

Ethos(s): Enabling Community and Culture

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Robyn! @robynbergeron

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My job is to build frameworks in which contributors can succeed and create better software together.

(also, I have opinions.)

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I believe in the power of human creativity.

I believe in the power of collaboration.

I believe that open source is a development model, not a business model.

I believe that free software and capitalism can coexist harmoniously.

WHY AM I HERE?

- Because Gareth Rushgrove is awesome!
- Because I care about this ecosystem and way of life and building communities of practice is important. WE NEED TO LEARN FROM EACH OTHER.

Ethos(s): the characteristic spirit of a culture, era, or community as manifested in its attitudes and aspirations

OMG ETHICS

CONSTRAINTS, TO AVOID RABBIT HOLES

- “Are we truly free?”
- “Is it unethical to profit from free software?”
- “Is license x/y/z ethical?”
- “Isn’t this whole talk really just self-motivated and thus not actually ethical?”
- “Is company x/y/z evil?”

WHY ARE YOU HERE?

- You are a creator of open source software
- You are a participant in an open source software project
- You are a “cat herder” in an open source software project
- You (or your company) are a creator or consumer of open source software

...and you want to know about the practices of healthy open source communities.

WHY ARE YOU HERE?

- You are an employee of a venture capital firm and you would like to know if I am...
 - Going to talk smack about your firm
 - Going to talk smack about a company your firm has invested in
 - Going to talk smack about the recent wave of “anti-amazon licenses”
 - Available for employment

PRACTICAL WISDOM

ABOUT OPEN SOURCE...

- Open source is a development methodology.
- Practices such as transparency, “Release early, release often,” are part of the culture, not an obligation of using a software license.
- Your user and contributor community can be your force multiplier -- or they can be the end of you.
CHOOSE WISELY.
- Users are potential contributors. If you have no users, you will have no contributors!

WE CANNOT TALK ABOUT OPEN SOURCE IN A PURIST VACUUM. IT IS NO LONGER A “SCARY THING,” IT IS A VIABLE BUSINESS MODEL, AND THUS TALKING ABOUT THE ETHICS OF ONE PART WITHOUT INVOLVING THE OTHER PART...

Well, that would be unethical. :)

SOME UNIVERSAL RULES

Be honest. Be transparent.

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Community process or rules should apply equally to everyone. (Or should be clear about the circumstances where it won't.)

SOME UNIVERSAL RULES

Don't be evil.

IF YOU'RE A CREATOR OF OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARE

- BE HONEST about your intent.
- IF you get users and contributors -- you will have to learn how to delegate.
- BUT BEFORE ANYTHING... if you want to build a community, **consider your architecture of participation, and the architecture of your code.**
- Help your (potential) contributors to be successful.
- Recognize that any significant amount of success can lead to employment -- negotiate wisely with your community in mind.

IF YOU'RE A PARTICIPANT IN AN OPEN SOURCE PROJECT

- BE HONEST about your intent.
- SPEAK UP when you have concerns about the health or operation of the community.

IF YOU'RE A CAT HERDER IN AN OPEN SOURCE PROJECT

- BE HONEST about your intent, the project's intent, and if you have one, your employer's intent. YOU ARE THE FACILITATOR OF TRANSPARENCY AND COMMUNICATION AND UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE CONTRIBUTORS, THE USERS, AND (if it is the case) THE SPONSOR OF THE PROJECT.

IF YOUR COMPANY IS A CREATOR / PROVIDER / CONSUMER

- BE HONEST about your intent.
- BE WILLING TO LISTEN. Remember: healthy communities are far more likely to be financially viable / profitable -- and communities in political turmoil will be at risk of ever establishing a viable business.
- UNDERSTAND YOUR DEPENDENCIES, and support them appropriately.

IF YOU ARE FROM A VC FIRM THAT INVESTS IN FOSS COMPANIES

- DEEP SIGH

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- DEEP SIGH
- BE HONEST about your intent. AND STAND BY IT.
- DON'T make community-obliterating decisions on behalf of companies simply because omg you need that 20x return.
- STOP BLAMING AMAZON. OMG. If every company, as they say, must be a software company -- in the name of agility, and pivoting business models, and all that -- OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARE COMPANIES ARE NO EXCEPTION TO THIS RULE.

</rant>

Thanks!

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