Adventures in Open Source Development

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

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• 37 years old
• Software engineer
• Maker
• Hobby baker
• 100% Nerd
• Creator & maintainer of OctoPrint
OctoPrint?

- “The snappy web interface for your 3D printer!”
- Open Source, AGPLv3
- ~100k **confirmed** users, unknown actual number
- Python, HTML & CSS & JS
- Web: octoprint.org
Almost 8 years of history

- Aug 2014: Going full-time
- Apr 2016: Switch to crowd funding

Timeline:
- 2013: Start
- 2014: Aug 2014
- 2015: Plugin system
- 2016: RC process
- 2017: More sustainable release cycle
- 2018: Community forums
- 2019: Anonymous Usage Tracking
- 2020: Discord server
The Good
Working with passion

• It’s your project!
• You can shape it, you can implement your vision
• No politics driven architecture
• No working on something you’d never use yourself
• You help people solve their problems
• You are an **enabler**
• And sometimes they even say **thank you**: Makes it all worth it!
Learning tons of new stuff!

• Software development
• Project management
• Community management
• Release management
• The value of release candidates
  • and how tricky it can be to get people to actually run release candidates...
• Brand development
• ... and so much more
The Bad
Work life balance

- Especially if side project or large project
- Hard to shut off and recharge
- You need to be very protective of your private time
• Asking for donations is tough and doesn’t usually scale
• Partnering with companies is an even bigger challenge
• Make it easy for people to give you tiny but recurring tips
• Github Sponsors, Patreon, Liberapay, Donorbox, ...
• Especially at the start you’ll do it alone
• People are fast to request features, but slow to contribute them
• Beware of having to maintain things you don’t or can’t use
The Ugly
Entitlement & attacks

“I need it to do X, implement that”

“Fix this obscure bug!”

“Why isn’t this implemented already?!”

“Who ever pushed this release should be ashamed of themselves!”

“F*** YOU!!!”
License violations

• Companies love using OSS
  • They don’t love contributing back to OSS
  • And sometimes they don’t even admit they are using OSS
• Choose your battles wisely
Burnout

You don’t owe anyone anything!

You need to take care of yourself!

Learn to say “No”!
Would I do it again?

Absolutely!
Thank you for your attention!

Twitter: @foosel
Slides: octoprint.org/slides/

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