

# Open Source Community Antipatterns

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## What's a good community?

- Level playing field
- Diverse/Sustainable
  - Innovation happens elsewhere
  - Hit by a bus number
- That human sense of community



## Categories

- Governance
- Communication
- Culture/Environment
- Merit
- Decision Making
- Leadership
- Balancing Forces





## Governance

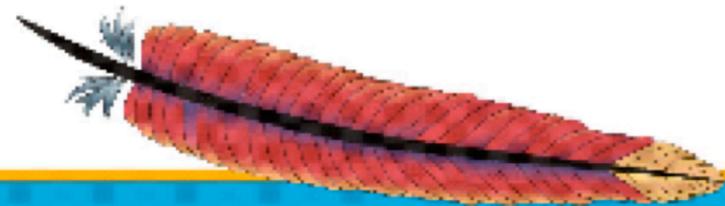
## Wrongly Sized Governance

- Too little is bad
- But too much is also bad



## Fail to document clearly

- how the governance operates



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# Communications



Leading the Wave  
of Open Source

## Keep things private

- This is the root of all evil when it comes to building communities



## Be restrictive about approved media

- It's 2007... do you know what a blog is?





## Culture

## Don't actively pass the culture on

- Fail to inculcate culture / way of doing things
  - leave it undocumented
  - Don't actively mentor newcomers
- Say “how” but not “why”
- The Starfish and the Spider:
  - The unstoppable power of leaderless organizations
  - Ori Brafman and Rod. A Beckstrom



## Rules not guidelines

- Insist on rules without principles
- Prefer rules and not principled guidelines



## Be privilege oriented

- The opposite is to be responsibility oriented
- The bad result is that people seek privileges as opposed to responsibility



## Build a talk-o-cracy not a do-ocracy

- Doing is more important than talking
- Talker-not-doer's are a DOS against the community



## Make criteria arbitrary or vague

- for success, advancement, inclusion
- capricious, secret or otherwise arbitrary



## Keep it professional

- That's a bunch of hooey
- Talk like a human not a droid or lawyer





## Environment

## Make an environment unfriendly to

- Under-represented groups
- Women
- Non-Caucasian people
- Non-English speakers



## Don't be respectful

- This should be an explicitly stated norm



## Geographical Colocation

- is an antipattern





## Merit

## Believe that merit

- is absolute and absolutely measurable
- can be defined along a single or small number of dimensions



## Don't recognize Merit

- or do it slowly



## Decision Making



## Use lots of procedures

- Don't explain how decisions get made
- Have different decision making styles/procedures for different contexts





## Leadership

## Ignore the need for leadership

- “I don’t think that word means what you think it means”



## Try to “manage”

- Managing != leading



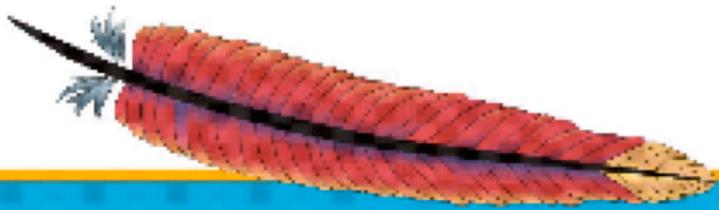


# Balance Forces

## Be Partisan

- Make sure that one or more parties obtain the majority of the benefit / benefit disproportionately





Other

Make community building  
someone's job

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## Fail to apply open source tools to the governance itself

- Accountability for governance/foundation tasks



# Centralize: Give people turf

- The Starfish and the Spider
- The trouble starts when there are resources to manage/allocate
- Property rights (too much ownership)





## Questions?