

# Towards Community



*(lets get there fast)*

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*“Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls...” - Jeremiah 6:16*



# Overview

*To try and demonstrate I planned this talk, and it has some vague structure*

- 'Community' foo
  - The community – a snapshot
  - we're a success already
  - or are we ?
- Barriers to entry
- Release schedules
- Credits
- Conclusions



# How to know when you've made it

*Some wisdom from an old friend ...*

- You know when you're successful when you get E-mail like:

I see myself as something of  
visionary ...

- Unfortunately this is true only of conventional projects
  - It is easy to get people to tell you what to do
- We need a 'Management' project
  - suggested every so often in GNOME



# OpenOffice.org 'successful' already

*Our product is simply the best.*

- We got there by cheating however
  - no school of hard knocks
  - no experience attracting people
- Charity creation
  - hire 1000 people to setup a charity that saves small furry animals ? no volunteers ?
- Need to make OO.o hacking 'cool & fun'
  - servant leadership
  - help people do what they want to do
- We are failing:
  - Gnome – 250cvs commits per **day**
  - OO.o – 10/15 patch issues per **week**



# What is 'a community' ?

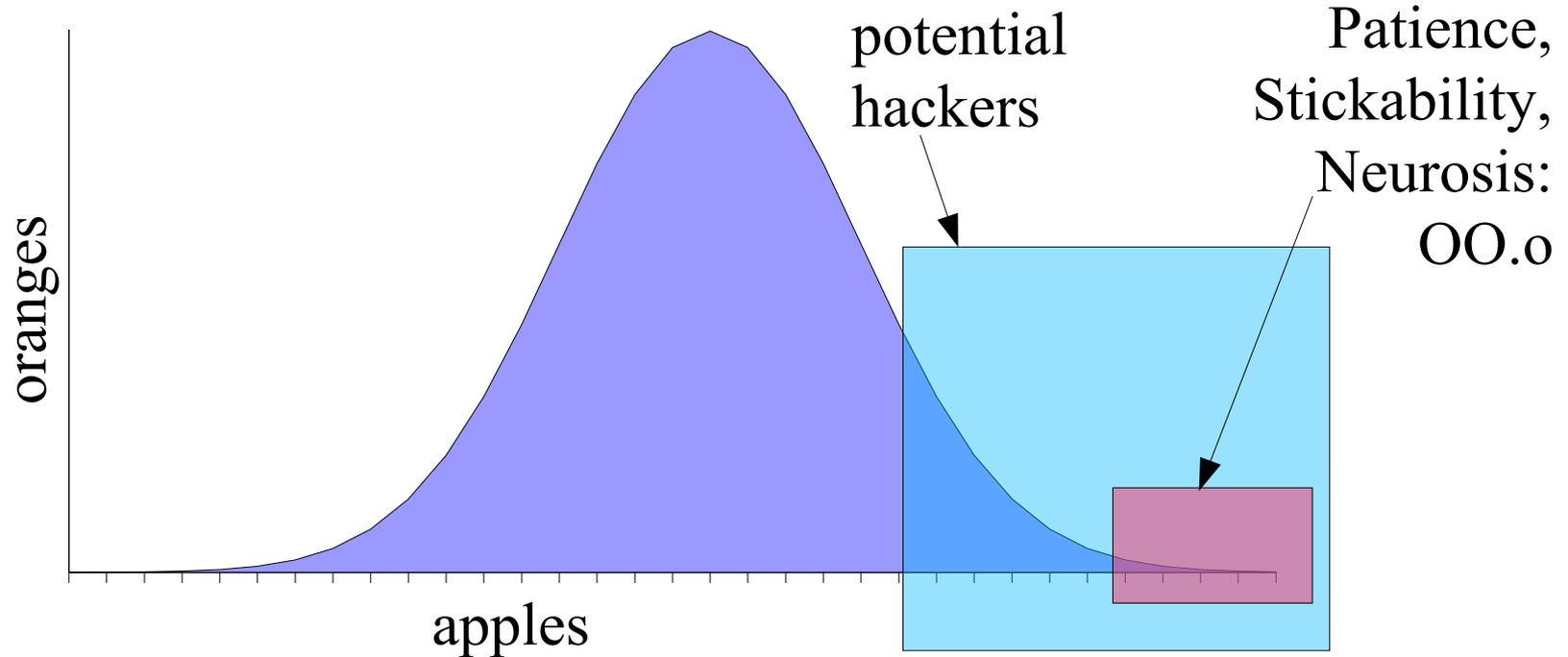
*The patronising nonsense that people ramble out there*

- I have no idea what a community is
  - no-one has ever seen one
  - other people's seem to work better than ours
- I care about working with my friends
  - sharp people, that are a pleasure to work with
  - people I like to spend time with / do things for
  - people I can help & who can help me back
  - guys I can have a laugh & a beer with
- Get obsessed with metrics:
  - More Mono devel mail than OO.o 'discuss'
  - More E-mail ! - doing very well here



# A photograph of the community:

*Or why Free software is like climbing some potential hill*



- People are normal – even hackers
- Hackers work on what gives the best bang/consumed-evening
- There is a **random** pool of people

## Barriers to entry:

- hearing OO.o is good fun
- source download size
- compile fragility
- compile time
- lack of devel. docs
- finding the place to hack
- debugging

- JCA signing

- patch submit / approval
- ssh add process
- learning cws system
- building latest devel ver
- committing code
- getting cws nominated

## A start:

- ooo-build – kill mozilla
- ooo-build – it builds
- hackers-guide – honest
- public LXR
- conference plugs

**Room for improvement**

*multiple round trips*



# ooo-build - <http://ooo.ximian.com/>

- Building made easy
- Wraps the existing OO.o build system

```
configure
```

```
download
```

```
make
```

```
make install
```

Prerequisites:

~4Gb+ spare space

~512Mb RAM

~1Ghz processor

- Used for the 1<sup>st</sup> build, & packaging
- Development iteration more cunning
- Hackers guide:
  - <http://ooo.ximian.com/hackers-guide.html>



# StarOffice/OpenOffice.org

*How the two relate to each other a small and shrinking difference*

## Sun is doing it right

- OO.o CVS is the authoritative base source
  
- Freedom / Legal bits:
  - Source under LGPL / SISSL
  - SISSL: X11 + ~LGPL for ABI / file-format changes
  - JCA – **joint** copyright assignment
    - You continue to own the copyright
    - You grant Sun copyright-owner-like rights too
  
- GPL + assymetric copyright assignment
  - worst of all worlds



# A (typical?) example

*As Zeus said to Narcissus: "Watch yourself" - so, look at me!*

- A student in 1998 – hits a bug & starts on a fix
  - First 'community' contribution:
  - to a large code-base 500k lines
  - lots of lovely macros / global variables
- Hacked a patch: add `-Wsequence-point` to gcc
  - Catches `a = a++; a[n] = b[n++];` etc.
- Signed / posted / got copyright to FSF confirmed
- Posted E-mail with patch: **16<sup>th</sup> June 1998**

# A (typical?) example (2)

- First reply: 9<sup>th</sup> July 1998

From: Robert Lipe <robertl at dgii dot com>  
Subject: Re: New feature, warning on n=n++ etc.

I could find no discussion of this patch nor any evidence it was committed.

I just dusted it off, cleaned it up, applied it to my egcs tree and performed a bootstrap with it in place. **No problems noted.**

I then fed a large chunk of code through it and it did successfully spot a few problems. After I unravelled the macros that generated the sleaze in question, **I agree with the new warning.** The code in question is wrong.

...

How about it ?

No reply ...



# Result: wandered off elsewhere

- doc++ - javadoc but fast
  - dramatically improved flex grammar / feature-set
  - no maintainer interest – forked but pain to maintain
- GGI project – games interesting
  - H/W difficulties / no
- Wrote (toy) spreadsheet in Java
  - discouraged by nasty pre-swing printing model
- Mahjongg – a Gnome game
  - wrote a tile-placing algorithm to make solvable
  - E-mail reply with maintainer
  - Instant recognition / credit.
- Gnumeric – **1998** couple of months after gcc
  - Productive / committed ... into Gnome big-time.



# Interacting with contributors

- Love them – they probably need it.
- Initial contribution special
  - Inevitably a terrible patch – card ...
  - Immediately respond, fix the patch, create the cws, commit it, credit them with the work.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> patch
  - send it back once – so they learn, then fix it up
- 3<sup>rd</sup> patch
  - send it back a lot – should be getting better by now
  - commit it for them
- N<sup>th</sup> patch – crunch point
  - Maintainership or sudden Death – be careful.



# Minor barriers & interacting

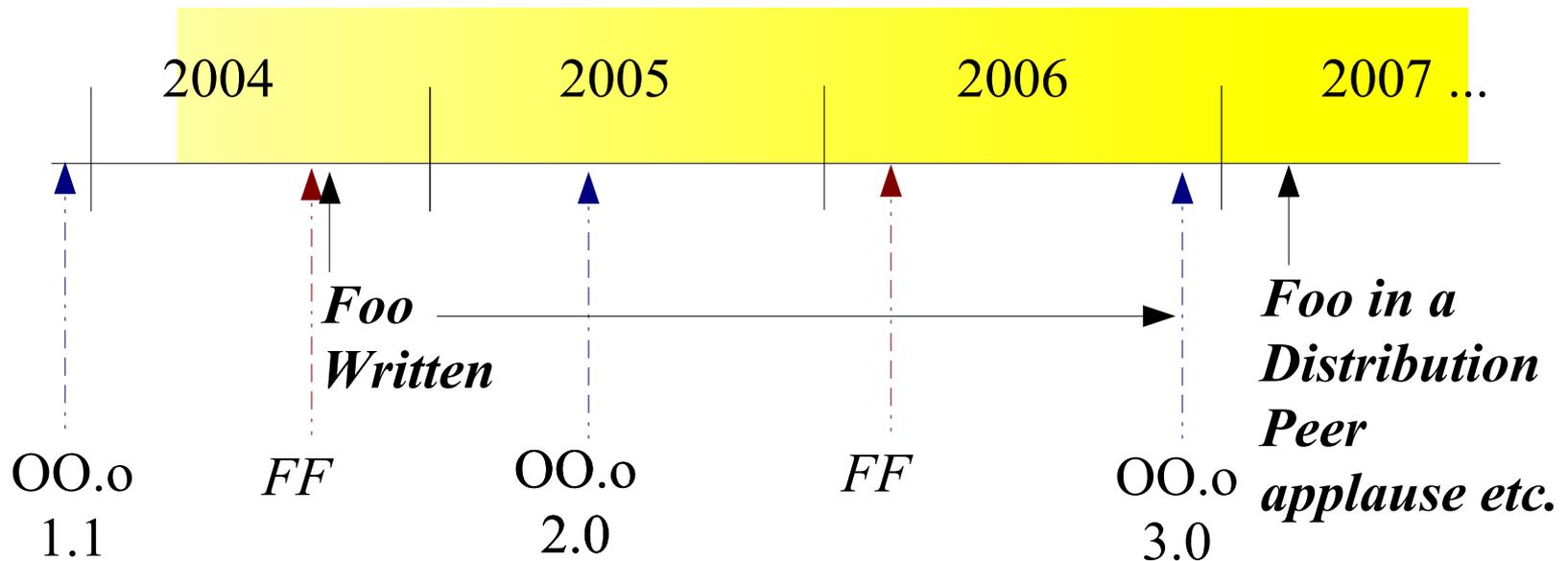
- Pre-hacking interaction
  - More painful – no idea if they're any good
    - my umpteen build problems with gnumeric: Miguel
  - IRC – the only real solution
    - extremely helpful – works both ways
- CVS performance – *branch,tag,merge vs. a patch-set*
  - `#$%#$%#%#'ing` unfixable NFS idiocy
- Bad behavior
  - “we re-wrote your feature from scratch” - 3x
  - “it's on our road-map to do for 2.0” - ?
  - “interesting patch” ... no feedback / follow-up
- Not as bad as I remember it
  - dealing with the paranoid & delusional ...



don't worry:

## Your feature will be in the next release:

- A rough guide to the OO.o schedule:



Upgrade / patch release [ minor version ] every quarter  
Acutely different to Free software release process



# A (typical?) example (3)

- Second reply: 10<sup>th</sup> October 2000

From: Joseph S. Myers

Subject: Updated version of Michael Meeks' sequence point warning patch

I decided to update Michael Meeks's patch to warn for some sequence point rule violations to current GCC. Here is the updated version

(with a tree-checking problem and some other bugs fixed ...

**The original patch seems to have waited two years unreviewed.** I hope someone reviews this version a bit quicker than that (on the basis of whether this patch is suitable for inclusion and useful as it is, though it could certainly be improved)? If false positives are found to be a problem, the warning can always be moved out of **-Wall**.

Bootstrapped with no regressions on i686-pc-linux-gnu. **OK to commit?**

- Committed ... (somewhat interested)



# A (typical?) example (4)

- A few months ago (**2003?**)
  - Noticed (with some amazement) my warning spewing out for some other people's code
- Delay until stable release
- Delay until distribution
  - users not using / testing / appreciating for years.



# Accelerating the release schedule

- Other projects:
  - GNOME – 6 month, **time** based
    - staggered freezes UI, string, code, release
    - missed the deadline ? next only 6 months
    - re-organising development resources (?)
  - Linux Kernel – crazy, was: **umpteenth months**
    - now monthly releases: permanent instability?
- OO.o – is too slow – make it faster ?
  - 6 months a long time in the industry ?



# Community ? / problems

*The things that are wrong under the sun ...*

- ooo-build
  - patch holding ground for up-streaming
  - collaborative effort between Linux distros:  
Ximian, Debian, Red Hat, SuSE, Ark, PLD, [ Win32 ]
  - Easy to commit to / get involved with
    - Ask for JCA in the post
    - Hack here ...
  - ~300 patches, sub-setted several ways.
- ~every Linux distribution
- Our bug is your feature ?
  - unreasonably ugly artwork
  - no native widget integration

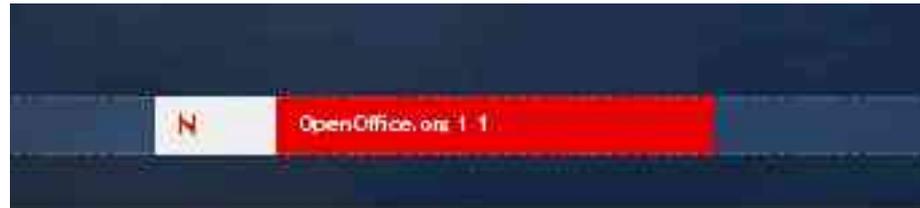


# Credits: Spot the external contributor:



# Credits: See where you can get a mention:

Look Mum; that's me there:



OpenOffice.org 1.1.3  
Copyright 2004 Sun Microsystems Inc.  
This product has been created by Novell, Inc.  
based on OpenOffice.org using the LGPL.  
OpenOffice.org acknowledges all community  
members, especially those mentioned at  
<http://www.openoffice.org/welcome/credits.html>.

Go on: click on that link:



doesn't work huh ? try  
selecting it to  
copy/paste instead ? ...



## Credits: Peer credits:

- How will they recognize your great work:

```
* Copyright: 2000 by Sun Microsystems, Inc.  
*  
* All Rights Reserved.  
*  
* Contributor(s): _____
```

- Conventionally:

```
2004-08-25 Luiz Augusto Von Dentz <luiz.dentz@freedows.com>
```

```
ChangeLog * patches/000_1_1_3/apply, patches/000_1_1_2/apply,  
* patches/000_1_1/vba-foreach.diff: add feature
```

```
+ features
```

```
+ VBA (Luiz)
```

```
NEWS file + foreach functionality
```

About box mention, Authors: tag in source,  
maintainership etc. - *Marketing help ?*



# Interesting things ...

- Novell – 6000 users
  - 80% using OO.o as their main office suite
  - Almost none file bugs
  - [ we know the bugs are there but ...]
  - Added a 'file a bug' button on the toolbar
  - Serious apathy / fatalism here
- ooo-build (*yet to go upstream / get finished*)
  - VBA interoperability [ not migration ]
  - Lotus 123 import bits
  - Lotus Word Pro – in progress
- More hands coming from Novell Bangalore



# Conclusions / Thanks

*What I spent the last minutes saying – nudge your neighbour it's nearly over*

- Still a long way to go with the community
- ooo-build / hackers moving up-stream
  - some compromises / duplication necessary
- Credit people
- Faster releases extremely helpful
- Marketing project
  - creditable opportunity to get hackers ?
- **Sign the JCA today ...**

*Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll, that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock for ever! I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And though this body has been destroyed yet in my flesh I will see God, I myself will see him, with my own eyes - I and not another. How my heart yearns within me. - Job 19: 23-27*

