Marketing Your Open Source Project

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About me

- 30 years in tech, mostly about communicating
- 10 years in open source
- 7 years in cloud
- Now: Open Source Content Lead, Amazon Web Services

What you'll learn in this talk

1. What marketing is (and isn't)
2. Why you need it
3. How to do it

…not exactly in this order

"If you build it,
they will come."

Just "building it"
is rarely enough.

Some more reasons
marketing doesn't happen in open source

"Eww, marketing"

"Open source is free, therefore we don't need to market it"

"Marketing is a 'soft' skill"

Marketing definition #1

Merriam-Webster

"The process or technique of promoting, selling, and distributing a product or service."
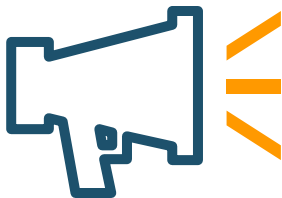
Marketing Definition #1a

"Marketing is a bunch of hand-wavy fluff and BS."

"I'm not selling anything —
 open source is free!
 Why would I need
 marketing?"

You're asking people to dedicate something valuable —their time and attention— to your ideas.

Marketing definition #2

In open source, marketing is about getting people to exchange their time and attention (and sometimes money) for your ideas.
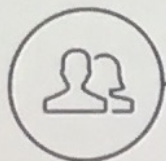
Ugh. Do I have to?

There are millions of open source projects

- Github hosts over 54,000,000 open source repositories
  https://github.com/about
- SourceForge is home to 430,000 open source projects.
  https://sourceforge.net/about
- Apache Software Foundation now has 175 committees managing ~300 projects and another 50+ projects in incubation
  Source: https://projects.apache.org
- Eclipse Foundation now has 163 projects and 120 new projects in incubation
  Source: https://projects.eclipse.org/list-of-projects
- OpenStack has 49 project teams working on 1,525 project repositories
  Source: https://releases.openstack.org/teams

☐ THE **LINUX** FOUNDATION

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Open Source Development is Accelerating

23M+
Open Source Developers

41B+
Lines of Code

10,000+
New Versions per Day

64M+
Repositories on GitHub

1,100
New Projects a Day

THE **LINUX** FOUNDATION

Sources: Sourceclear, Sonatype, Github

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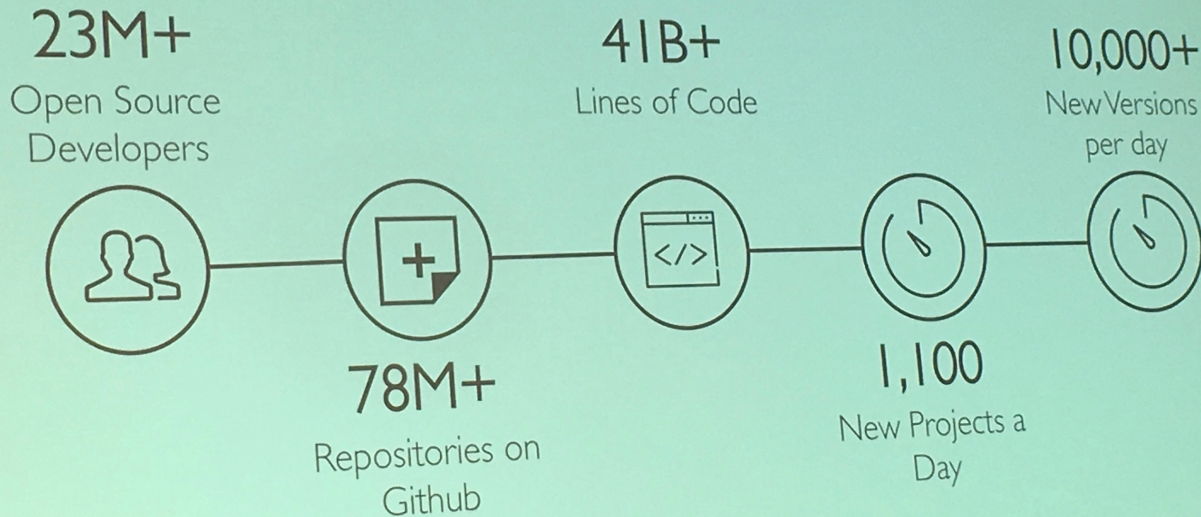New Versions
per day

78M+
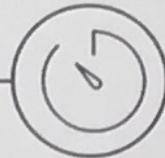
Repositories on
Github

1,100

New Projects a
Day

Sources: Sourceclear, Sonatype, Github

THE LINUX FOUNDATION

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Marketing definition #3

Marketing open source is about capturing scarce attention and resources in a crowded environment.

What resources do projects need?

The time and effort of people:

Users

Contributors
Independent, and/or assigned to a project by their employer (or hired specifically to work on it)

What resources do projects need?

Money:

- Sponsorships
- Salaries
- Bounties
- Investment
- Donations

More reasons

marketing doesn't happen in open source

We can't afford it

We don't know how

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The components of open source marketing

Customer

Who are your customers?

What do they want?

How do you know?

Code

The basic code

- Architected for participation

- Well-commented

Tools

Tests

Examples and sample code

Documentation

Good documentation is *absolutely crucial*

It can also be very hard to achieve

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Style Dictionary

`npm` `v2.1.0` `license` `Apache-2.0` `build` `passing` `code climate` `unknown`

Style Dictionary

Style once, use everywhere.

A Style Dictionary is a system that allows you to define styles once, in a way for any platform or language to consume. A single place to create and edit your styles, and a single command exports these rules to all the places you need them - iOS, Android, CSS, JS, HTML, sketch files, style documentation, etc. It is available as a CLI through npm, but can also be used like any normal node module if you want to extend its functionality.

When you are managing user experiences, it can be quite challenging to keep styles consistent and synchronized across multiple development platforms and devices. At the same time, designers, developers, PMs and others must be able to have consistent and up-to-date style documentation to enable effective work and communication. Even then, mistakes inevitably happen and the design may not be implemented accurately. StyleDictionary solves this by automatically generating style definitions across all platforms from a single source - removing roadblocks, errors, and inefficiencies across your workflow.
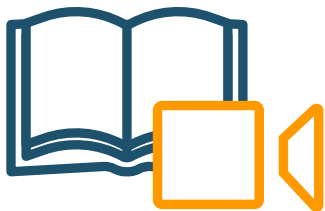
A style dictionary consists of:

1. **Style properties** organized in JSON files
2. Static assets that can be used across platforms

Marketing definition #4

Marketing helps people understand what a technology is about, and how they can use it to kick ass.

Overview: Some types of content

How to's, blueprints, architectures, etc.

Blog

Videos & screencasts

Articles and press (trade press, scholarly journals, refereed conferences)

Books

Education

Logo/mascot

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How-to's, blueprints, etc.

Various terms used (and abused) various ways

Don't get hung up on terminology

DO create this kind of material

A note about white papers

Have an even worse rep than marketing in general

Nowadays tend to be aimed at C-level execs

…which may be relevant to your project, especially if you are going after an enterprise market

Blog

Yes, have one!

Technical and newsy posts are both appropriate

There is no canonical length

If you're not a great writer (that's ok, most people aren't), get help

Video and screencasts

Types of videos

Not "slick" may be more appropriate

YouTube is your friend

Attention spans are short

Subtitles/captions

Trade Press

Get professional PR help with this

Getting press coverage is an art, not a science

Yes, PR does still matter

News Sites

Hacker News

Reddit

Refereed journals

Communications of the ACM

USENIX ;login:

COMMUNICATIONS
CACM.ACM.ORG
OF THE **ACM**
03/2012 VOL.55 NO.3

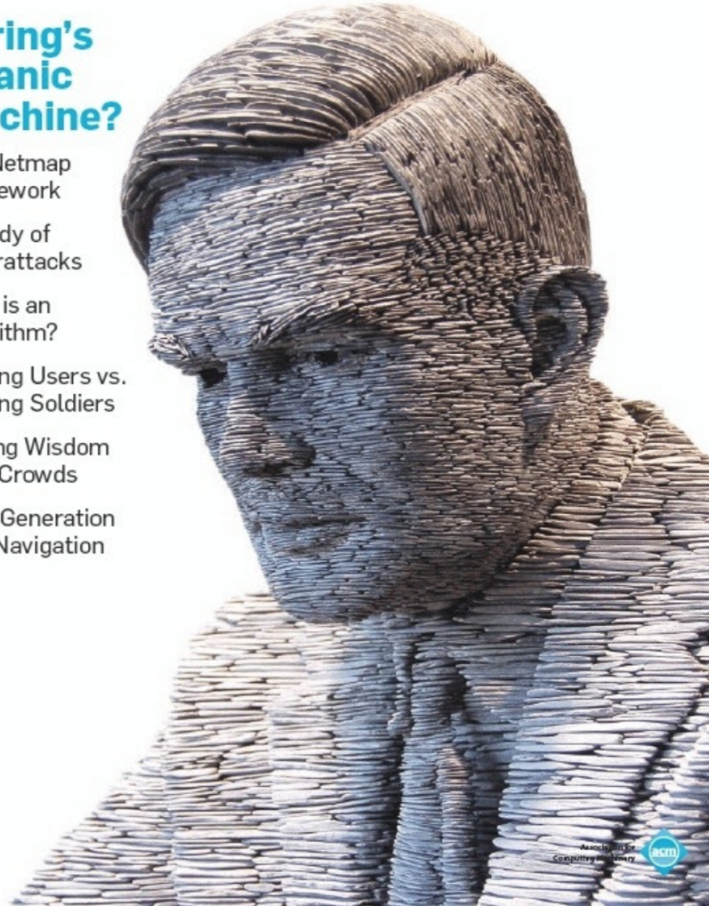**Turing's Titanic Machine?**

The Netmap Framework

A Study of Cyberattacks

What is an Algorithm?

Training Users vs. Training Soldiers

Gaining Wisdom from Crowds

Next-Generation GPS Navigation

Books

Great marketing tool

Possibly a great career move
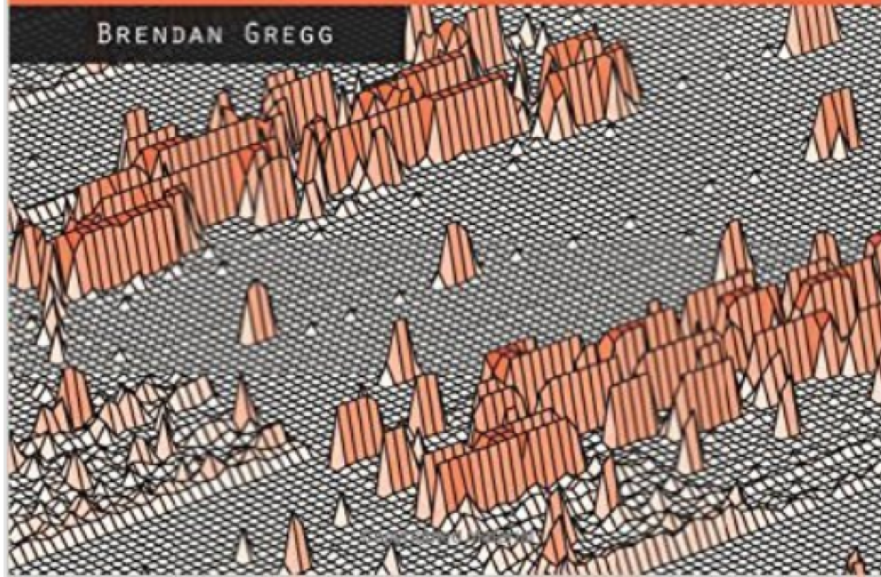
Tons of work

Never write a book for the money!

PRENTICE HALL

Systems Performance

ENTERPRISE AND THE CLOUD

BRENDAN GREGG

Logo/mascot

Linux Tracing is Magic!

ftrace   perf_events   eBPF   SystemTap

LTTng   ktap   dtrace4linux   OEL DTrace   sysdig

- (Thanks Deirdré Straughan & General Zoi's Pony Creator)

Education

Tutorials

Workshops

Classes

Certifications

Content efficiency

Time needed to create different kinds of content:

Informal talk (video it!): 10 mins–1 hour
Not counting video edit time

Blog post: 1–10 hours

Formal presentation: 3–10 hours

Published article: 3–30 hours

Technical paper: 5–50 hours

Book: 2,000 hours

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Shortcuts to developing content

Bug database

Email threads

IRC/Slack discussions

Code comments

Rule of thumb: if you have to answer the same question more than 3 times, put the answer somewhere easy to find (FAQ, blog post, wiki)

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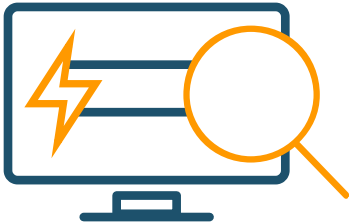
Places to put content

GitHub repo
(necessary, but not sufficient)

GitHub pages

Other website and/or wiki

Blog

Search engine optimization

Content, content, content!
…and keep it fresh!

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Discoverability

Use keywords, tags, and categories:

GitHub topics

Blog tags and categories

YouTube tags

SEO keywords

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Meetups, talks, and conferences
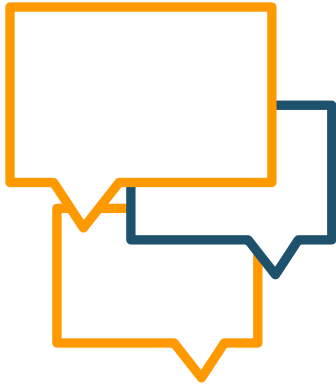
Are a source of content

Help with community building

Earned speaking slots > paid ones

Start small/local, work your way up to large national and international conferences

Can't do them all?
Have technical evangelists

Run your own conference?

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Social media

Twitter

LinkedIn

Facebook?

Whatever else comes along

Discussion

- Mailing lists
- IRC
- Slack
- Stack Overflow

Ok, that's the basics, but…

This one marketing secret
will change your life…

Marketing definition #4

Everything that touches the customer is marketing.

EVERYTHING

The air travel experience

Community

Culture

Code of conduct

Diversity

Responsiveness

Kindness

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Brilliant jerks

" Around 50 percent of respondents had *witnessed* bad behavior in open source, and they said that's often enough to keep them away from a particular project or community. **"**

Wired on the GitHub Open Source Survey

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Marketing
definition
#4

Everything that touches the customer is marketing.

EVERYTHING

aws

You are already doing marketing

Are you doing it well?

Thanks!

to
Brendan Gregg
Laura Ramsey
For help and inspiration

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References & further reading

https://www.wired.com/2017/06/diversity-open-source-even-worse-tech-overall/

http://opensourcesurvey.org/2017/

Building Compassionate Communities in Tech, @izs

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8kLIonLrKdQ

http://headrush.typepad.com/creating_passionate_users/

http://www.writing-world.com/tech/tech4.shtml

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