Contributor Growth Strategies for OSS Projects

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Dr. Dawn M. Foster
Director of OSS Community Strategy
fosterd@vmware.com  fastwonderblog.com

Open Source at VMware  @vmwopensource
blogs.vmware.com/opensource

@geekygirldawn
Agenda

- Factors that Impact Contributor Growth
- Contributor Growth Strategies
- Contributor Ladders and Leadership
- Metrics for Measuring Project Sustainability
- Resources and Final Thoughts
whoami

• Geek, traveler, reader
• 20+ yr tech career focused on community & open source (Intel, Puppet, Scale Factory, …)
• OpenUK Board, CHA OSS Board and Maintainer
• CNCF TAG Contrib Strategy co-chair
• PhD from the University of Greenwich focused on Linux kernel collaboration

Photos by Mom, Josh Bancroft, Don Park
Factors that Impact Contributor Growth
The Problem is Hard

OSS projects are made by squishy, unpredictable humans
Vicious Cycle

No time to onboard new contributors leads to fewer contributors and more burnout.
Developing and Executing on Contributor Growth Strategies
Motivation

Be specific about where you need help with “Good First Issues” or “Help Wanted” labels

https://contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/community/contributor-growth-framework/motivation
Governance is about People

Sets expectations for how people collaborate & make decisions

https://contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/github/templates/required/governance-intro

Kubernetes CNCF CC BY 4.0
Be Explicit

Explicit, documented governance makes it easier for people to contribute
Onboarding Docs

Good docs for onboarding new contributors is step #1 toward scaling maintainers.
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Building a welcoming and inclusive community

Move contributors up the ladder and into leadership roles

https://github.com/cncf/project-template/blob/main/CONTRIBUTOR_LADDER.md
Leadership

Contributors can climb the ladder into leadership to reduce maintainer burden

Image by the CNCF CC BY-NC 2.0

https://contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/governance/leadership-selection
Mentoring

Help contributors become better
Be Strategic

Think about where you can best spend your time to grow your contributor base.

Photo by Elena Popova on Unsplash
Measuring Project Sustainability
Responsiveness

Contributors submitting PRs with no one to resolve / close them - may need to move more people into leadership
Types of Contributors

Few casual/regular contributors -> improve onboarding docs
How big of an issue is it and who can you promote?
Resources

**CNCF Contributor Strategy TAG Docs & Templates**
- contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/
- contribute.cncf.io/maintainers/community/contributor-growth-framework/
- github.com/cncf/project-template

**The Open Source Way Guidebook**
- github.com/theopensourceway/guidebook/

**CHAOSS Metrics**
- https://chaoss.community/
Join TAG Contributor Strategy

Join our Slack Channel

#tag-contributor-strategy (CNCF Slack)

Sign up for our mailing list

lists.cncf.io/g/cncf-tag-contributor-strategy

Drop in to our meetings

Go to cncf.io/calendar/ and search for contributor strategy!
Final Thoughts

Growing your contributor base is hard and takes time, but time spent now is worth it later.
Thank You!

Dr. Dawn M. Foster
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