



## Making Ubuntu more personal

# PEOPLE POWER

Impersonal processes can take some of the fun out of software development. Jono is working to make the Ubuntu community more engaging through additional mentoring for newcomers.

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**P**rocesses. Don't you just love them? Oh, wait, I mean hate them. Processes are part and parcel of life: You find them when you need to get your driving license renewed, when you need to file your taxes, and when you want to participate in software communities. Processes serve an important purpose, though; they provide a consistent set of steps and directions that folks can follow with relatively little or no human intervention. And, they are fantastic when there are many people who need help and not enough hands to help them.

Processes exist throughout the Ubuntu community, and we strive to make them as lightweight and simple as possible. These processes were put together because of the number of people wanting to join our community, but, honestly, no one really enjoys processes. No one wants to follow a set of steps that feels mechanical and automated. What people really enjoy, particularly in collaborative communities such as Ubuntu, is the pleasure of working together with others – with people who are helping them succeed in the Ubuntu community. People join the Ubuntu community for the software, but they stay for the people.

I want to better refine the personal experience of joining the Ubuntu commu-

nity. For example, let's look at how you become a developer. Today, if you want to package software for Ubuntu and run through the MOTU program, you'll receive a good set of documentation and the tools you need, along with some support resources, such as IRC channels and mailing lists. Then, it's up to you to try and understand the content so you can get up and running and, if you need help, you need to take the initiative to ask another member of the community. Unfortunately, if you are a little shy or reserved, asking for help may be something you feel uncomfortable about, particularly if you don't know many people in the community.

I think the Ubuntu community can do better here. Over the years, I have met countless people who have told me that specific people were instrumental in helping them to get up and running with a particular community. I believe that we need to connect great mentors with new community members and ensure that everyone has the tools to optimize that relationship. The relationship is not just for the mentor to share his or her knowledge with the new community member, but to also provide a platform of friendship, moral support, encouragement, and inspiration.

Recently, I talked with Daniel Holbach, who grows our developer community, about how to make the developer experience more personal. I asked Daniel to put together some graphs that

showcase the contributions made by new developers over a period of time to provide a better view of the significant and sustained contribution these folks have been making. This graph pulls data from upload mailing lists and returns names of people to whom Daniel can offer mentorship to get them through the final stretch of becoming an approved Ubuntu developer. Already this work has proven successful, and the candidates to whom Daniel has reached out have felt a more personal sense of engagement.

This step is only the beginning, though. What makes Ubuntu such a beautiful phenomenon is the people. It is the people and their experiences, wisdom, and guidance that stops this community from being just a group of like-minded people and transforms it into being a truly empowering and engaging environment. This people power is not just optimal for growing our skills and knowledge but also for becoming energized with a feeling that we can all change the world in our own way. This is what we are here to do in Ubuntu.

Of course, everyone can help Ubuntu become a more personal environment. If you are involved in the community, you can help by just reaching out and offering your mentorship and guidance to newcomers. Even small gestures, such as just asking how someone is doing, show a remarkable sense of caring, and all these efforts help make Ubuntu the most fun community in the world. ■