

Step 3: Monitor and improve using additional models
- Community Welcomingness
- Community Service and Support
- Funding
- Safety
- Project Awareness

chaoss.community/kb/metrics-model-starter-project-health
Resources

CNCF Contributor Strategy TAG Docs & Templates
contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/
contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/community/contributor-growth-framework/
github.com/cncf/project-template

The Open Source Way Guidebook
github.com/theopensourceway/guidebook/

CHAOSS Metrics
https://chaoss.community/
Final Thoughts

Building a sustainable community is hard, but thinking about your goals and using metrics can help you find ways to improve your community.
Action Item

Carve out 1 hour a week to improve contributor documentation or help someone learn something new.
THANK YOU!
Any Questions?

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