Communications in FOSS

Week 10

A project must:

1. Recruit Users and Developers

2. Encourage new developers to become deeply involved

3. Allow free flow discussion but still come up with necessary decisions

4. Have a body of knowledge that is continued to be updated for newcomers and experts alike

5. Produce working software

These all mentioned in class on board

With that being said...

✤ A great programmer but lousy communicator will only be able to get one thing done at a time AND have trouble convincing others to pay attention.

✤ Someone who may be a bit lousy in programming but an affective communicator can coordinate AND persuade many people to do many things.

THIS CAN MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE!

You are what you write!

- Write complete sentences and make sure your grammar, paragraph breaks, coherent narrative, and punctuation is correct.
  - Emails
  - Bug Reports
  - Documentation
  - Anything that will have permanent life
- Readability is important if you want to engage readers and keep them
- Careful grammar gets rid of ambiguity (especially technical writing)

Adhere to FOSS Writing Standards

✤ Send plain text emails only

  ✤ Offset clearly - if overall structure of your post or email is still clear 5 meters away you are doing it right.

  ✤ Stay under 80 columns wide for preformatted blocks such as quotes or error messages (de facto standard)

✤ Quoting someone else's email, inset responses where they're most appropriate. Example: when teacher says answers are inline.

  ✤ Trim of parts you didn't use

  ✤ If you are responded to all inquires quickly, okay to top-post. As long as the person can get the general idea of what you are answering

✤ Construct the subject lines of new emails carefully.

    ✤ Most important line bc it lets users know if they should read more or not.

    ✤ Many emails become a thread on the topic which your subject line discusses

    ✤ If the discussion moves away from first subject line but still is relevant , edit subject line to create another thread of emails .

    ✤ You may also just create a whole new post or email with a new subject line especially is the tangent doesn't correlate to primary topic.

✤ When writing don't engage in hyperboles be clear and concise

✤ Edit twice for any message longer than medium sized. Reread top to bottom before sending.

✤ Your tone may be terse, but a certain level of this is expected.

You may be brilliant and charismatic in person, but if you seem like you ramble and unstructured via communications that aren't IRL, people will assume that's the real you

Hyperbole Example

"Doing it that way would make the code totally unreadable. It'd be a maintenance
nightmare, compared to J. Random's proposal..."

The same sentiment actually becomes stronger when phrased less sharply:

"That works, but it's less than ideal in terms of readability and maintainability, I think.
J. Random's proposal avoids those problems because it..."

In the end the perpetuator will lose credibility if they keep using hyperboles. Error on the side of moderation

Tone Example

The Response:

Can you possibly elaborate a bit more on exactly what problems you ran into, etc? Also: What version of Slash are you using? I couldn't tell from your original message.Exactly how did you build the apache/mod_perl source? Did you try the Apache 2.0 patch that was posted about on slashcode.com?

Shane

✤ No Greeting

✤ Just a serious of Questions

✤ No signoff besides name

However, This person did ask followup questions, This shows they want to help solve the problem.

Cut the Terseness by

* ✤ Add a "good luck" at the end if it was an inquiry for assistance

* ✤ You can cut the terseness with maybe a smiley face near an appropriate area.

* ✤ If someone wrote in a bug and let you know, acknowledge their feelings after you give an analytical response to the bug they said they found or wrote in accidentally.

Remember, unhappy people tackle fewer bugs and write worse software

Communication and Growth

✤ Software grows, people looking for info increases dramatically.

✤ If the number of posts to the list begin to exceed individual reader can process in a day, the list becomes a burden to its members. Same logic applies to IRC channels, discussion forums etc.

Adjust Communication for Growth

1. Recognizing when particular parts of a forum are not suffering unbounded growth, even if the forum as a whole is, and separating those parts off into new, more specialized forums (don't let the good drag down by the bad)

2. Making sure there are many automated sources of information available, and that they are kept organized, up-to-date, and easy to find. As well remind people to use X.