



Building [developer.ubuntu.com](http://developer.ubuntu.com)

# NO ASSUMPTIONS

Jono explains the different expectations around building a new community. **BY JONO BACON**

**F**or many years now, we have been building a comprehensive Ubuntu contributor community. Across the many different sub-communities – such as Packagers, Translators, LoCo Teams, Forums, AskUbuntu, Documentation Writers, Ubuntu Women, QA, Accessibility, and others – we have worked hard to help everyone contribute to making Ubuntu the best it can be. I am proud of this work and of the many people who have contributed to it. I think Ubuntu has made great inroads in fostering a community that empowers all contributors and welcomes everyone – regardless of their technical ability or where they might live.

Now, we need to build a new type of community that is quite different from what we have done before: a community of application developers.

Recently, various teams have been working to make the Ubuntu application developer experience smooth and effective. This has included creating [developer.ubuntu.com](http://developer.ubuntu.com), building the MyApps submission process that enables app developers to submit their app for review, improving the Ubuntu Software Center, performing application reviews by the community-led Application Review Board, and doing various outreach campaigns.

You might be wondering why this developer community is so different; surely

it is just another collection of mailing lists, blog posts, excitable tweets, and infrastructure? Well, it is different in one very distinctive way.

Traditionally, each sub-community has contributed to Ubuntu itself as a platform. This approach defines a simple relationship between Ubuntu and our contributors: If there is a problem in Ubuntu, we encourage these contributors to help resolve the issue in whatever way they can – by reporting bugs, testing PPAs with fixes, running the development release of Ubuntu, and so on. The relationship presumes that our contributors are interested in the internals of the platform and community, how they fit together, and how they can be improved. With such an assumption, we make a set of determinations: You are familiar with Launchpad, you read Planet Ubuntu, you know how to file a bug, you read some of the mailing lists, and so on.

With the new app developer community, we should not make those assumptions: We need to assume that application developers are only interested in Ubuntu as a platform. They don't care how it is built or the politics involved, they just want to deliver their apps quickly and easily on Ubuntu. We need to view these folks as true consumers of our platform. They want to use our platform to do interesting things and not get embroiled in how the platform was created. More specifically, we should not presume an interest or intention to improve the platform, but merely to consume it and deliver their apps.

In other words, we need to welcome people who don't actually care about Ubuntu, beyond being an interesting platform. This idea required quite an ad-

justment in focus and thinking in how we grow this community. We can't presume application developers have the skills or interests that would be commonplace to our existing contributor community.

For example, I don't believe it would be reasonable to recommend that an application developer run a development version of Ubuntu or that he or she become a member of MOTU or core-dev. These functions are valuable in our contributor community, but we need to assume that an application developer just wants to consume our platform and deliver their app.

Of course, our existing contributor community is as critically important as before; we would be nothing without our community, and we always welcome people who have an interest in both how we build Ubuntu and how they can deliver apps to it. The difference is in setting expectations for this new community; we do not need to assume the same experience, knowledge, interests, or values.

At the recent Ubuntu Developer Summit in California, we fleshed out these plans. David Planella, Michael Hall, and Daniel Holbach on my team will be performing a lot of work in the 12.10 Ubuntu cycle to grow and build this new community actively. We will be reaching out to find application developers in new places and identifying the holes in our application developer processes. We will also be seeking to ensure that Ubuntu is a fantastic platform for application authors and that the fruits of those developers' work are available to Ubuntu users around the world in the Ubuntu Software Center. ■