

Social Skills for Geeks

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Who am I and why am I here?

Goals

- How to ensure more and good quality contributions
- How to not scare contributors away
- Highlight typical situations and ways of handling them

Feel free to jump in!

Topic overview

- Handling contributions
- Coping with the negative
- Ways of working
- Allowing others to grow

Handling Contributions – constructive comments

- Comments should be useful
 - To the point
 - Provide enough information and reasoning behind the remarks
- Positive comments are also welcome ;-)

Handling Contributions – Accepting and rejecting

- Accept with encouragement
- Make rejection not about the person but about the code
- Always explain why
- Make concrete suggestions for improvements and next steps

Coping with the negative – Angry e-mails/posts

- Try to understand: Why is he/she angry?
- Consider who will read your reply
- Hostile vs. almost hostile
- Cool down before you reply
- Ask a 3rd person (community manager)

- Not being listened to

Ways of working – Response time

What do you think is acceptable?

Ways of working – E-mail, IRC, forums, wikis

- Assume your audience suffers from tl;dr
- Document the outcome of IRC discussions to avoid constant repetition of the same discussion
 - In an email to the right list
 - In a public wiki

Ways of working – How many should be involved?

- Splitting up into smaller groups
 - Don't cut off a sub-group in terms of processes, contributors, news and so on
 - Keep the amount of mailinglists/forums/wikis/IRC channels/... sane
- Avoid silos that develop their own negative spiral – jump in when you see them developing

Ways of working – Trying to convince others

- Anticipate objections beforehand
- List the pros and cons
- Don't try to convince for the sake of convincing

Allowing others to grow – Taking care of newbies

- Patience!
- Newbies might ask “stupid” questions at the beginning – that does not have to be an indication of their abilities
- Try to help find a suitable task for newcomers
- Teach and document when new questions arise

Allowing others to grow – The benefits of sharing knowledge

- Bus-Factor
 - Is there someone who could do your job reasonably well if you went awol? How about others around you?
 - Document the processes
- Sharing knowledge can be to your benefit too
 - Improve your skills
 - Allows you to move on when/if you want to

Questions?!

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