Getting Started in Open Source

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Who Are We?
By the Way....

• These are our opinions
  – Not those of any past, present or future employer
• Based on our experiences
• Your experiences may vary
Why Us?
Why You?

• Gain new skills
• Learn without going (back) to school
• Professional networking / career opportunities
• Personal gratification
• Ethical considerations
Shown here actual size...
All That Glitters is Not Only Code

• Testing
• Localization
• Documentation
• Release Engineering
• User Interface Design / Usability
• User support
Have You Considered?

- Marketing
  - Contributed articles, how-to's, tutorials
  - Graphic design
  - Fan advocacy / art
  - Event organizing / staffing
  - Projects looking for end users - share your enthusiasm

- Fund raising

- Community management
Getting Started

• Find a need that matters to you
  – Technical challenge
  – Social considerations
• Find a community you are comfortable with
• Ask your friends!
• Limit your scope
In this miniature by the Limbourgs representing the month of October, the Louvre, then the residence of the kings of France, stands on Paris’ right bank, across the Seine from the farming scene in the heart of Paris in the foreground. The figures at the bottom plow the field and plant the seeds while in the middle distance a scarecrow archer and network of strings protects a planted field from the birds. In the centuries since the Limbourgs painted this scene, the architecture of the Louvre, painted here in exquisite detail, has undergone an immense amount of renovation, remodeling, redesign, and reconstruction.
Review History

So you're not flamed while repeating it

• Review project website or wiki
• Read mailing list archives / forum topics
• Look / ask for newbie documentation
• Check out the source code
• Do other research
Observe the Present

• Join mailing lists, IRC channels, etc. and lurk
• Learn how people have gotten involved in the past
• Watch for calls for volunteers
• Decide if the community tone is right for you
• Find a place you would enjoy contributing
Create the Future

Diving Right In....

• File a bug report
  – Bonus points for submitting a patch

• Volunteer to help
  – Major bonus points for useful suggestions
Some Basics
Mailing List Etiquette

• Don't rehash old discussions
• Don't reply to every message in a thread
• Only reply to relevant text of a previous message
• When in doubt, don’t top post
• “Me too” posts are a big no-no
• No filibustering
Communication Annoyances

Ways to make yourself look less credible in a remarkably short period of time

• Silly nicknames
• Multiple nicknames in different media
• Overusing CAPITAL LETTERS
• Using excessive punctuation!!!1!!1!one!
  – Using none at all
• ZOMGWTFBBQ!?!?!
Things to Get Used to

• It's a very direct and blunt world
• Lots of people are watching
  – people *will* correct you
Gaining Credibility

A brief how-to

• Show you've done your research
• Pass on the knowledge you've learned visibly
• Adapt to existing structures
Other Things to Avoid
Cluelessness

• Failure to pick up on the “mood”
• Not understanding common goals of the community
• Asking RTFM questions
Hostility & Non-Cooperation

• Angrily demanding help
• Deliberately riling people
• Willing to complain, but not to fix
• Failing to accept criticism well
Don't Be Scared!
Summary

• Decide on a personal focus, then a project

• Study the past and present before diving in

• Be a good citizen of the project

• Enjoy yourself!
Resources

• Eric S. Raymond – *The Cathedral and the Bazaar, How to Ask Questions the Smart Way*

• Free Software Foundation – Free Software Definition

• Karl Fogel – *Producing Open Source Software*
  – available under open copyright & at no cost [http://www.producingoss.com](http://www.producingoss.com)
Q&A

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