



What Success Looks Like for Open Source Communities

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Meaning & Importance of Success

- Success pervades language & culture
- Who benefits from a project's success?
- Does current success imply future prosperity?
- How is success measured? Do we all measure success by the same metrics?

Generalizing Success as a Concept

- Success for whom?
 - Community: users, maintainers, stakeholders
 - People first
 - Stakeholders & companies
- Follow open source values
- Ongoing evaluation, not a single event
- Realistic determination of potential
- Always look for win-win scenarios
- **Learn from the wisdom of others**

Stormy Peters' Findings

- People over Projects
- Quality over Quantity
- Engagement over Excitement
- Encouragement over Enthusiasm
- Community Goals should be S.M.A.R.T.
Specific, Measurable, Attainable,
Realistic, Time-bound (1981/Doran)

Dan Kohn's Findings

- Structure and funding are key to growth
- “Janitor functions” are important
 - triaging bugs
 - answering questions from new users and new developers
 - dealing with trademark and license issues
 - being available to grease personal friction
- Leverage existing tools like github/gitlab

Google's Findings

Personality, skills, and traditional intelligence are less relevant than these factors:

1. **Psychological safety:** Everyone feels safe in taking risks around their team members, and that they won't be embarrassed or punished for doing so.
2. **Dependability:** Everyone completes quality work on time.
3. **Structure and clarity:** Everyone knows their specific expectations are. These expectations must be challenging yet attainable.
4. **Meaning:** Everyone has a sense of purpose in their work (i.e., financial security, supporting family, helping the team succeed, etc.).
5. **Impact:** Everyone sees that the result of their work actually contributes to the organization's overall goals.

LF & TODO Group Recommendations

- Define success & set goals according to your reasons for investing in open source
- Measure success toward goals with metrics

Common organizational goals & metrics:

- Developers' participation & level of influence
- Organization reputation in open source communities
- Ability to recruit and retain talented developers
- Health of the organization's own projects
- Manage open source license compliance

Open Source Values & Principles

- **Openness & Inclusion**
open licenses, lower barriers to entry
- **Transparency**
open sharing of project-related information
- **Meritocracy**
leadership elevated by technical as well as non-technical merit
- **Freedom/Liberty**
license includes freedoms & responsibilities
- **Diversity**
We are smarter than Me
- **Neutrality**
assumption of common ground
- **Upstream First**
the process of negotiating changes upstream helps both contributor and upstream project
- **Release Early & Often**
get bugs in front of many eyes, Linus' Law
- **Collaborate**
everywhere it makes sense to do so
- **Separate technical from business**
all decision-making processes
- **Community**
open communication, social best practices
- **People First**
respond to the needs of the community



Antoine understood open source

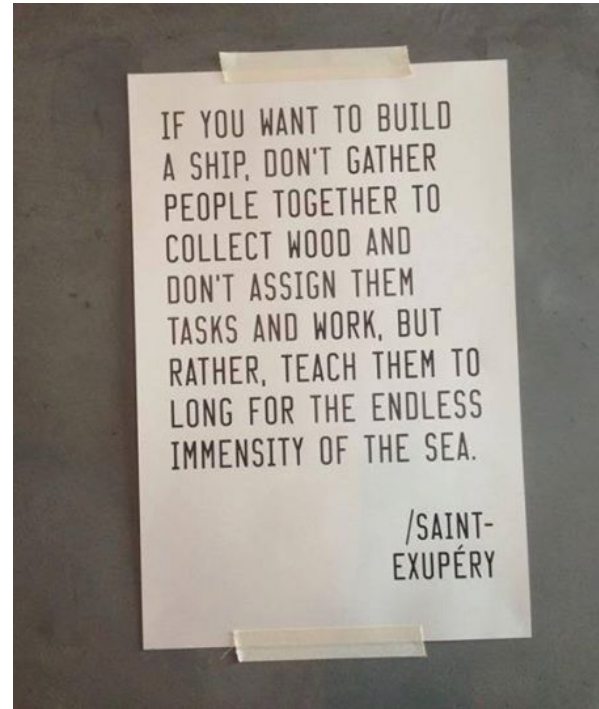
IF YOU WANT TO BUILD
A SHIP, DON'T GATHER
PEOPLE TOGETHER TO
COLLECT WOOD AND
DON'T ASSIGN THEM
TASKS AND WORK, BUT
RATHER, TEACH THEM TO
LONG FOR THE ENDLESS
IMMENSITY OF THE SEA.

/SAINT-
EXUPÉRY

Antoine understood open source

One will weave the canvas; another will fell a tree by the light of his ax. Yet another will forge nails, and there will be others who observe the stars to learn how to navigate. And yet all will be as one. Building a boat isn't about weaving canvas, forging nails, or reading the sky. It's about giving a shared taste for the sea, by the light of which you will see nothing contradictory but rather a community of love.

— *Citadelle* (1948), A. de St. Exupéry



Project Success Categories

Software quality - technical success

Project participation - project success

Community health - community success

Success Categories: Software Quality

- Bug submissions, pull requests
- Testing matrix, distributed testing
- Agile metrics (or pick your own)
 - Cycle time, bug response time
 - Burndown
 - Velocity
- Dogfood quantity & quality

Success Categories: Participation

- Transparency
- Corporate involvement
- Financial participation
- Feedback mechanisms
- License compliance (project and users)

Success Categories: Community Health

- Communications quality & frequency
- Responsiveness
- Geniality
- Diversity
- Inclusion
- Meets needs

Taking Measurements

- passive: listening (to press etc)
- active: metrics
- proactive: anecdotes & interviews

Success == cat pictures



References

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