

# Synergy

through Online Etiquette and Mentorship

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# The Engineer Mindset

- Objective-oriented
  - “These things must be accomplished.”
- Streamline the process
  - Reduce latency and expand throughput
  - Brief is beautiful
- Improve towards progress
  - Building on previous knowledge
  - Avoiding the past mistakes
- Novices are a liability



# Two Big Challenges for Online Maintainers



- Written speech lacks voice
  - Some meaning is lost in text
  - Tone can be misinterpreted
    - “That is a great idea.”
    - “Are they serious or is this a joke?”
- Respect must be earned
  - Interact with many strangers
  - Gifts are the tool
    - Work for trust (guide for respect)
  - More trust means more leverage
    - Criticism is more easily accepted

# Scenario

How do you talk to a stranger?



# Reviewing Patches (submitted by newcomers)

## The Wrong Way:

- No. Just No.
- RTFM
- What even is this? What on Earth are you trying to do?
- This code is bad and you should feel bad.
- I'm not going to reply to you any more.



## The Right Way:

- Hi William, thank you for taking the time to send me your patch. This is a great first draft, but I have some comments and questions inline below.
- Unfortunately this hardware doesn't support that function. Try this function instead from page 42 of the manual.
- I'm confused about this part. Would you explain it some more? Let's work together to figure this out.
- This is a common error that I made in the past too. Here's how you can fix it and why it's better this way.
- There are some good ideas here. With a little more work, we'll be able to merge this. :-)

# Guiding Principles

- **Maintainers should be mentors**
  - No one starts out an expert (remember how it felt to be a novice)
  - Maintainers can (should!) serve as ambassadors of the code
    - Guide novices on the path to expertise
- **Build trust and establish respect**
  - Acknowledge the efforts of the patch submitter
  - Do the favor for them so they do the favor for you.
- **Work as allies towards a common goal**
  - Patch merger is a cooperative effort of code improvement
    - Not a fight for acceptance
  - Disagreements are technical not personal



# Thank you

Feel free to contact me with any comments or questions:

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Let's work together to build something better.

