The ASF and Open Source Communities

Jim Jagielski
Member and Chairman, The Apache Software Foundation
The ASF

ASF == The Apache Software Foundation

Before the ASF there was “The Apache Group”

The ASF was incorporated in 1999
The ASF

- Non-profit corporation founded in 1999
- 501(c)3 charity
- Volunteer organization
- Virtual world-wide organization
- Exists to provide the organizational, legal, and financial support for various OSS projects
The ASF - then

- Started with 21 members
- 2 projects
- All servers and services donated
The ASF - now

- We have >300 members...
- >70 TLPs
- ~25 Incubator podlings
- Tons of committers (literally)
- (Over 2300 people)
- Very large and growing infrastructure
The ASF’s Mission

- Provide open source software to the public free of charge
- Provide a foundation for open, collaborative software development projects by supplying hardware, communication, and business infrastructure
- Create an independent legal entity to which companies and individuals can donate resources and be assured that those resources will be used for the public benefit
The ASF’s Mission

- Provide a means for individual volunteers to be sheltered from legal suits directed at the Foundation’s projects
- Protect the ‘Apache’ brand, as applied to its software products, from being abused by other organizations
- Provide legal and technical infrastructure for open source software development and to perform appropriate oversight of such
The Apache Software Foundation provides support for the Apache community of open-source software projects. The Apache projects are characterized by a collaborative, consensus-based development process, an open and pragmatic software license, and a desire to create high-quality software that leads the way in its field. We consider ourselves not simply a group of projects sharing a server, but rather a community of developers and users.
How We Work, Take 2

Community over code

Our code should be exceptional
Structure of the ASF - dev

- Volunteer Driven Organization
- Software Projects are managed by Project Management Committees (PMCs)
- PMCs vote in new PMC members and committers
- At the end of the day: People / Individual focused
Structure of the ASF - legal

- Member-based corporation - individuals only
- Members nominate and elect new members
- Members elect a board - 9 seats
- Semi-annual meetings via IRC
- Each PMC has a Chair - eyes and ears of the board (oversight only)
Although the term is deprecated, “The Apache Way” relates to how the ASF (and its projects) work and operate.

Basically, the least common denominators on how PMCs operate.
Basic Memes

- Meritocracy
- Peer-based
- Consensus decision making
- Collaborative development
- Responsible oversight
Meritocracy

“Govern byMerit”

Merit is based on what you do

Merit never expires

Those with merit, get more responsibility
Peer-based

- Developers represent themselves - individuals
- Mutual trust and respect
- All votes hold the same weight
- Community over code
  - Healthy communities create healthy code
  - Poisonous communities don’t
Why Community > Code

Since we are all volunteers, people’s time and interests change.

A healthy community is “warm and inviting” and encourages a continued influx of developers.

Poisonous people/communities turn people off, and the project will die.

End result - better code, long-term code.
Consensus decision making

Key is the idea of voting

- +1 - yes
- +0 - no real comment
- -1 - veto

Sometimes you’ll also see stuff like -0, -0.5, etc...
Voting

- The main intent is to gauge developer acceptance
- Vetos must be justifiable and have sound technical merit
- If valid, Vetos cannot be overruled
- Vetos are very rare
Collaborative Development

- Code is developed by the community
- Voting ensures at least 3 active developers
- Development done online and on-list
  - If it didn’t happen on-list, it didn’t happen
Collaborative Development

- Mailing lists are the preferred method
  - Archived
  - Asynchronous
  - Available to anyone - public list
Collaborative Development

Other methods are OK, if not primary

- Wikis
- IRC
- F2F

Always bring back to the list
Success Stories - HTTPD

Apache HTTP Server ("Apache")

- Reference implementation of HTTP
- Most popular web server in existence
- Found in numerous commercial web servers
  - Oracle, IBM,...
- Influenced countless more
Apache Tomcat (Servlet Container)

- The default standard servlet container
- Each version maps to a specific spec.
- Bundled with numerous Java apps out there
- Likely a major influence on the diminishing relevance of JEE
Success Stories - Others

- Apache CouchDB and Cassandra
- Apache Hadoop and Lucene
- Apache Ant and Maven
- Apache Logging, Axis, Struts, ...