How to attract new developers for your team
Report about MoM and SoB, seeking more ideas

Andreas Tille

Debian

1. Mentoring of the Month

2. Sponsoring of Blends

3. Sprints
On Wed, Jan 18, 2012, Luis Ibanez wrote:

Subject: Looking for a Debian packager for FIS-GT.M: Change the History of Healthcare!!

Dear Debian packagers:

We are looking for one of you to help us change the history of Healthcare.

We are working at OSEHRA (http://www.osehra.org/) on building an Open Source environment for VistA, the Electronic Health Records system of the US Department of Veterans Affairs.

VistA is the best proven EHR, and it has been used for the last 30 years at the VA. It currently runs about 170 VA hospitals and about 1,000 ambulatory facilities.

...
On Wed, Thu, 19 Jan 2012, Andreas Tille wrote:

Subject: Happy birthday Debian Med and announcement of MOM

...To ensure that this development of a strong team will continue I would like to propose a new effort I would like to call

"Mentoring Of the Month" (MOM)

In this program I would like to dedicate a part of my spare time to a newcomer (the "student") providing any packaging knowledge I have to enable him working more or less independently on packaging after passing this MOM period. I like to guide the student kindly into all secrets of Debian packaging at the example of a specific program which is in the focus of the Debian Med team. The student is free to pick the package however, ...
Debian Med has attracted one developer per year

According to a *questionnaire* in Wiki

- Debian Med has 23 DDs+DMs
  - 10 DDs *because* Debian Med exists;
  - 4 DDs before Debian Med started
- 7 out of the 10 above extended their activity to other fields in Debian
- 8 out of the 10 above are active in Debian Med
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MoM Goals

- The package in question is finished and uploaded.
- The student is able to do advanced packaging tasks and is introduced into the communication channels of Debian Med team.
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Communication

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- do not bother other readers too much and use [MoM] tag in subject
If the mentor is posting something on the mailing list containing [MoM] in the subject, the student tries hard to respond with a comment (if not better possible, something like: I have no idea but I will do some research like asking upstream or whatever - just leaving a hint that he feels responsible somehow).
The student tries to follow any of the commits of the mentor to the package which is in focus of the MoM plan, and favourably sends a comment like:

- Its OK for me
- What does this mean, please explain
- I would prefer ... instead of your change

- follow changes (subscribe commits) or do frequently:
  - SVN up | git pull; {SVN|git} log
- student should try to find a useful comment to confirm understanding
Rules (2/5): Confirm understanding

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student should try to find a useful comment to confirm understanding
The student confirms that he succeeded in building the package according to the state in VCS in case it builds, or that he is able to reproduce the error message of the build process.
Rules (4/5): Communication

- In case of problems the student will ask on Debian Med mailing list (\texttt{[MoM]}: Subject)
- show others:
  - we are working on a problem
  - sort things out via open discussion
  - how also others could learn things about packaging
- alternative: \#debian-med IRC channel.
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Alternative: #debian-med IRC channel.
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  - we are working on a problem
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- alternative: #debian-med IRC channel.
The student posts a status report about the packaging every day, reporting about done changes, issues raised, discussions with upstream etc.
Summary of MoM formalism

- MoM is *work*
  - hopefully it shows that this work is also *fun*
  - mentor trades his spare time for the work of the student
  - attempt to train "silent observers on the list"
  - focus not only on technical details but also on learning to know relevant communication channels
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Question to myself about MoM for women

After learning that GSoC has 0% woman applicants (out of 181) but Google Outreach Program for Woman had 100 applicants I’m wondering:
Should I explicitly dedicate every second month for women only?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Package</th>
<th>Uploaded?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>02.2012</td>
<td>Luis Ibanez</td>
<td>fis-gtm</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03.2012</td>
<td>Scott Christley</td>
<td>libswarm</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06.2012</td>
<td>Eric Maeker</td>
<td>libquazip</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.2012</td>
<td>Tomás Di Domenico</td>
<td>python-csb</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02.2013</td>
<td>Sukhbir Singh</td>
<td>hunspell-en-med</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.2013</td>
<td>Lennart C. Karssen</td>
<td>probabel</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01.2014</td>
<td>Jorge Sebastião Soares</td>
<td>snp-sites</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Some people put their names in the waiting queue but did not answered a ping.
MoM Conclusions

- Time spent into mentoring is worth the effort
- No student for each month so the workload is bearable
- Students have just read recent documents which I did ten years ago → I can learn new stuff from them
- Major advantage: training upstream to pool their knowledge about the code with ours about packaging is very efficient for the hard packages
- About 50% of students had strong connection to upstream and requests for upstream changes went very smoothly
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Sponsoring of Blends (SoB)

- Blends concept remains widely unknown amongst newcomers (but also amongst DDs)
- Newcomers might desperately seek for sponsors and simply do not know how to find one
- Kill two birds with one stone: Get the package sponsored after proving that you understood the Blends techniques
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1. You confirm to have understood the Blends principle (have read the Blends documentation, are member of some team on alioth, reading the relevant mailing list)

2. Your package is maintained in a VCS used by the Blends team

3. Your package is listed on the Blends tasks pages (which is either because the package is inside Debian or in any Blends VCS)

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SoB results

- SoB is heavily used by Debian GIS team, partly used by Debian Science
- I get mail when Wiki page is changed and take mostly immediate action
- I’m lurking on relevant mailing lists as well on debian-mentors to catch maintainers in need of a sponsor
- If you notice a candidate for SoB please redirect them to me
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Face to face meetings with users and upstream developers

Have a quick look at what happened since 2011 when we started doing yearly sprints by also inviting users and upstream developers.

Thanks for supporting sprints which we have proven to be successful
Top 10 Up uploaders of Debian Med team

Andreas T 1057
Charles P 486
Steffen M 314
Mathieu M 274
Olivier S 155
Steve M. R 121
Thorsten A 105
Aaron M. U 92
Laszlo K 89
Dominique B 44
Top 10 discussion on Debian Med user mailing list

Andreas Tille (Debian)

How to attract new developers for your team


23 / 32
Top 10 bug hunters of Debian Med packages

Andreas Tille (Debian)

How to attract new developers for your team

Top 10 committers to Debian Med VCS

0 500 1000 1500
Andreas T 6111
Charles P 3653
Mathieu M 1847
Steffen M 1031
Olivier S 995
David P 538
Steven M. R 496
Laszlo K 477
Thorsten A 299
Aaron M. U 294
Inviting environment

In several talks at DebConf and in discussions before I have heard the argument that it is hard to find friends. But it is not. The answer is to create inviting teams.
Waking up in the morning and realising that somebody else has solved your problem from yesterday
Links

- Debian Med policy
- Mentoring of the Month
- Sponsoring of Blends
- **Debian Med policy**
- **Mentoring of the Month**
- **Sponsoring of Blends**
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- Debian Med policy
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This talk is available at
http://people.debian.org/~tille/talks/

Andreas Tille <tille@debian.org>