Exploiting Social Software to Build Open Source Communities

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Outline

- Building open source communities
- Community building as a marketing activity
- The role of social software
- Evaluation
- Conclusions
OS Community Building

- Even though the number of open source software is remarkable, it is still **far from obvious** how to start and run a successful open source project.

- Starting an open source project is in fact building a **community of users and developers** for that project.

- What should be considered:
  - organization patterns
  - social structures
  - specificities of the software
  - others: size, domain, business and support models, licensing scheme

OS Community Building

- The problem of community building can be formulated as a **marketing challenge**: marketing a software to target consumers/producers.

- The availability of social software applications has resulted in the constant **emergence** of online communities.

- A selected set of these communities can be used to pass invitation messages among their members to join the open source project → **viral marketing**.
Community Building as a Marketing Activity

- For a viral marketing campaign to be effective, a well-defined marketing plan has to be built first → e.g. the 7 P’s of the marketing mix model

- Tailoring the 7 P’s model to meet the specificities of marketing open software platforms

- The tailored model is used to identify ingredients for the viral marketing campaign:
  - attractive marketing environment
  - compelling information
  - target communities
  - viral messages
  - request handling processes

A Tailored 7 P’s of the Marketing Mix Model

[Diagram showing the 7 P's model with tailored elements such as Project, Product, Price, People, Place, Physical Evidence, and Perception]
A Tailored 7 P’s of the Marketing Mix Model

- **Project:** Think of the target software as a project that results into products → organization, process, support, vision statement, name, slogan, logo, description, etc.

- **Public license:** using, modifying, and redistributing source code should be practiced according to rules defined in a public license

- **Place:**
  - the place of marketing efforts
  - the geographical regions where the target communities could reside

- **People:**
  - interest groups including universities and research institutes, existing open source communities, social networks, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and governments → meta-communities
  - Communities with active members and individuals with high social networking potential
  - Human resources needed to carry out the marketing activities

A Tailored 7 P’s of the Marketing Mix Model

- **Promotion:** possible marketing channels include WWW site, social content sites such as YouTube, mailing lists, and blog entries by famous bloggers

  Effective viral messages should be formulated for every channel. Example kinds of messages include videos, news blurbs, blog entries, and e-mail messages

- **Perception:** the community perceive the mission and the potential of the open source project through its infrastructure and promotion messages
  - specificities of people
  - marketing channels

- **Process:**
  - how the elements of the infrastructure should be coordinated to guarantee access to the open source project
  - marketing action points
  - resources needed to execute the marketing plan
A Viral Model for Releasing Software

- interested members join the new community
- a well-defined process to manage the community is needed

Evaluation: The NoTA Platform

- Contribution at the core level
- Contribution at the application level
- Different promotion channels, messages, target communities
Evaluation

- Evaluation criteria:
  - number of users subscribed to the mailing list
  - number of downloads of the software
  - count of webpage hits
  - number of views for the social media
  - number of projects built on top of the platform
  - number and kind of contributions received
  - amount of requests/feedback/inquiries received
  - geographical distribution of the community members
  - sources for getting to know the project
  - participation in project events and meetings

Conclusions

- A research project on building open source communities
- We have formulated the problem of building an open source community as a marketing activity
- Existing marketing models and strategies exploiting social software networks and applications can be used
- We are working on an industrial case study
- More evaluation/case studies needed
Thank You!

Q&A