The True Cost of Open Source

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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

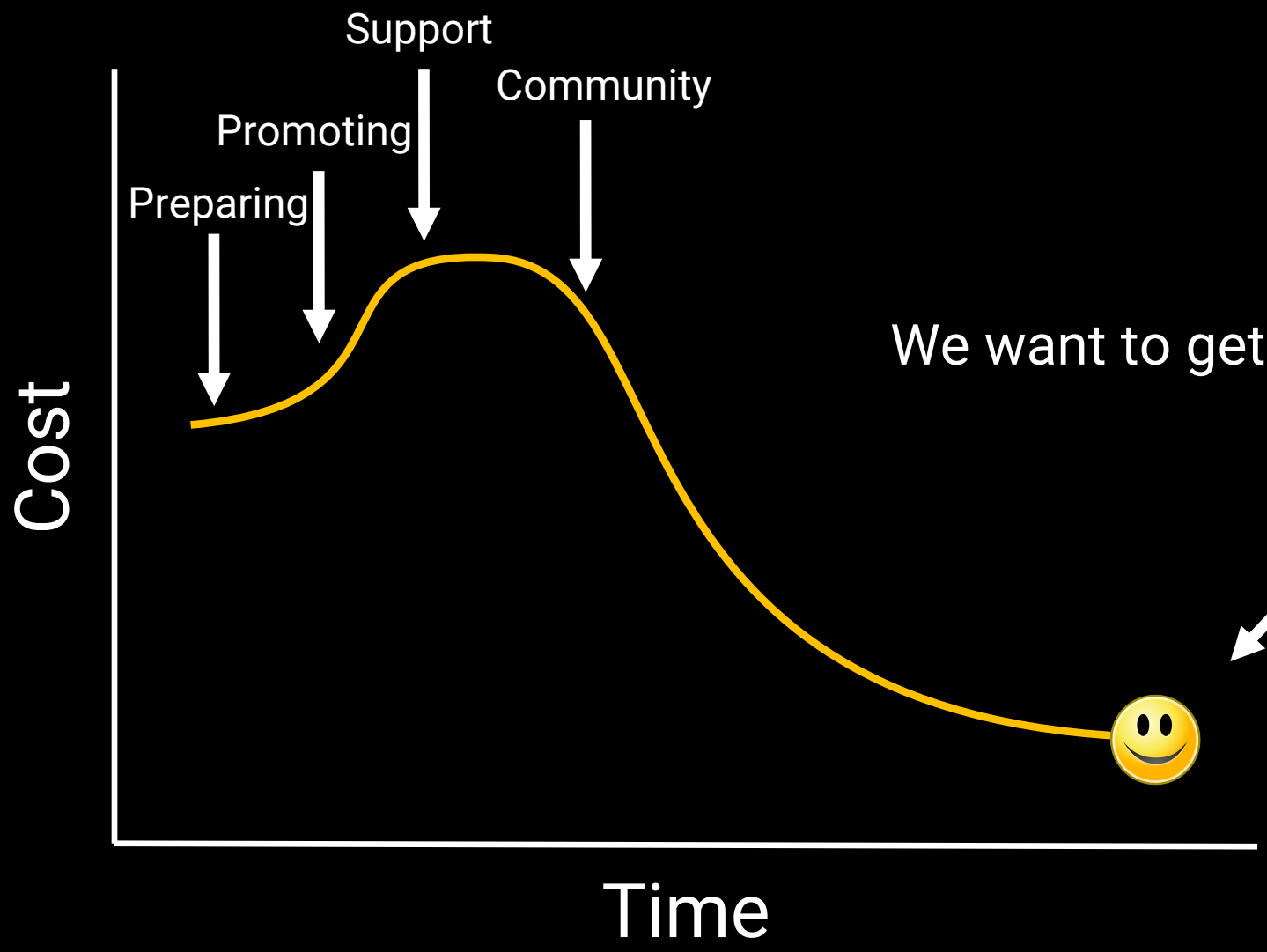
Is it worth it?

ABSOLUTELY!

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

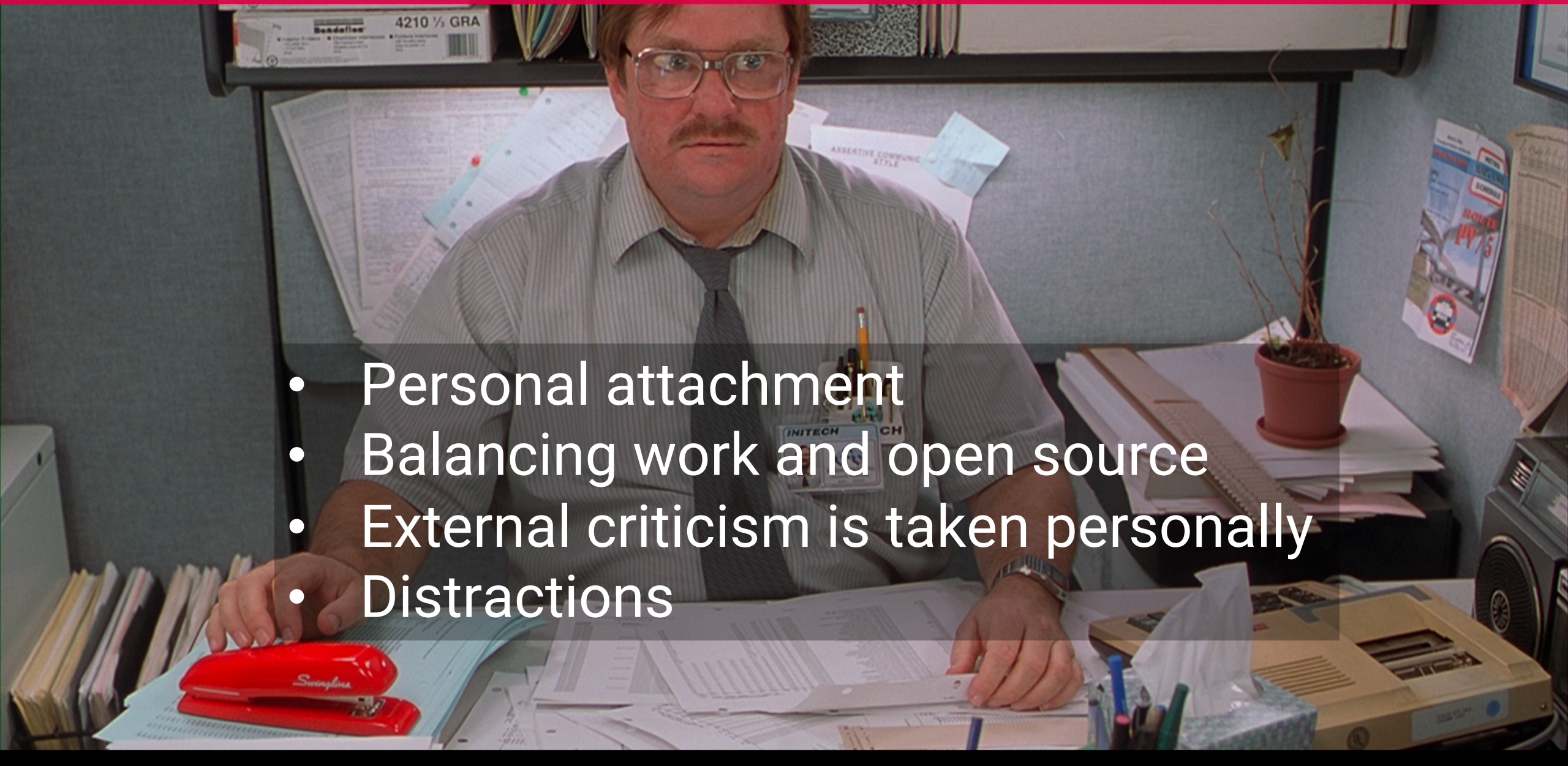
(both employer and employees)

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

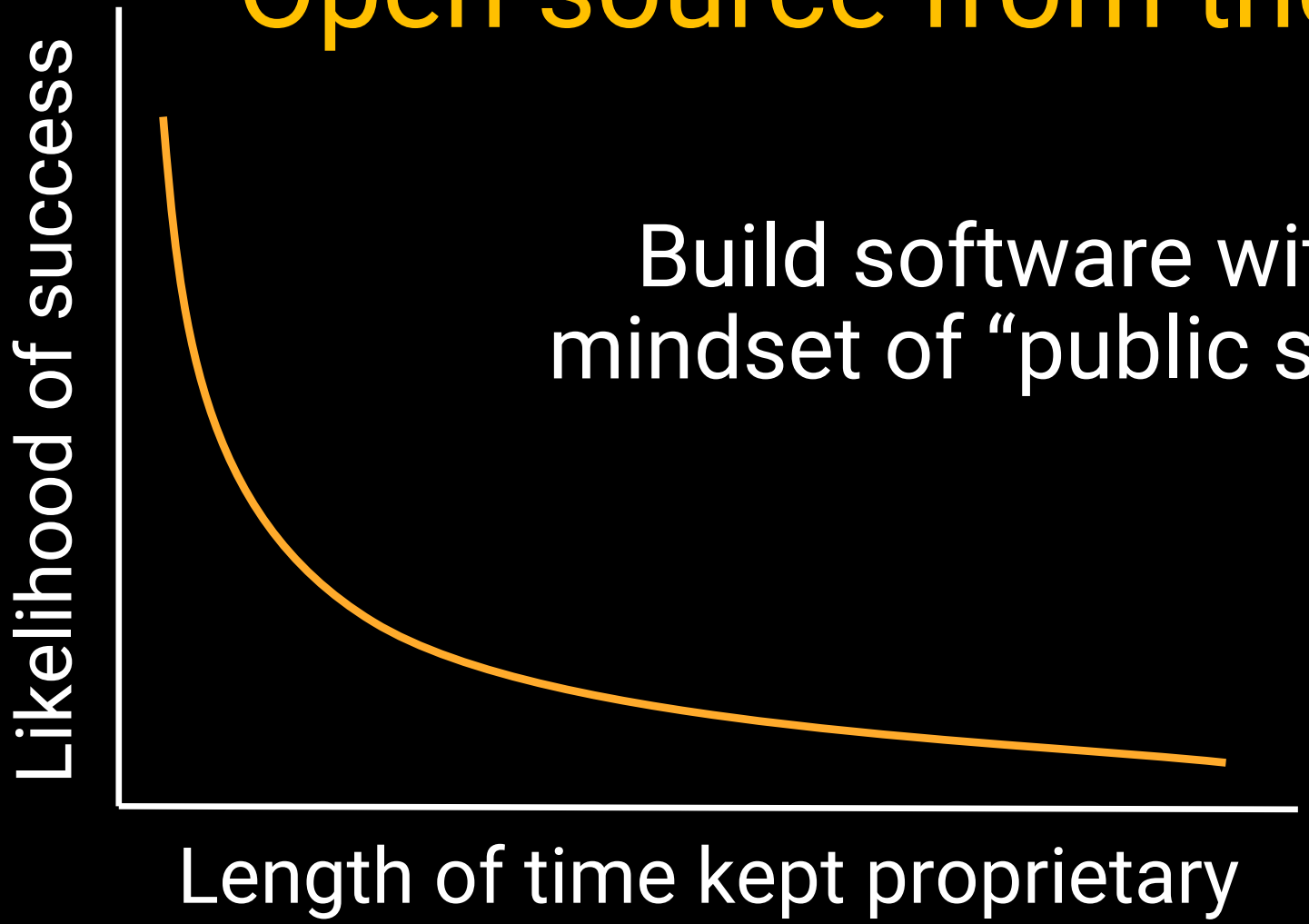
- Every maintainer should have a partner
- Find the right tools
  - Gitter, Slack, Skype, Screenhero, Github, etc.
- Internal Open Source (AKA “Inner Source”)
- Mentoring

WARNING

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”

WARNING

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!!
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If you open source a project and no one knows about it, is it really open source?

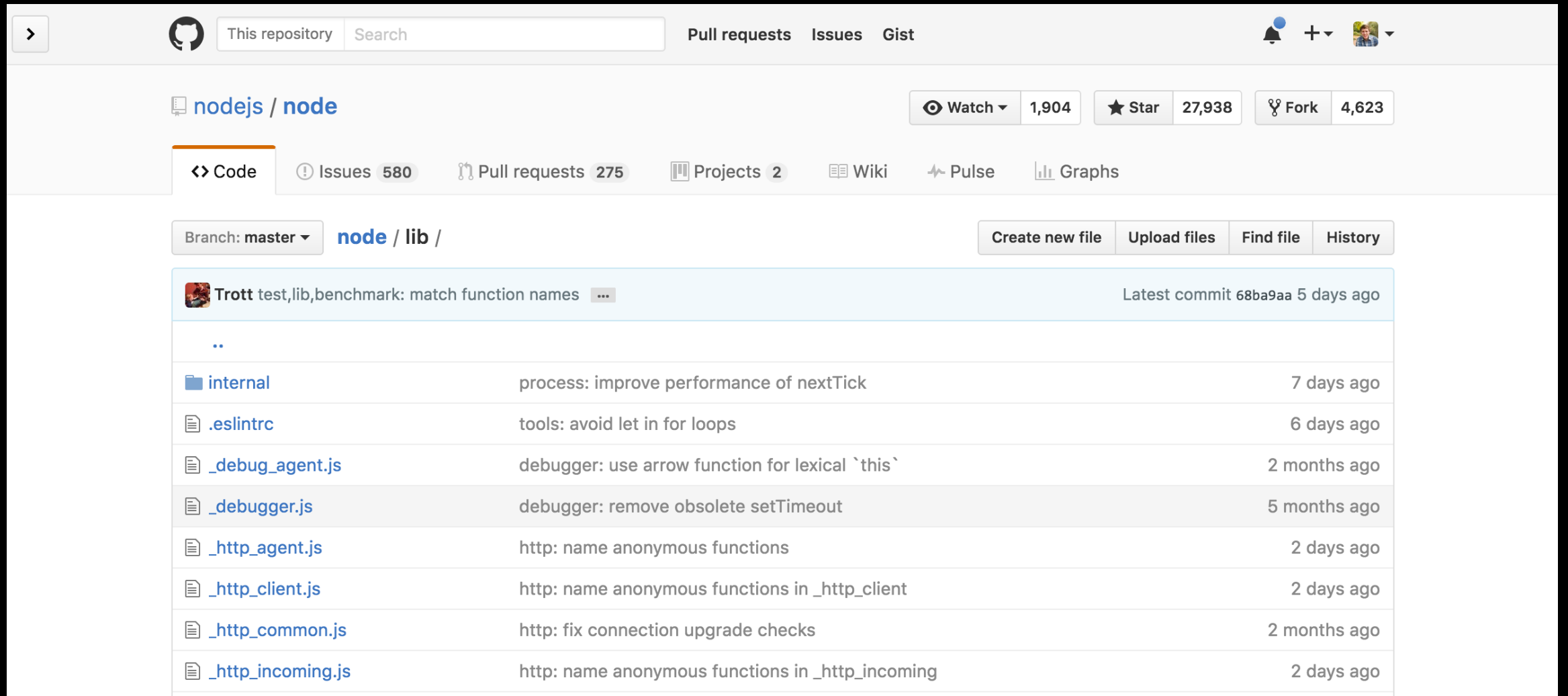
Tips for building a community

- 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

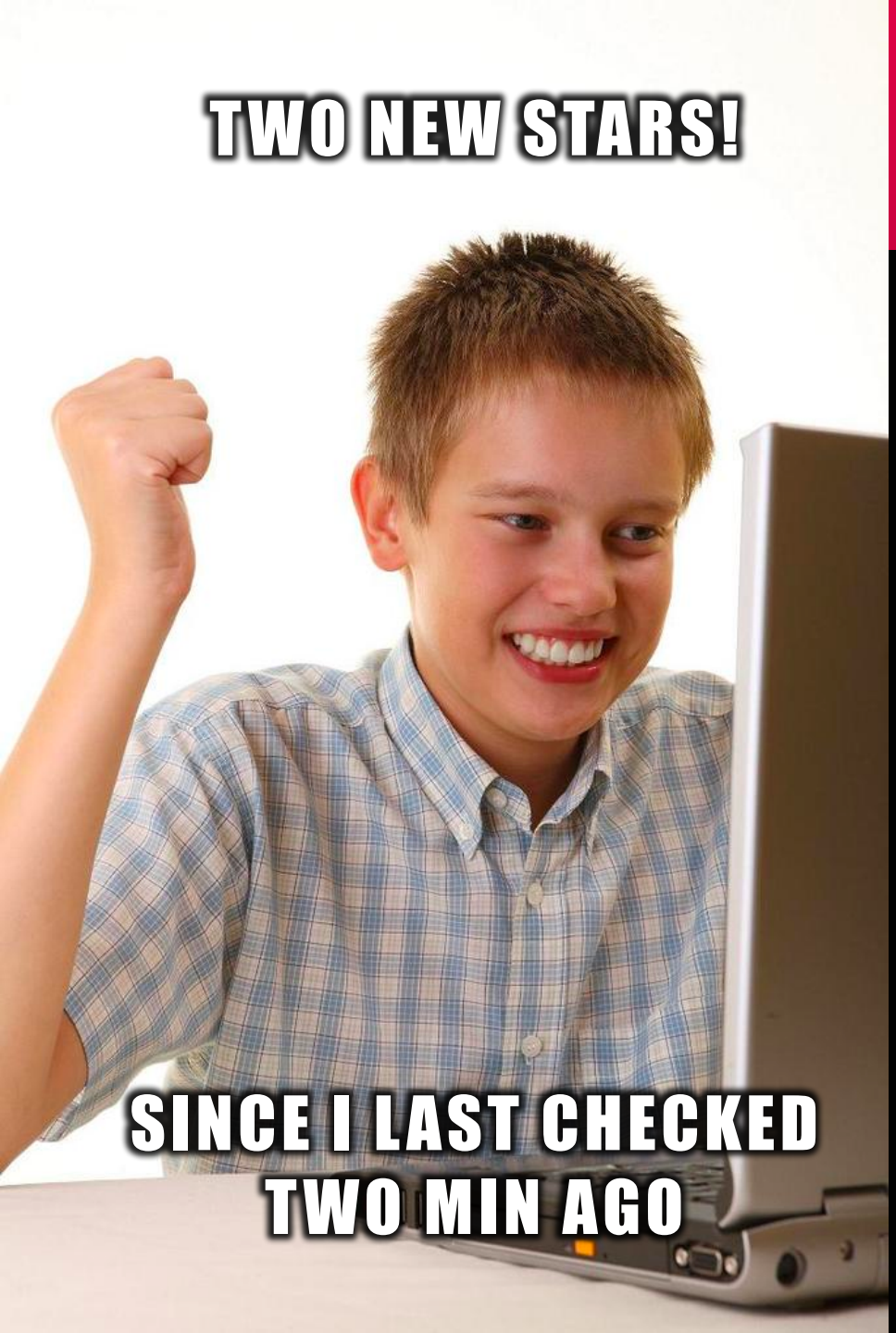
Flat directory tree FTW!



Company should help promote projects

- Publish press releases
- Promote on social media
- Publish articles on company tech blog
- Host meetups

Hire open source contributors



WARNING

You'll be obsessed with your successful open source project

Notifications, page refreshes, scouring the internet, responding, etc.

Thanks for listening!

Any questions?

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