

The transition of the RAP development team to Open Source

About

- EclipseSource == Innoopract + Code9
- Jochen Krause, CEO
- Joined „Eclipse Board of Stewards“ end of 2002
- Initial member of Webtools PMC, RT PMC
- Mentor for Riena, Memory Analyzer, Swordfish, ...

Moving a 5 year investment into Open Source

- W4T announced in 2001
- Widget based web development with Java API
- „Desktop style“ development model for web apps
- Commercial licensed

Getting started

- Leadership
 - Code donations
 - Interaction model with rest of world
 - Development process
-
- Launching is a critical phase, mistakes in this phase can have a huge impact



Leadership

- Diversity in committers vs. leadership and ability to execute
- For RAP we took decision to NOT share leadership
- When is the right time to let go?

Hit the ground running

- Get the code into shape vs release it to the community
- Started work 6 month before we submitted the proposal
- Announcing and not delivering is a pitfall I have seen many times
- Allocate time for IP clearance if you have code donations

Code donations

- RAP was a multi-million dollar code contribution
- Don't simply take a huge wad of existing code „as is“ - have seen it fail too often
- People need to be able to consume it
- Start with a small working kernel
- Take over more stuff as you need it
- Be open to feedback from community
- RAP was fully operational after 6 weeks

Eclipse development model

- Time boxed (Quality and time are fixed, features NOT)
- Open source rules of engagement (Openness, Transparency, Meritocracy)
- Eclipse processes



Time boxed

- Almost no problem to adapt for our team
- Quality vs. features can prove difficult
- Having more than one release per year puts an enormous stress on the team
- Did that only once

Openness

- Listen to the community
 - SWT vs. w4t API
 - SWT vs RWT package names
 - Full API vs subset
- EGO

Openness 2

- Reactive vs. proactive
 - honest, inviting, non-inviting
- Loss of control
- „it is great that you want to join, but currently we don't have time to address your topic ...“

Transparency

- How open do you want to be with respect to REAL issues?
- Co-located teams make it really hard
- IM is a killer
- How do you involve people in planning balancing commercial goals and open source needs?

Organizational roles vs. meritocracy

- Organizational roles may not fit with merit in the Open Source community
- Serious potential for conflict
- Full time commitments make it easier
- Meritocracy at the same time a big motivator
- Developers can build their brand

Eclipse processes

- IP – Work with mentors (there were no mentors when we started)
- Efficiency of IP process has improved greatly at the Eclipse foundation
- Still imposes a risk for code donations (especially dependencies)
- Joint releases – RAP joined with Ganymede
- You want to be on joint releases - probably from the second year

Building a community

- Can't be handled by the classic marketing department
- Time your team needs to invest, success means spending multiple hours every day
- Direct interaction between developers and end users is a challenge for some developers
- You should control the time you are spending – it can become endless
- It took RAP 4-6 month getting an community

Release early and often

- Make sure you let people know about improvements you have in mind
- Building quality in the open == building trust

You are a marketer

- RAP team believed that technology should speak for itself, marketing is waste of time
- Technology is not enough to create a community
- You need the right mindset
- Who is your front runner?
- People are incredible hard to change
- Having someone skilled will pull others along

Risks

- Open source roles are bound to the individual, NOT to the company at Eclipse
- Closed source – individual leaves
 - Loosing Know How
 - Keeping code
 - Potential leadership role can be reallocated

Risks – cont'd

- Eclipse – individual leaves
 - Loosing Know How
 - IP still there, but code remains available to individual
 - Potential leadership role at risk (lost)
- Can be handled contractually

Thank you

Published under Creative Commons Attribution – Share alike 2.0

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>