

What is an open source software community?

Sebastian Rahtz

OSS Watch

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What challenges do open source projects face?

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Projects *tend* to start small, and often go in one of seven directions:

- stay small: **remains a nerd tool**
- gather users but no new developers: **frustrated users**
- fragment when primary leader loses interest: **unattractive for new people**
- develop power but with minimal documentation: **no way to find the power**
- grow within an expert community: **high price for admission**
- go commercial: **stops being 'free'**
- simply die

The usual panacea is **'you need to build a community'**

The reality

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TeX macros implementing the TeX output from the Jade/OpenJade DSSSL processor Maint [\[Edit description\]](#)



:Linux on Large Systems Foundry

- Development Status: 5 - Production/Stable
- Intended Audience: Developers, End Users/Desktop
- Operating System: OS Independent (Written in an interpreted language)
- Topic: Symmetric Multi-processing, Text Processing
- Translations: English

NOTE: Your project has not yet opted-in to receive donations.

Project UNIX name: jadetex

Registered: 2001-06-06 13:54

Activity Percentile (last week): 61%

View project activity [statistics](#)

View list of [RSS feeds](#) available for this project

[\[Set preferred support mechanism\]](#)

[\[Configure Trac categorization\]](#)

Latest File Releases

Package	Version	Date	Notes / Monitor	Download
jadetex	3.13	May 18, 2003	-	Download

[\[View ALL Project Files\]](#)

Public Areas

[Project Home Page](#)

[Tracker](#)

- [Bugs](#) (**15 open / 23 total**)

Bug Tracking System

- [Support Requests](#) (**0 open / 1 total**)

Tech Support Tracking System

- [Patches](#) (**4 open / 8 total**)

Patch Tracking System

Developer Info

Project Admins:

[icastle](#)

[rahtz](#)

Developers: 2

[\[View Members\]](#)

Latest News

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Types of open source communities

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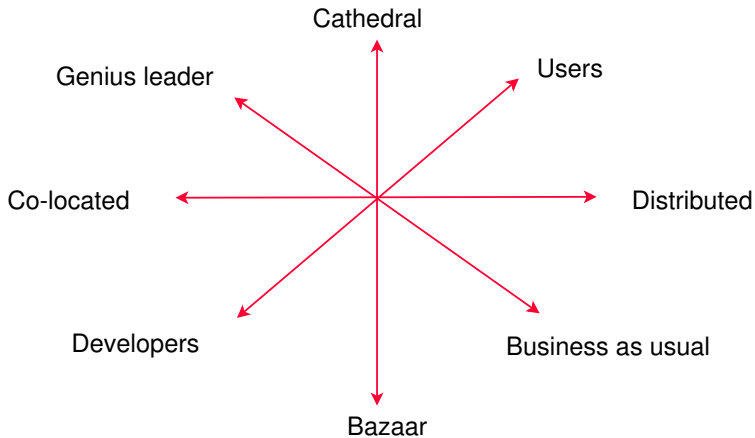
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- Developers who want to work on a shared project
- Users of software who want to get better results from it
- A community with a problem which is solved by software
- Programmers who find it gets software developed faster
- A procedural infrastructure to provide long-term stability

Community tensions

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Shining examples of community

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- Apache** a technical strategy; formal democratic management; enviable reputation for quality
- Firefox** Committed non-technical evangelists and plugin writers
- uPortal** shared development between academia and business
- Debian** Articulated policies and procedures; no prima donna leaders
- Moodle** a community of **teachers** which merges seamlessly into developers; charismatic leadership; self-hosting

Community developer rôles

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The **visionary** has the Big Idea, makes the long-term decisions

The **leader** makes the medium-term decisions

The **programmer** implements the functionality and makes the short-term decisions

The **tester** finds the bugs

The **apprentice** programmer fixes the bugs

The **documentor** writes the manual

The **communicator** tells other people how good it all is

The **distributor** packages it up for new users to try

How many of these rôles can safely be filled by one person?

Characterizing development communities

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Many open source software development groups have common characteristics:

- small groups of people who have worked together over a period of time and have developed a common sense of purpose
- communities of apprentices where newcomers learn by gradually going from peripheral participation to full participation
- collective understanding of the community by its members and accountability to each other
- shared repertoire of languages, tools, artefacts, etc, produced by the community.

Community guidance

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- 1 Are you clear about the kind of community you want to grow and why? **Sort yourself out first.**
- 2 When people find you, do they (nearly) instantly have a good grasp of what your project is about and how your community works together? **Sort out your communications.**
- 3 Are there multiple entry points into your community and is there a clear path of progression through it? **If your community is more valuable than your code, then value it.**

Top tip: start with your web presence

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1 Tell people in a **simple**, summary, way what you are up to:

- This is what the software is supposed to do
- This is who it is aimed at
- There are its main features
- These are the main software or other dependencies
- Here are some screen shots
- This is the developer community
- Here are **licence**, **download** and **install** instructions

to have a nice mixed community

oh, and don't forget the T-shirt

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