Ubuntu Developer Summit

WISH YOU WERE HERE

BY JONO BACON

As I type this, we are only a few weeks away from the next Ubuntu Developer Summit, this time taking place in Copenhagen [1]. For the uninitiated, the Ubuntu Developer Summit, known as UDS, is the primary place in which we discuss, debate, and design the next version of Ubuntu, in this case, Ubuntu 13.04.

The next event is going to be somewhat bittersweet for me because I won't be joining my Ubuntu comrades in Copenhagen; instead, I'll be staying home in California. Fortunately, though, I am staying home for good reason; my wife and I are expecting our first baby. In other good news, the fact that I can't attend UDS in person doesn't really matter because I can remotely dial in to join the sessions (assuming the baby has not joined us at Castle Bacon yet).

I wanted to take a little time in this column to talk about UDS and how unique and special of an event it is. I also want to encourage you lovely readers to join us at the next event we have, either in person or remotely. Everyone is welcome: UDS is and will always be free and open to all.

The genesis of UDS began with the goal of getting our community together in the same room to have a set of practical face-to-face meetings to prepare for the next release. Back then, UDS consisted of approximately 50 people from all over the world, many of whom were hired by Canonical. These days UDS typically attracts more than 400 people from different countries and is a combination of Canonical staff, community members who attend with sponsorship help from Canonical, as well as partners, OEMs, and other community contributors.

The event is broken into nine tracks: App Development, Cloud & Server, Community, Design, Desktop, Foundations, Hardware, QA, and Security. UDS usually kicks off with a short intro from yours truly, and then Ubuntu founder Mark Shuttleworth gives his keynote, followed by a keynote from Rick Spencer, the Director of Ubuntu Engineering. Usually Rick delves a little deeper into the specific goals for the next release.

After the introductions, we head into the meeting sessions. For each of the tracks, a series of discussion sessions are held across 14 different rooms, so there's potential for 14 sessions at any one time. These sessions are designed to discuss the topic at hand and then decide on a set of assigned work items that will be completed for the next release. We have an online schedule available at all times to show which sessions are coming up.

For each of the sessions, there is typically a blueprint registered. A blueprint is a web page on Launchpad that tracks a piece of work. With the blueprint, you can specify the name and goal of the project, the work items involved, the deadline, and other details. Everyone in the community can view these blueprints and subscribe to them, which provides a neat way to stay updated whenever anything changes on a project (e.g., when a work item is completed). These blueprints are eventually slurped into *http://status.ubuntu.com*, where the community and our engineering teams can keep an eye on the wider spread of blueprints and ensure the work is getting completed.

An important note about these sessions at UDS is that they are not typical conference presentations. These are active discussions with a series of chairs in a fishbowl (a configuration in front of the room that makes it easier to chat), complete with a projector that shows the IRC channel for the room, a general projector for connecting to a laptop, and an audio feed that is streamed online. These facilities make remote participation a doddle; just take a look at the schedule, find the room your session is in, and connect to the audio feed and IRC channel. You are now in the session! See the UDS website for more details about how to participate remotely [2].

Besides the normal sessions at UDS, there are also a series of plenaries after lunch. Plenaries comprise four 15-minute sessions each day in which the full audience is available to watch the session. Plenaries are great for talking about different projects going on, and we often invite our partners to join us and talk about how Ubuntu is being used in their work.

Finally, at the end of the event, we have an hour-long wrap-up session in which each of the track leaders provides a short summary of the key decisions and outcomes of their tracks from the week of discussion. This provides a great method of ensuring everyone is synced up on the plans for the next week.

One piece of feedback I've received from new attendees over the past 11 UDS events is that UDS provides a unique and interesting insight into how Ubuntu is made. Although many of you won't be able to join a UDS event in person, I strongly encourage you all to join remotely. UDS provides a fantastic way to contribute to improving Ubuntu, and also to see how decisions are made, listen into sessions that interest you, and make new friends. Participating in UDS really is a rewarding and worthwhile experience. I hope to see you there, in person or remotely! ■

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[1] Ubuntu Developer Summit: *http://uds.ubuntu.com/event/*

[2] UDS remote participation: *http://uds.ubuntu.com/community/remote-participation/*