The True Cost of Open Source

Patrick Steele-Idem
@psteeleidem
Based on my experience at eBay

Maintaining marko and other projects

Now leading our open source initiative
Why open source?

- Build a better project
- Attract outside contributors
- Retain talent
- Attract talent

...you probably know these things
Open source is easy

Successful open source is hard
Open sourcing a project introduces a lot of extra work

• Legal and security reviews
• Public engagement
• Community development and support
• External bug reports and pull requests
• Marketing and branding
Open source is risky

• Security concerns
• Reflects poorly on the company if done incorrectly
• Potentially bad interactions with outside community
• Employees may leave if they can take their code with them
Is it worth it?

ABSOLUTELY!
Before you open source, you really need to know what you are getting into

(both employer and employees)
Costs over time

We want to get down here as fast as possible!
Open Source is Hard on Developers

- Personal attachment
- Balancing work and open source
- External criticism is taken personally
- Distractions
Open source is not a one-person job!
Promote collaboration

• Every maintainer should have a partner
• Find the right tools
  • Gitter, Slack, Skype, Screenhero, Github, etc.
• Internal Open Source (AKA “Inner Source”)
• Mentoring
Preparing a project for open source is costly

Legal reviews, polishing the code, adding docs, removing internal references, etc.
Open source from the beginning!

Build software with the mindset of “public scrutiny”
OUR SUPPORT COSTS
ARE TOO DAMN HIGH
Good documentation and extensive tests are critical.

Open source forces this, but you should be doing it anyway.
Flexibility is not always needed

Be prepared to say “no”
Breaking changes hurt

Dividing your community increases your support costs
Open source projects require extra planning

• Gather opinions
• Keep the public API as simple as possible
• Have clear guidelines
Community!! Community!! Community!!
If you open source a project and no one knows about it, is it really open source?
Tips for building a community

- Be helpful, kind, and make people feel welcome
- Leave some problems for others
- Ask inviting questions
- No ego
- Get to know other developers
- Don’t be afraid to have voice chats with outsiders (you’ll learn a lot!)
- Be transparent
- Talk about it!
- Celebrate the accomplishments of others

“That is a problem. Do you have any ideas on how we can improve it?”
Make source code approachable

Flat directory tree FTW!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>File Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>internal</td>
<td>process: improve performance of nextTick</td>
<td>7 days ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.eslintrc</td>
<td>tools: avoid let in for loops</td>
<td>6 days ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_debug_agent.js</td>
<td>debugger: use arrow function for lexical <code>this</code></td>
<td>2 months ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_debugger.js</td>
<td>debugger: remove obsolete setTimeout</td>
<td>5 months ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_http_agent.js</td>
<td>http: name anonymous functions</td>
<td>2 days ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_http_client.js</td>
<td>http: name anonymous functions in _http_client</td>
<td>2 days ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_http_common.js</td>
<td>http: fix connection upgrade checks</td>
<td>2 months ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_http_incoming.js</td>
<td>http: name anonymous functions in _http_incoming</td>
<td>2 days ago</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Company should help promote projects

- Publish press releases
- Promote on social media
- Publish articles on company tech blog
- Host meetups
Hire open source contributors
TWO NEW STARS!

SINCE I LAST CHECKED TWO MIN AGO

WARNING

You’ll be obsessed with your successful open source project

Notifications, page refreshes, scouring the internet, responding, etc.
Thanks for listening!

Any questions?

Patrick Steele-Idem
@psteeleidem