

Open Source Community Antipatterns

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The Goal is

A level playing field so that merit and “innovation happens elsewhere” can prevail



Areas

- Governance
- Communication (of governance)
- Culture/Environment
- Merit
- Decision Making
- Leadership
- Balancing Forces





Governance

Badly Sized Governance

- Too little is bad
- But too much is also bad
- Look at the US government. Who trusts that or any other big government to get things done?



Freeze Your governance

- The only right governance is the one you have
- Be aware of other governances



Fail to document clearly

- how the governance operates



Rely on Legal Mechanisms

- for the goal of community control / ownership



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Communications



Keep things private

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



Be restrictive about approved media





Culture

Don't actively pass the culture on

- Fail to inculcate culture / way of doing things
- Say “how” but not “why”
- Starfish and the Spider



Rules not guidelines

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



Be privilege and not responsibility oriented

- people seek privileges as opposed to responsibility



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

- Doing is more important than talking



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

- Women and minorities
- And non-english speakers
- The goal is a level playing field



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



Define Merit

- along a single or small number of dimensions



Change the rules

- Constantly
- Unpredictably



Decision Making



Use lots of procedures

- Have different decision making styles/ procedures for different contexts



Leadership



Ignore the need for leadership

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Try to “manage”

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Balance Forces



Be Partisan

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



Mix corporate and non-corporate stuff

- Like NDA's





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



Don't fight centralization

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

