DebConf governance brainstorming session

Holger Levsen

August 17th 2013
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- This document is available at gobby.debian.org/debconf13/bof/debconf-governance
Time is (not) on our side

- **strong** feedback:
  - do not want to discuss now.
  - maybe define $time for discussion now.

- other people are fine to discuss.
- "the view is fantastic" (meaning: it has been a good DebConf)
Time is (not) on our side

- **strong** feedback:
  - do not want to discuss now.
  - maybe define $time for discussion now.
    - I’d propose in 2-3 months, when the dc13 final report is done
  - other people are fine to discuss.
  - "the view is fantastic" (meaning: it has been a good DebConf)
Different DebConf

- Phil Hands brought up the idea of a DebConf in Frankfurt/Hahn (small airport next to the big Frankfurt/Main one), the airport has conference facilities and is easy to reach.
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My spontaneous reaction: "stop smoking crack"

Phil's thoughtful reply: "you or me?"
Quick poll

- Who has been to a DebConf which wasn’t good?
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- Who was sceptical about dc13 before coming here?
Quick poll

- Who has been to a DebConf which wasn’t good?
- Who was sceptical about dc13 before coming here?
- Who stayed unconvinced and thinks this wasn’t a good DebConf?
About this session

- This is not about DebConf13. Or at least, it shouldn’t, Please don’t make it one.
- My slides originally started after this one.
Decision making

- painful for all is probably quite correct
- no clear owners (decisions, responsibilities)
- no clear process
- no(t enough) written documentation
result: chairs as perceived by me

- some month ago: "chairs, please decide on this tiny foo"
- these days the chairs were rather ignored (and thus lost interest as many other global team members too)
DebConf governance?

- Debian has foundation documents (constitution, DFSG) and more written and important documents: policy, new maintainers guide, etc
- DebConf has some wiki pages in a "Manual" category
- IOW: our governance model is not clearly defined currently, thus different people have different interpretations
- maybe s#governance#decision structure# but you get the idea
DebConf governance?

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- IOW: our governance model is not clearly defined currently, thus different people have different interpretations
- maybe s#governance#decision structure# but you get the idea
- gwolf: I prefer your "decision structure" wording to "governance". DebConf is Debian. We are not a separate body, thus, we don’t need a separate government.
Date: 2011-03-09 10:15
Subject: chairs delegation
From: Stefano Zacchirol <leader@debian.org>

▶ I hereby delegate the following people as "DebConf chairs":
   ▶ Holger Levensen <holger>
   ▶ Moray Allan <moray>
   ▶ Gunnar Wolf <gwolf>
The main responsibility of the DebConf chairs is to act as a liaison between the Debian Project and the DebConf organization. In that capacity, the chairs will be responsible to the Project for the organization of DebConf and how Debian resources (e.g. money, but also the "Debian" name) are used to that end.

DebConf organization itself does not need to change in response to this new delegation and the informal DebConf team is free, as it has always been, to establish its own structures and decision mechanisms. The chairs are expected to help the team in establishing those things and to break decision ties if and when they occur.
what zack intended

- zack, "back when I wrote this...":
  - spell out that DebConf is Debian
  - clarifying who’s responsible for Debian resource usage in the context of DebConf
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- zack, "back when I wrote this...":
  - spell out that DebConf is Debian
  - clarifying who’s responsible for Debian resource usage in the context of DebConf
- At that time, this was very much needed and today there is no more doubt, that DebConf is Debian.
- Thank you, zack!
Of course, DebConf is also not Debian

- There are differences between Debian + DebConf (time component, real world interaction)....
- we are all different...
- d-i is run differently then debian-release then debconf then...
  we are all different and we are all Debian.
- DebConf is very special indeed. Like we all are :-)

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DebConf team, (re)defined

- No redefinition, rather formalisation needed, IMNSHO.
who is in the team?

- idea 1:
  - anybody on the list / the IRC channel?
who is in the team?

▶ idea 2:
  ▶ formal process to join and leave:
    ▶ join by public mail to debconf-team, auto-acceptence as default, delegates can put join on hold or deny.
    ▶ yearly cleanup by team||chairs
    ▶ (list maintained in a public git repo)
who is in the team?

- idea 3:
  - formal process to join and leave:
    - join by public mail to debconf-team, one existing team member needs to advocate, delegates can put join on hold or deny.
    - yearly cleanup by team||chairs
    - (list maintained in a public git repo)
who is in the team?

- idea 4:
  - instead of chair delegation: team delegation?
    - team can add members to it (this also needs a formal process)
    - DPL can deny those
who is in the team?

- idea 5:
  - other suggestions?
the good old times

▶ "rough consensus & working code"
what’s consensus anyway

▶ idea1: consensus means we all agree.
what’s consensus anyway

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▶ idea2: consensus means decision by a clear majority
what’s consensus anyway

- idea1: consensus means we all agree.
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- idea3: consensus means an absence of significant dissent
what’s consensus anyway

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- idea4: other suggestions?
what's consensus anyway

- idea1: consensus means we all agree.
- idea2: consensus means decision by a clear majority
- idea3: consensus means an absence of significant dissent
- idea4: other suggestions?
- (this also finally needs to be formally documented)
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- To some, 8 people agreeing, 1 vocally disagreeing and 2 a bit unsure, is a consensus.
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- Really, really, really.
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- Even if we were mostly white males ;-P
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- But Debian is a diverse community, so this is not true for all, so we need to document this.
- Really, really, really.
- Even if we were mostly white males ;-P
- (Hint: we are not - and Debian and us change too.)
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- There are many many final and good decisions! The view on the lake really is fantastic.
Random ideas

- Just some more random ideas now...
advisory board instead of chairs?

▶ the term **advisory board** might make things clearer....
advisory board instead of chairs?

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- or maybe it redefines things: an **advisor** is something else than a **chair**
- and no matter what name we choose: just a name ain’t enough, we need defined procedures.
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- and no matter what name we choose: just a name ain’t enough, we need defined procedures.
- or maybe a **steering board**? (that’s something different again)
DebConf Committee

- delegate the DebConf Committee?
- (and keep that name)
real life handover?

- idea: have a real life handover 1-3 days after DebConf?
- LCA has "ghosts", previous organizers who are happy to help
No matter what model we choose, the really important part is that everybody understands it the same and can live with it. And, that future generations will do the same.

Sounds easy, but it’s not.

Let’s do this together!
Brainstorming session

- Please use gobby!
- What do you think?
Social experiment

- Please sit in the circle if you think you are part of DebConf team
- Please sit in the audience otherwise