

How to Destroy a Community

Jono Bacon's Smart Incentivization

bit.ly/smartincent



4 Key Principles for Incentivization

1. Strive for Acceptance
 - a. Connected set of incentives to create a sense of belonging
 - b. Status in a group is important to us
 - c. Hook | Reason | Reward
 - d. Intrinsic (personal thanks, recognition) vs extrinsic rewards (swag)
2. We are a reciprocal species
 - a. Giving to others gives us a desire to give back
3. We form habits with repetition
 - a. Keep people motivated for 66 days, and then repetition will help keep them around
4. Most of us have a BS radar
 - a. Rewards should be personal and non-computer based

4 Key Principles - Applied since 2003

1. Strive for Acceptance
 - a. Within the Kodi community, everyone knows that an “invite” from the team is a huge deal
 - b. With the invite comes exciting titles and recognition among peers
 - c. Virtually all of our rewards are intrinsic in nature (because we’re poor!)
2. We are a reciprocal species
 - a. The motto of the team is and has always been “Code Welcome,” which means, when we aren’t being sarcastic, that all of the code that exists now has been given to you for free and will continue to be given for free, and the best way for you to give back, is give us some code in return
3. We form habits with repetition
 - a. This one is frankly accidental. Getting a PR merged into Kodi typically takes a long time. After coding, you have to go through extensive peer review, you have to show the code works across half a dozen different platforms, etc.
 - b. GSOC forces this as well
4. Most of us have a BS radar
 - a. We’re bad at automating! And we tend not to do those things we think are lame anyway. For e.g. We don’t have a mailing list at all

Key Principles of Destroying a Community

1. Burnout
2. Inability to Compromise or Meet in the Middle
3. Feelings of Betrayal

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1. Failure to Compromise
 2. Feelings of Betrayal
 3. Burnout

Passion can lead to a feeling of betrayal

- In 2011 and 2012, XBMC was starting to get a name as this streaming piracy platform, and the team uniformly agreed that something needed to be done, but what was decided on wasn't strong enough in the minds of many.
- In addition, many members of the team were interested in growing our presence at conventions and having more regular internal conventions, which meant figuring out new ways to fundraise.
- Both of these actions resulted in many team members feeling betrayed by the organization. To them, XBMC wasn't about raising money and it wasn't about merely doing what the law required in handling piracy. And to raise money felt like selling out. In the words of one anonymous dev:

Passion can lead to a feeling of betrayal

After the whole argument and heated discussions that I was involved in with people about piracy addons and the teams position on them and changing the rules as well as money fundraising and other things. It got to the point where doing and talking about xbmc actually got quite upsetting to me and was just making me angry. And to cut a long story short I work on xbmc for the fun and enjoyment I get out of it (well used to anyway) I'm not in it for fame or fortune so had to get away from all the politics and fighting we were having.

With that said I'm rather enjoying doing other life stuff at the moment and probably won't be coming back in an active role for a while yet

- anonymous

Passion leads to a failure to compromise

- In 2008 several people helped with the port for XBMC for Mac. Because the platform wasn't very well setup for accepting modern pull requests and the entire concept of git was alien to most of the team, the Mac team found themselves working on their own branch that was completely separate from the main XBMC branch. This lead to numerous political debates with no seeming end
 - How to name non-xbox ports?
 - Can one port have hardware video decoding and not another?
 - Does everyone need to use port agnostic hardware video decoding?
 - Does everyone working on a port need to be officially part of the team?
 - Does every port need to go through xbmc.org or can each port have its own team and website?
 - Does each port need to keep the existing release numbering scheme?

Passion leads to a failure to compromise

- Eventually, the two teams simply split apart. One team changed their name to Plex. The other retained XBMC until renaming many years later to Kodi

Passion leads to burnout

- Arguably the most difficult one to deal with, burnout can have numerous middleman causes
 - Disagreement over the path of the project
 - Disagreement over team philosophy
 - Disagreement over how to handle adversity in the first place
 - Over-exerting to the point that the work is no longer interesting or compelling
 - The passion of others unintentionally distancing you and slowly causing you to lose your own sense of ownership in the project

Overcoming the Principles of Community Destruction

Frankly, what follows are guesses. The team has implemented some strategies, but at the end of the day it's much easier to identify the problems than the solutions

Overcoming the Principles of Community Destruction

1. Make clear to all that the community is a democracy early on
 - a. Some people may have “boss” jobs with the final word on specific matters, but anyone is welcome to ask for a replacement boss or a full team vote on decisions. In this way, there is no such thing as a truly “final” word
 - b. Elections are ranked choice voted, which punishes extremist views, pushes for safe centrism
2. Respect deeply held values
 - a. Example: User tracking in FOSS
3. Beer + Fun
 - a. The most important team rule is that this project should be fun. To that end, we hold a yearly DevCon and encourage social meetups within the team, so we can have face to face positive chats, often about things completely unrelated to development. It reminds us that our passion for the team supersedes our passion for whatever change we’re pushing