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Panel: the FOSS 2010 Community Report

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Abstract. This is a proposal for a panel presentation to be held during the OSS2010 conference in South Bend, IN. The purpose of this panel will be to disseminate the findings from the related FOSS2010 workshop, a CCC-sponsored exploratory workshop held in Irvine, California in February. At the OSS conference we wish to give first a report of what was learned at the FOSS workshop, and then to glean important feedback from community members who were unable to be at the FOSS workshop.

1 Introduction

This is a proposal for a panel presentation to be held during the OSS2010 conference in South Bend, IN. The purpose of this panel will be to disseminate the findings from the related FOSS2010 workshop, a CCC-sponsored exploratory workshop held in Irvine, California in February. At the OSS conference we wish to give first a report of what was learned at the FOSS workshop, and then to glean important feedback from community members who were unable to be at the FOSS workshop.

We propose that the four conveners of the FOSS workshop represent the panel at the OSS conference (names listed above). There might be additional participants if needed, but it is not expected at this time.

2 Purpose of Panel

The purpose of the FOSS workshop is to generate ideas and perspectives from within the free, libre, and open source research community about the future of research in the field. Some of the questions we have posed to our workshop attendees include:

- How does FOSS as a diverse socio-technical movement accomplish global software development, without a traditional central authority or source of funding/resources?
- How do distributed groups make decisions? What sort of conflicts are common, and how are conflicts settled?
- What are the differences and similarities between FOSS projects and proprietary (non-FOSS) projects? Is there a taxonomy of characteristics of these two types of projects? Are there hybrid projects, and how are these described?
- How do we measure "success" of a FOSS project? What are the various attributes of a project that might help us measure success? Do we have all the data we need, or are there additional measures that we need to collect?
- What are the different ways that software developers (makers of the technology) are given incentives ("paid") within the various types of FOSS projects? How does this incentive structure compare to proprietary projects? What do the developers themselves report are the best and worst incentives?
- How can the benefits of FOSS be translated into a language technology decision-makers can understand? Are there "best practices" for FOSS technology adoption or for rollovers from proprietary to FOSS models within businesses or governments?
- What are the various techniques and technologies that help self-organized groups to work effectively? How can these self-organizing techniques and technologies be applied to other domains?
- What are the different roles in a FOSS project (e.g., core developer, active user)? What levels of contribution is needed from members in various roles are needed to sustain a project (e.g., how important are active users)?
- How long can such a movement be sustained?
- Are there conditions or events that constitute an inflection point that will mark the decline of FOSS as a socio-technical movement?

These are big questions with big answers. At OSS2010 we expect to be able to present for participants an overview of how the FOSS community approached these questions related to the future of FOSS research. We will of course welcome debate, comment, and reflection on the FOSS report during this OSS panel.

3 Requests

For our OSS panel, we will request a regular conference room, a timeslot during the conference program, a table or dais at the front of the room with space for four or five seats, and the same audio-visual support as for a regular conference room.