Bringing collaborative approaches from Software Development into other partnerships

Birgit Müller (WMDE)
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Software Development for the Wikimedia projects doesn't happen on an island somewhere in Europe. Or somewhere near the Atlantic Ocean.
Challenge & Fun

Building software for the Wikimedia projects:

- Everything is connected and changes have impact on all projects
- There are a 1000 options where to start to improve the software
- Diverse users & contributors with different requirements, interests and goals

-> Collaboration is key

-> Focus is key

-> Good planning and communication is key
Working together within the Wikimedia movement
Example 1: The Technical Wishlist

Regular surveys since 2013

Problem: Before that, no one has ever asked editors for their most wanted features and committed to address those wishes

Target groups: All users, focus on editors

~ 22% of the active editors participated in the last survey

Approach to identify and prioritize technical requirements from diverse users in a collaborative way.
The Technical Wishlist: Best practices

- Initiative and discussion of technical requests by the community
- Prioritization by the community and estimation/prioritization by the WMDE Team
- Commitment by WMDE’s Software Development Department
- Close collaboration, transparent development and communication process
- Collaboration with WMF teams and volunteer developers: Partnership with the Community Tech Team, collaboration with other teams and contributors on a project based level

- Möglichkeit, eine Kategorie auf neue Artikel hin zu beobachten (Bug 7148)
  5. Pro IW 18:45, 15. Nov. 2013 (CET)
  6. Pro --Kar1432 (Diskussion) 00:37, 26. Nov. 2013 (CET)
  7. Pro ... «« Man77 »» 01:25, 29. Nov. 2013 (CET)
  8. Pro Patrick Stützel (Diskussion) 14:18, 30. Nov. 2013 (CET)

Voting for show changes in category membership in 2013
The Technical Wishlist: Challenges

* Mainly contributors who are already active in meta discussions are participating in the Wishlist survey -> Outreach to more editors (e.g. via central notice)

* A technical wishlist might be too technical for editors -> Offer other formats in addition, such as workshops

* The international communities need to be involved, too -> project description at least in English, translatable help pages, multilingual announcements, partnerships with tech ambassadors of other language communities
The Technical Wishlist: Challenges

Trade-off between addressing a request fast & improving Mediawiki
-> find a good mix to address both, stay focused & know what you can do and what not

Other teams are working in the same field and might already have a vision for that
-> you need to explain and defend your idea
-> come up with a thoughtful concept that has already been discussed within the team and with community members
-> be open to modify your proposal based on feedback

Example 2: user/topic specific workshops

Workshop serie on advanced search in 3 cities with ~ 40 participants

Problem: The search is already very powerful but no one knows it! There are several search parameters that can be used to specify the search, but they are only listed on a help page.

Target group for the workshop: Everyone who is interested in doing special search queries, e.g.
- Searching for articles in lists
- Searching for articles in certain categories
- ...
At the workshop we
● discussed desired search queries
● created a search mapping and connected desired search queries with existing search keywords
● designed proposals how to integrate those options into the special:search page

Approach to focus on a specific problem and discuss solutions with diverse users in a collaborative way. No technical knowledge required.
Advanced Search Workshop: Follow Up

What happened so far:

● Prototype has been built
● Workshop results and prototype has been introduced to the WMF’s Search team and the project has been discussed at the Developer Summit 2017
● Feedback was collected
● Improved prototype has been built
● Feedback on German WP and from other developers is collected

Next steps:

● Prototype will be tested with another project community
● Technical implementation is planned to start in May
Advanced Search Workshop: Best practices

- Identify a good topic
  - Getting to know existing search options was interesting for different users from beginners to very experienced users
  - Only taking into account what already exists provides a clear definition for the mission and scope of a project

- Find partners
  - The idea and concept for the workshop series was developed collaboratively
  - The relevant team at the WMF (Search team) got involved early, a joint session was held and a new productive collaboration started

- Format: Real life workshops
  - The workshops gave the chance to dive deeper into the topic and use different methods
  - The workshops were helpful for non-techies to bring in their questions and ideas
  - It was fun!

Focus on the problem: No one has asked before for the editors’ most wanted features and committed to address those wishes (Why)

Process & Development: (How)
- Wishlist
- Workshops
- Events
- Transparent information
- Clear contacts
- Regular feedback iterations
- Feature development based on feedback & research
- Not “the hacky way”/Mediawiki improvement
- Continuity & constant improvement of both, process & products

-> Collaboration & partnerships with users, teams, volunteer devs

Theme: Community centered Software Development

Product: New/improve features to support contributors & a new way of working together (What)
## Community centered Software Development as a theme

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<th>Year</th>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>Commitment by the WMDE software development department</td>
<td>Start development work. Plan: A dedicated Technical Wishes team/A collaborative process</td>
<td>Continue development work Build up a team Build a process Conduct improved survey Collaboration with communities + Community Tech</td>
<td>Continue development work Test new formats Collaboration with communities and other teams</td>
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**Share lessons learned with other teams & the movement**
Working together with partners from external organisations, but for the movement
Example 3: Ladies that FOSS

Ladies that FOSS

Hackathon in October 2016 with 35 female coders and mentors from 9 different FOSS projects, monthly meetup since March 2017

In collaboration with Mozilla and other Open Source organisations

Problem: Only 11% of people in FOSS are women or identify as non binary, agender or genderfluid. Very few women are contributing to Mediawiki/Wikidata.

Focus group: Female coders who want to join a FOSS project but don’t know where to start.

https://wikimedia.de/wiki/LadiesthatFOSS

Projects participants could choose to work on: Mozilla Firefox, RIOT, MediaWiki, Wikidata, Inventaire, coala, Nextcloud, LibreOffice and Sourcefabric.
Ladies that FOSS - good practices & challenges

The event was a “good guideline into the FOSS world, I’m much less scared now to contribute” (participant @feedback survey)

- Identify a good topic
  - Only 11% of people in FOSS are women or identify as non binary, agender or genderfluid
  - Wikimedia has a problem of attracting and keeping volunteer developers in general
  - Know why you want to do a event for women: People might question it!

- Find partners & attendees
  - Other FOSS organisations have the same problem and are interested in new approaches and solutions, too - it is easy to find partners for a Ladies that FOSS hacking event
  - A wide range of projects attracts more people
  - A broad communication is needed to reach out to possible attendees: The biggest challenge, but it worked.
Ladies that FOSS - good practices & challenges

The event was a “good guideline into the FOSS world, I’m much less scared now to contribute”
(participant @feedback survey)

- Workshop setup
  - Personal introduction to the projects and direct contact with the mentors lowered barriers and helped participants to get the relevant infos immediately
  - Small tasks and clear goals for the day allowed fast success
  - The diversity of projects gave participants the opportunity to get to know different projects and match to a project according to their interests and skills

-> Continuity: In March 2017 the first Ladies That Foss meetup took place
Key learnings

● Bringing multiple perspectives together gives the most valuable impact
● Focus on your strengths – you don't need to do everything
● Know about your own vision, the scope of the project and how far you want to go
● Find out who is doing similar work, who might be interested in your idea or who might be affected by your work
● Identify a common topic with your potential partner
● Gather feedback for your ideas: Drop an idea, if it is really bad
● Scale your idea down in smaller steps
● Expectation management: Communicate clearly what you can do and plan to do and what not
Thank you!

Birgit