Analyzing conflict and possible solutions around WMF software development

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Technical Collaboration
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WMF Technical Collaboration team

We help developers to build features in collaboration with our communities.

https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Technical_Collaboration
Making users happy is hard, but it should not be as hard as it is in Wikimedia.
Avoiding polarization

"Community" vs "Foundation"
"Editors" vs "Developers"
"Us" vs "Them"

We are on the same boat, quite mixed.
Understanding our relationship

Not just customer-provider
Not just wiki collaboration
Not classic open source

We are software partners.
Encouraging experimentation

"Here is an idea..."
"This cannot and will not be ever deployed in Wikimedia"

A series of experiments brought us here.
Understanding free software development

"It's too soon to announce it"
"This is broken; call me when it's done"

Collaboration starts in the planning phase.
Sharing priorities

"Solution in search of a problem"
"Stop wasting donors' money"
"You should fix *** instead"

Strategy, annual plans, quarterly goals matter.
Defining checkpoints

"We cannot run consultations for every feature"
"I wasn't asked"

Draft plan, design concept, prototype, beta...
Defining feedback channels

"Not in my wiki"
"Not in Phabricator"
"English only!?!"

MediaWiki.org, interwiki notifications, translations
Focusing on positives and blockers

{{support}}
{{oppose}}

What is good? What is unacceptable?
"Is this project dead?"
"No, we are just very busy"

Consistent project pages pointing to last activity
Checkpoints for specialized contributors

"Where can I help improving design concepts?"
"We need accessibility testers"

Increase the diversity and focus of reviewers
Flexible deployment waves

"Please enable X in our wiki"
"Keep X away from our wiki"

Satisfy early adopters and skeptical communities
Making decisions for readers

"Disable this feature for IPs"
"But readers want..."
"No, they don't"

Base assumptions on shared user research
It can be done… if everyone improves a bit.
Memorable summary for wiki communities

You are technical contributors
Demand project consistency
Choose your checkpoints
Focus on defining blockers
Memorable summary for development teams

You are community members
Demand early involvement
Use checkpoints consistently
Listen to blockers carefully
Thank you