



Enhanced Development through Community Engagement

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VLE & Internet Forum
Taunton School, Taunton
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AKA

How to reduce the risk of getting burned when a new Moodle release lands and breaks your in-house customisations



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OSS Watch

- Open Source Advisory Service
- JISC Funded
- FE and HE



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OSS Watch

- Unbiased information
- Consultancy services
- Evaluation of open source projects
- Software community development
- Bid writing
- Sustainability advice



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Open source is...

?



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Look beyond the licence cost

Look beyond the licence

Look beyond the code



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A development community



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A development community that...

- Knows how to develop software
- Knows distributed collaboration
- Knows how to gain from diversity
- Knows about the education domain
- Knows suitable technical solutions





Open development features

- Open source licence protection
- Distributed community development
- Peer reviewed contributions
- Meritocratic governance
- Sustainability





Take advantage of the knowledge

- Learn from it
- Take from it
- Contribute to it
- Share it



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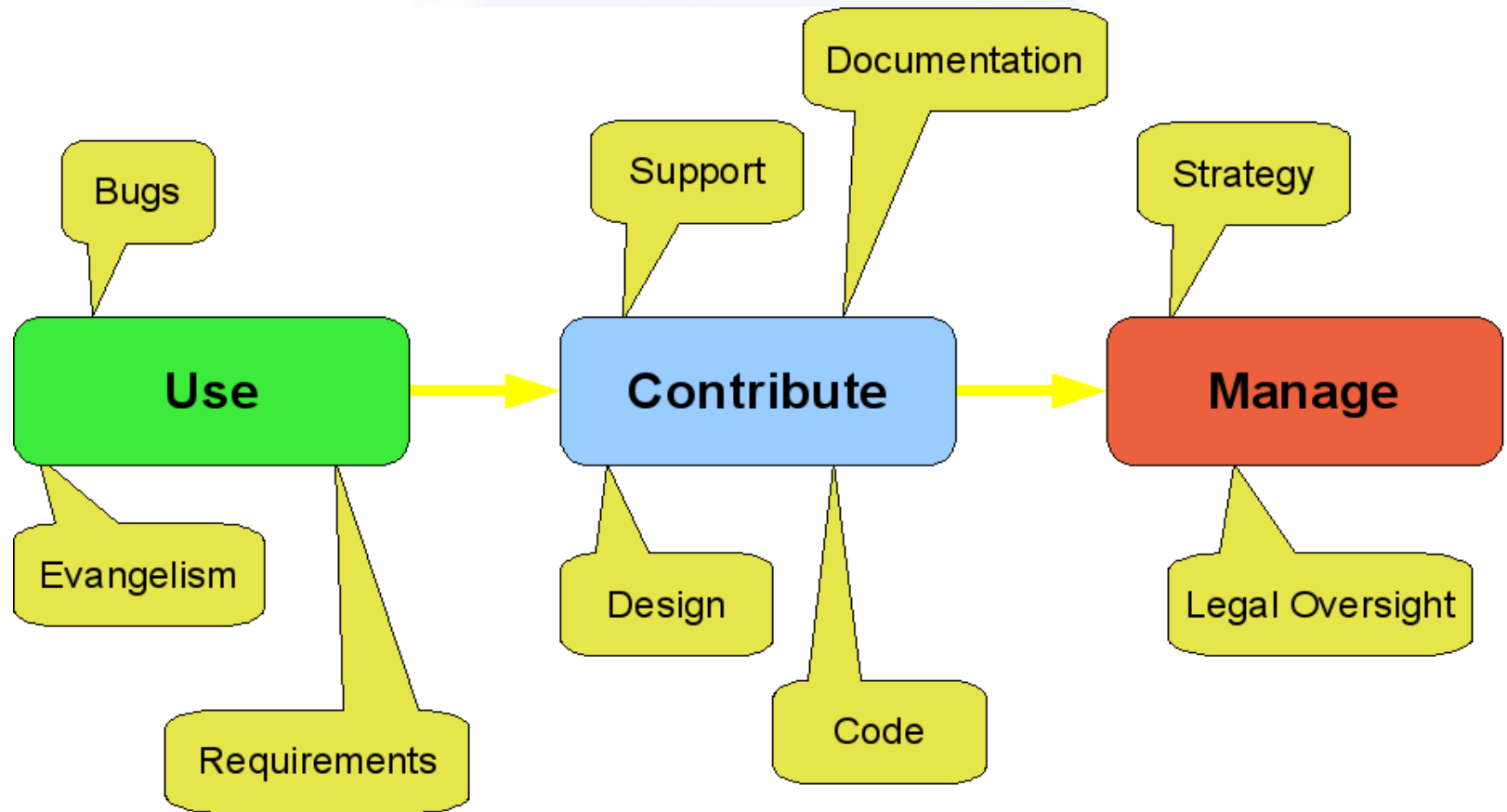
SS Watch

Find out...

- What's happening now and next
- What to plan for and how
- Who's working on what
- What work is required



OSS Watch





A real life example

Mark Johnson, Tauntons College

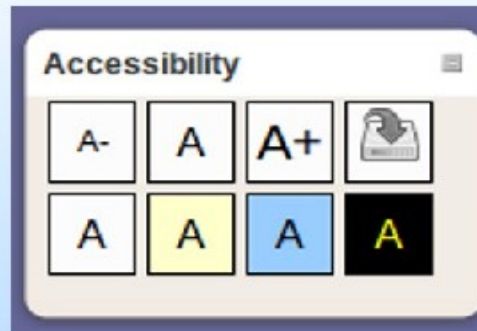
- VLE developer
- Moodle 2 forces significant change
- Started 'port' early to reduce risk
- Custom accessibility feature broke



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The Line of Code that Could



From Mark Johnson's presentation given at the
OSS Watch community engagement workshop in Oct 09

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The Line of Code that Could



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Dialog with Tim Hunt

Captured on the Moodle ticket:

<http://tracker.moodle.org/browse/MDL-20013>



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The Line of Code that Could



I've got a block that I'm trying to port to Moodle 2 which includes it's own stylesheet via a styles.php file. However, for some reason it isn't being included along with other blocks' stylesheets.

I've had a poke around in theme/styles.php and all I can tell is that it's not being added to \$files after get_sheets_for_plugin_type is called, although the other blocks with styles.php files are. Is there anything I need to look out for in 2.0 that could be causing this?

Sounds like a bug. I changed that code recently. **Please file a bug in the tracker (<http://tracker.moodle.org/>) and assign it to me.**



<http://tinyurl.com/mj-moodle1>





The Line of Code that Could



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The Line of Code that Could



Found it. It seemed that while the function was returning the correct files, the += operator wasn't joining it to the \$files array correctly. The attached patch changes it to use array_merge(), which seems to work as expected.

Ah nice one. I always get + and array_merge confused. Thanks for catching it. Fix now in CVS.



<http://tinyurl.com/mj-moodle2>



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A model engagement

- Found a problem
- Debugged it as far as could
- Discussed it with the dev community
- Created an issue in tracker
- Got advice and found the problem
- Created and submitted patch
(with permission from employer)



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The Line of Code that Could

```
diff --git a/theme/styles.php b/theme/styles.php
index d94dcfc..e1d2f46 100644
--- a/theme/styles.php
+++ b/theme/styles.php

@@ -116,7 +116,7 @@ $files = array();
 // here can be overridden by theme CSS.
 if ($pluginsheets) {
     foreach ($THEME->pluginsheets as $plugintype) {
-        $files += get_sheets_for_plugin_type($plugintype);
+        $files = array_merge($files,
get_sheets_for_plugin_type($plugintype));
     }
 }
```





Benefits

- It get's your name out there
- Feels good
- Easier to maintain code
- Community gets new code
- Peer reviewed code = better quality
- Adds value
- Good for Mark's employer



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The Line of Code that Could



Just found out I had my first patch accepted into #Moodle CVS :-)
<http://is.gd/2d6nC>

12:19 AM Aug 12th from Gwibber

@marxjohnson congratulations :D

12:21 AM Aug 12th from Twirssi



@marxjohnson congratulations on your first Moodle patch - it's a good one. I'm going to use it as an OSS Watch blog post on good open dev.
12:25 AM Aug 12th from web
in reply to marxjohnson



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Going further

- Could submit his feature
- Or work with community on feature
- ...





Ask yourself...

- Are you working in isolation?
- Are you using as free starter code?
- Are you making a bespoke system?
- Are you forking the project code?





Why is this sub optimal?

- You will have to maintain it
- You will have to merge each release
- You may duplicate extant features
- More work than you may need to do
- Who sees your amazing features?





Gain from the community

- Get your code accepted
- Accepted means arrives next release
- Accepted means community maintained
- Others may love your features



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Common Concerns

- Our code is not good enough
 - Release early, be willing to learn
- Get shown up
 - Unlikely if you are nice
- Too much extra work
 - See above for savings





Work with the community

- Lurk and learn
- Make contact
- Ask endless questions
- Answer questions
- Request submissions are reviewed





Work with the code

- Learn the house style
- Learn common idioms and techniques
- Add your experience
- Bonus - find bugs and gain merit





Work with the architecture

- Plugins common to allow diversity
- Find safe places to make mods
- Changes to core harder to merge





Work with the tools

- Explore project memory
- Embrace tracker workflow
- Utilise version control facilities





Work with the releases

- Perform regular small merges
- Stay current and aware of issues
- Reduce distance of your code
- Eliminate expensive surprises
- Contributes testing





Work with the community - again

- Be a player in the big team
- Have a voice – steer project



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Or - use a system integrator

- They engage with the community
 - Look for project 'partners'
- One point of support for you
- Act as intermediary





Moodle specific links

- Roadmap
- Tracker
- Modules and plugins
- Guidelines for contributed code
- The code





OSS Watch here to help you engage



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