



Stanford eCorner

Incentives for People in a Community-Based Organization

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Mitchell Baker, CEO of Mozilla, describes the richness in decision-making authority that one is endowed with while working in a community-based organization like Mozilla. She talks about the freedom that one gets while working in such a setting, starting from picking the team to the end goal. She also explains how Mozilla tries to incentivize people by articulating their vision.



Transcript

OK. As a leader of this organization, how do you incentivize people? So Part One? Right. OK. So really two answers to that. We are one of the open source projects that when we delegate authority, we actually mean authority. So that there is a decision maker. So in that sense, we're not quite as a leaderless as you might think. So on technical matters, for example, Brandon has always been the ultimate decision maker when you need one. And if there's something that's not technical about policy or governance or have a project once or how it operates with their commercial entity who participates, that's been me. So we always have some but on the broader delegated authority question, we incentivize people by trying to articulate a goal or a vision or a next step that people buy into and then by giving them the ability to do things.

It turns out that's a pretty big incentive. Sometimes people ask, "Why would anybody ever work for an open source project and not get paid?" And the first step question made sense to me. And now, I think of it as a poverty of understanding. Well, how many people don't like their jobs? How many people feel like their manager doesn't appreciate them? How many people feel like they're in the wrong job? How many people can't find work in an area that's really motivating? Or how many people can find their work but have family or other obligations? You know, where in a work setting you're very constrained and if you contrast that to something you like to do because many programmers like to program and you say, "Pick the area you like. Pick the people you like. Do what you want to do. Do it well and you can lead." You know, you will find people are gratified. They will come to you. They will help you. They will ask your opinion.

They will give you strokes and you can have some influence. Well, how great a hobby is that? But that's pretty nice. Many people struggle most of their life to find the setting like that. And so, we're an organization where we try to make more and more and more of those opportunities. So that's the incentive.