



2018-06-13

FOSS BACKSTAGE 2018 / BERLIN

Strategies for Aging Projects

INNOQ

Photo by Ash Edmonds on Unsplash

Agenda

- Context
- Problems
- Potential Strategies

This is a Workshop (?)

Stefan's Projects

- Apache Ant (since 2000)
- Apache Gump (since 2002)
- XMLUnit (since 2009)
- Apache Commons Compress (since 2009)
- Apache log4net (since 2011)

"Aging Project"

- Long history
- Many users
- Some developers still there
- Slow development
- Releases as needed

Stefan's Projects

- Apache Ant (since 2000)
- Apache Gump (since 2002)
- XMLUnit (since 2009)
- Apache Commons Compress (since 2009)
- Apache log4net (since 2011)

Problems

Problems that come with Age

- Running out of "itches"
- No fresh ideas
- Fun is lost

Problems Recruiting

- No easy tasks left
- "We've already discussed this"
- "remember backwards compatibility"

Workshop Additions

- (Perceived) barrier to entry
 - Having to subscribe to mailing list
 - Using "oldish" infrastructure
- Project's vision not clear for outsiders



Potential Strategies

"Beginner Tasks"

- Label Issues with "beginner task" or similar
- Don't fix it (immediately) yourself
- Be prepared to **spend time helping**
- Celebrate First Contributions
- Might slow down development

Lower Barrier To Entry

Embrace Fashion

- Forces you to change habits
- There will be misunderstandings
- Cultural adjustments
- Be prepared to spend time mentoring

Call To Arms

- Tried with log4net
- "What do you want me to do?"
- Better be prepared

Codify Decisions

- Not really tried
- Architectural Decision Records -
<https://adr.github.io/>
- No need to search archives

Make Noise

- If you don't know how to do it: give the keys to somebody who does

Find your Reason To Be

**All Strategies benefit
"young projects" as well**

How about "fun is lost"?

Rewrite

- May work for some developers
- No community effort => no gain for the community

Let Go

Thanks!



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