

# Integrating new people in package teams

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# Get people maintaining my packages for me

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# What is this BoF about?

- Packaging teams in Debian with a big amount of inter related packages (KDE, X, PHP, TeX, etc) are always needing more people joining to help.
- Everybody can help in some way and dealing with new comers is not always easy.
- I would like to discuss how we can integrate new volunteers in the best way possible.

You probably know <http://wiki.debian.org/Teams> where a lot of these teams are listed.

# Why this BoF?

- I have been working for several years in the Qt/KDE team and we have been always short of people.
- A lot of people seems enthusiastic about joining and helping, but not all of them join. We have been trying very hard for years to get more people to join the team.
- Working in a team it is itself something hard already. Actually some of these ideas might help to improve how the team works.
- How do we encourage power users to join the development team? (maybe out of the scope of this BoF).

# New Contributors: how to detect them?

- They show up in IRC from time to time and they say "Hey, I want to help. What I should so?"
- Sometimes they sent an email (to the development list or privately).
- Other times, they think about joining but they never do because they think they can not help in any way.

What can we do?

# First brilliant idea: Write some documentation

- Some processes evolve too fast or never get settled to be documented.
- Documentation never gets finished. (And writing docs is boring!)
- Once written, it seems impossible to maintain it up-to-date.
- Nobody reads 10 pages of documentation anyway :)

Some minimal documentation is good, but make clear not everything is written down and it might not be up-to-date.

## Second idea: Organize bug day, or welcome day

- New people interested join IRC and you explain to them how to help with bug triaging or other relatively easy tasks.
- Most of the people help one day and after all the training, disappear.
- There is not much you can get accomplished in one day so people get frustrated, although the "global effort" result for the day can be sometimes good.

## Third idea: IRC guidance/support

- It has been the most effective mode so far.
- Big problems:
  - Big timezone differences.
  - Language barriers since IRC is in real time (via email you have more time to think).
- Some people are very shy to talk via IRC and others don't 'get' IRC.
- People can be around but too busy with real life.
- Sometimes, it works pretty well, because people want to help in a specific task and they are proactive testing stuff and asking questions.

# Other ideas

- Trick newcomers with easy packages hoping they will help maintaining later the hard ones.
- Just blog or send an email asking for help.
  - It is not uncommon people contact with you with mails like: "how I help?" "I want to help." (back to the initial point)
  - A good idea is blogging with specific tasks.
    - However, this has not worked well for me.
    - Most of the people seems to want be told exactly what they should do. (No very proactive.)
- List tasks depending on people's skills or try to assign tasks depending on people's skills (very difficult).

# More common frustrations in the current team

- It is hard pairing tasks to newcomers according to their skill levels.
- Some people is only interested in getting something specific fixed and they do not care about the global picture.
- Little easy tasks are assigned to newcomers, you wait some time to get them done until they become a blocker.
- Everybody wants to help with packaging, there are more things besides packaging!
- ...

# More common frustrations in newcomers

- It can take a lot of time until you see the result of your job.
- No all the tasks are rewarding, but they need to be done as part of the job.
- It takes time to get started and you feel insecure.
- You need time until you realize you will never know absolutely everything about Debian.
- ...

# Questions

- What are your experiences working with new people inside a team?
- If you started contributing in Debian working inside a team:
  - How were your first steps?
  - What did help you?
  - What did not help you?
- What have scared you away of starting to work in a team?
- What does your team do to attract new people?
- Do you have any way of pairing people with tasks they would be good at?