



FOSDEM

Switching Open Source Communities: How to Stay Authentic to Yourself and Find Hidden Benefit In Your New Role

Anastasia 'Stacy' Raspopina
(Sr. Community Manager,
Postgres Professional)



Martina Pocchiari
(PhD Candidate, Rotterdam School
of Management, Erasmus University)



About the Speakers



Anastasia 'Stacy' Raspopina

Works at **Postgres Professional** as a **Senior Community Manager**.

Key responsibilities:

- event management;
- community relations;
- DevRel activities within the company.

Past career:

- Marketing & communications for other OSS companies from database industry
- Large conferences for software engineers (up to 1,600+ attendees)

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Martina Pocchiari

Studies how (brand) **communities** can thrive under **changing technologies** and **external events**

Other work:

- How does **event digitization** impact community members' engagement? with Jason M.T. Roos @ Erasmus University
- How do **crisis events** affect **members' involvement** in a brand community, and the community **resilience**? Several projects, with A. Almaatouq (MIT), P. Yildirim (Wharton), Y. Dover (Jerusalem Business School)
- Running experiments on **community success** with collaborating companies

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Talk structure

Part 1

- Industry experience shared by Stacy

Part 2

- Academic evidence provided by Martina

This talk is intended for

Community Managers (with both technical & non-technical background)

Everyone involved in advocacy (including company C-levels / brand owners)



Switching communities might be different...

Community of a competing solution in the same ecosystem

Community of a complementary solution in the same ecosystem

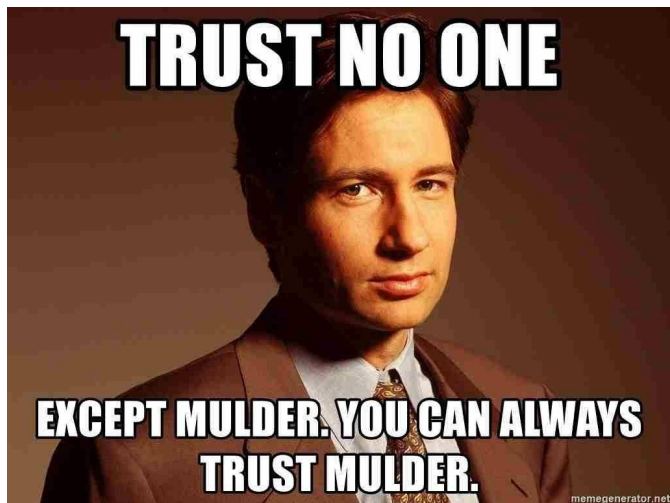
Community of a different ecosystem with a different flagship product

Unrelated community (or the one that seems to be unrelated!)

...with #3 & #4, you need to start with an alien status.



Key challenges in the new ecosystem or field



Lack of knowledge (and sources of knowledge)

Differences in processes (product releases, bug reports, feature requests)

Key players are unfamiliar to you

You have zero trust or negative trust (if coming from a competing ecosystem)

...you need to convert yourself into the Mulder.

Beating the lack of knowledge & process difficulties

Be open about where you work now (someone might offer you help!)

Find your “solid” and “empty” people (willing & not willing to educate you)

Ask the “solid” ones about the reliable sources of knowledge

Test your ideas with your “solid” group of experts

Be active in the new community to the extent you can to gain new supporters



Find your personal Yodas.

Meeting the key players



Always assume that people in charge are watching you.

Make sure you get respectful introductions from other community members.

Act to bring something to the table - slight changes & ideas matter too!

Do your advocacy job the right way (this is appreciated by tech contributors).

Be your best self beyond technology (interesting personalities are welcome!)

Building trust

Don't pretend to be anyone you are not

Be helpful and transparent re: what you are capable/incapable of

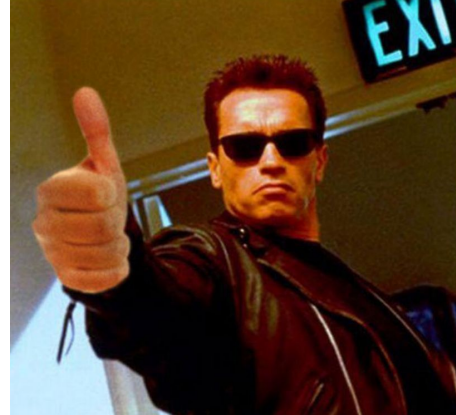
Don't <over>promise if you are not sure you can arrange something

Don't hide or deny the fact of working for a competitor in the past

Stay respectful at all times, take jokes with grace & practice self-irony

Sound sane, act sane - be logical & consistent in relationships

Offer win-win solutions where possible, focus on what we have in common



**You're going to
be awkward.
Accept this.
Keep on going.**

Interesting cases: PostgreSQL & MySQL joint talk

Switching to **super system** / focusing on what we have in common.

- General advocacy of open source approach made possible to bring people from both PostgreSQL & MySQL worlds to work on a joint talk in 2016.
- Around 100 people were present at the live presentation.
- Two blog posts shared around in two communities (20,000 views during the first 3 days).
- [DZone publication](#) as a follow-up to blog post.
- Intensified the discussion

on database-to-database migrations.



Sveta Smirnova & myself back in 2016.

Interesting cases: educational opportunities

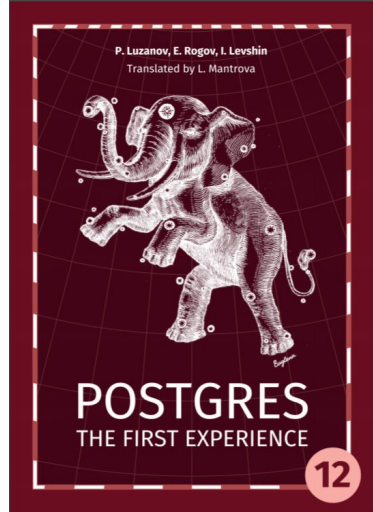
Multi-database environments are trendy.

To get more opportunities in today's world, DBAs tend to master new DBMSs.

Database-to-database migrations require knowledge of other databases.

Sometimes people are unable to ask for help in public when it comes to a competing solution (they are known as supporters of another DBMS).

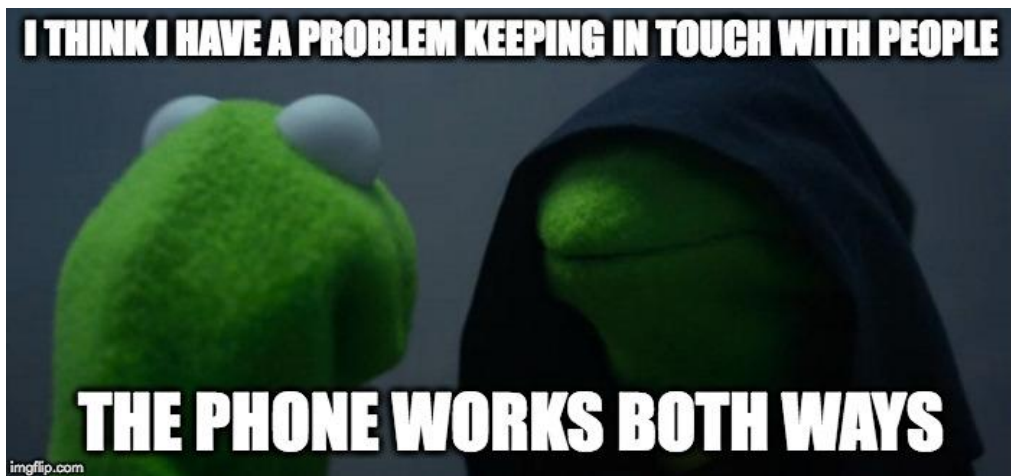
- I have pointed **tens of people** in the right direction helping them educate themselves on another DBMS.
- I was focusing on helping them and gaining trust, not advocacy.



Interesting cases: hearing back from past community

People whom you were good to in the past share interesting info with you:

- Who uses your database of interest (aka your target audience);
- Who contributes to multiple databases (key people for joint projects);
- Advice on what's hot in the industry (news from competitors, BI).



General advice (key takeaways)

Industry experience:

- Put people first, avoid “for gain only” interaction, be a broader thinker
- Contribute yourself, give away what you can
- Don’t pretend to be bigger than you are, practice self-irony, listen to others
- Be a person, not just a function

Academic Evidence

- Lack of knowledge
- Differences in processes
- Key players are unfamiliar to you
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Process Differences: What Can a Newcomer Bring to the OSS Table?

Li et al. (2012)

If the new role entails a position of leadership in the community, choose and balance between two leadership styles:

Transformational Leadership



Transactional Leadership





Transformational Leader

Shapes contributors' behavior via:

1. Becoming a **role model** of high **ethical behavior**
2. Articulating a **vision** that is **appealing** and **inspiring** to contributors
3. Promoting of **new ways** of thinking and solving problems, **challenging the traditional assumptions**
4. Providing **individualized attention** to developers, understanding and sharing their concerns and needs



Transactional Leader

Guides contributors' behavior via:

1. **Proactive** community supervision
2. Ensuring that no mistakes are made and that **standards** are met
3. Frequently **scanning** for errors, making useful criticisms and feedback

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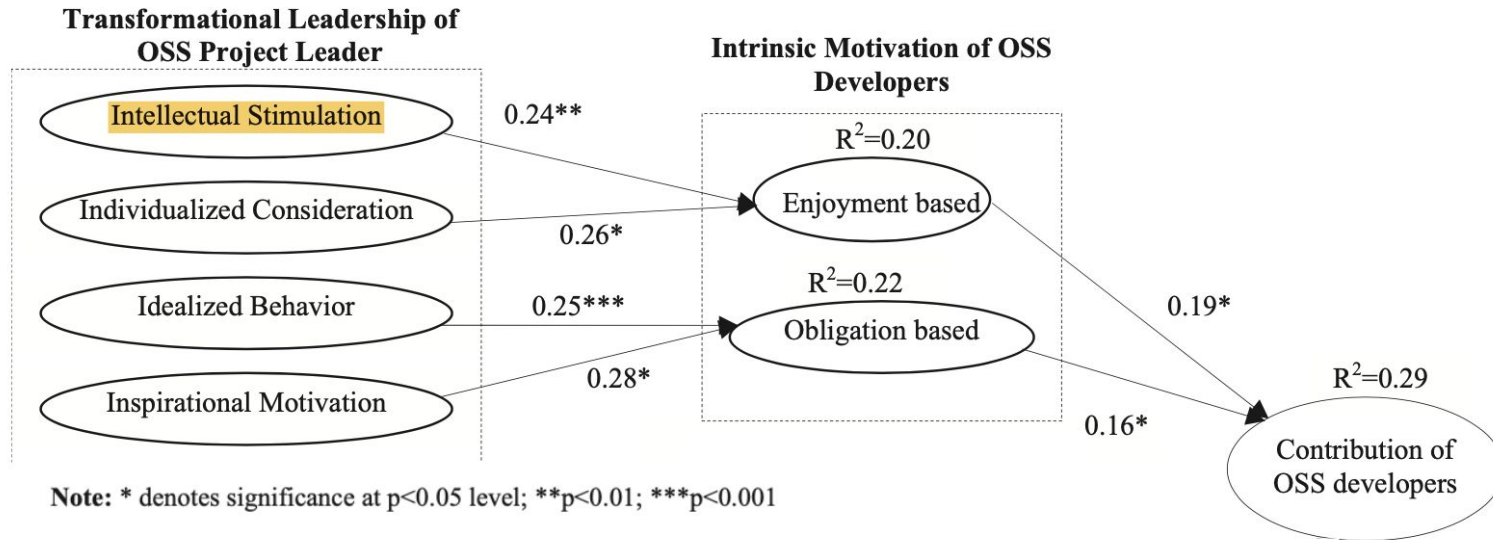
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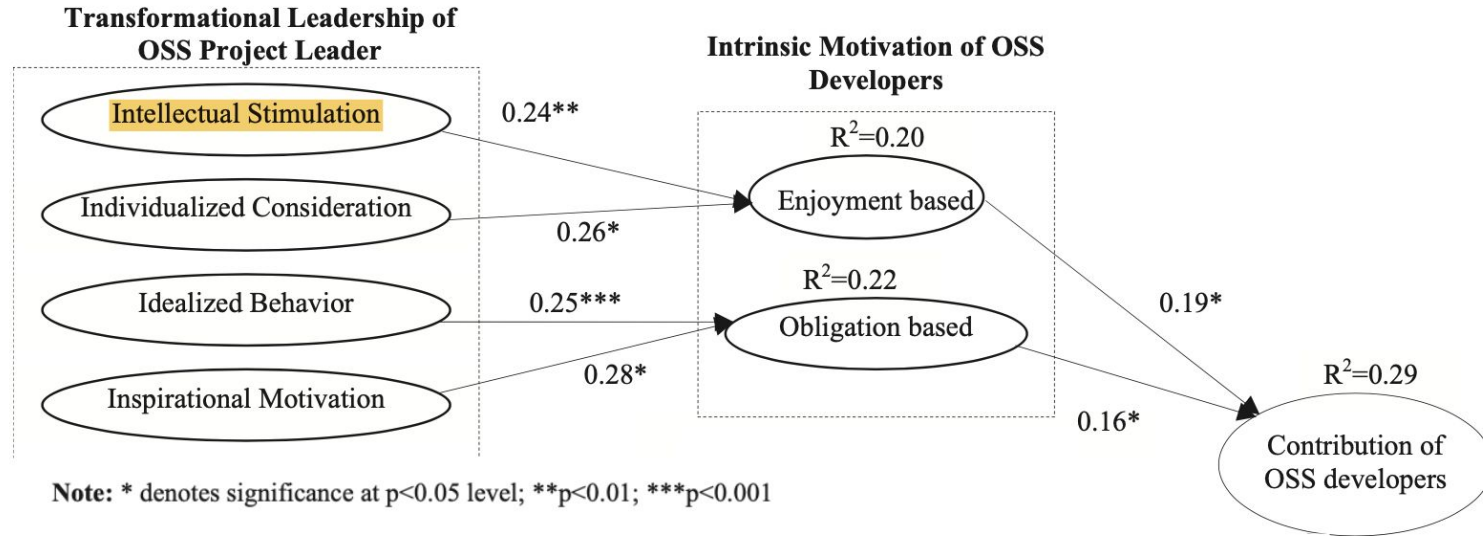
Bringing Value in the New Community via Transformational Leadership

Li et al. (2012)



Bringing Value in the New Community via Transformational Leadership

Li et al. (2012)



Li et al. (2012):

Transformational leadership **generates value** in OSS communities via developers' motivations to contribute to projects

A **newcomer** can leverage **intellectual stimulation** to increase collective motivations and value

From Zero to Hero: Developing Dyadic and Group Trust

Booth (2012) and Iyer et al. (2020)

Social trust:

- “a belief in the honesty, integrity, and reliability of others” (Taylor, Funk, and Clark 2007)

Dyadic Trust

Trust that one person feels towards a specific **other person**

Group Trust

Trust that one person feels towards a **collective** of other people

Generalized Trust

Trust that people feel towards others **generally**

Why Should You Care About Trust?

Booth (2012) and Iyer et al. (2020)

1. Trust is one of the **most crucial social factors** affecting the **success of collaborations**
2. Higher trust →
 - a. Higher **team satisfaction**
 - b. Higher **quality of team performance**
 - c. Less negative content and more **safety**
 - d. Higher **exchange of information** (see Stacy: lack of initial knowledge)

How can you **increase trust** in yourself and in the collective?

Increasing Trust as a New Community Player

Booth (2012) and Iyer et al. (2020)

Trust can be promoted by:

- Crafting or reinforcing a **clear identity** for the community
 - Underline the clear purpose of the collective efforts
 - Create or reinforce the common identity
- Creating multiple opportunities for **learning**
 - Design or support **specific spaces** dedicated to social and workplace learning
- Having credible and active **moderation**
 - Moderators help in environments for knowledge sharing
 - Aid in establishing trust within the community
- Modeling the enforcement of **appropriate behavior**
 - Inappropriate behavior must be stopped immediately

General advice (key takeaways)

Practitioner experience:

- Put people first, avoid “for gain only” interaction, be a broader thinker
- Contribute yourself, give away what you can
- Don’t pretend to be bigger than you are, practice self-irony, listen to others
- Be a person, not just a function

Academic experience:

- Leverage your diverse skillset, with mindful transformational and transactional leadership
- Invest in trust for better performance and collective environment

References

- Booth, S. E. (2012). Cultivating knowledge sharing and trust in online communities for educators. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 47(1), 1-31.
- Iyer, S., Cheng, J., Brown, N., & Wang, X. (2020, May). When Does Trust in Online Social Groups Grow?. In *Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media* (Vol. 14, pp. 283-293).
- Li, Y., Tan, C. H., & Teo, H. H. (2012). Leadership characteristics and developers' motivation in open source software development. *Information & Management*, 49(5), 257-267.

Other interesting references:

- Colquitt, J. A., Scott, B. A., & LePine, J. A. (2007). Trust, trustworthiness, and trust propensity: A meta-analytic test of their unique relationships with risk taking and job performance. *Journal of applied psychology*, 92(4), 909.
- Costa, A. C., Roe, R. A., & Taillieu, T. (2001). Trust within teams: The relation with performance effectiveness. *European journal of work and organizational psychology*, 10(3), 225-244.

Another related presentation by Stacy:

The Power of Community: Non-Linear Approach That Pays Off (London Open Source Database Meetup, September 28, 2019)

Let's Keep in Touch

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