



***How a free software
developer self sustains
or
money can't buy your love***

Outline

- Who am I or how I became what I am
- What I do in/for/with Debian
- What I do for money (and how)
- Some general advice



Who am I ?

- 36 years old, living in Hamburg, Germany
 - <http://layer-acht.org>
 - <http://holgerlevsen.de>
- working professionally with Linux since 1997
- using computers since 25 years
- started basic programming with friends as kid
 - self taught
 - we didnt even know for-loops...



Who am I ?

- my formal education: I finished highschool
- I didn't finish university...
- pretty much self taught everything
 - lots of information and knowledge freely available
 - There are many friendly people who like to share knowledge
 - for fun and to learn more themselves



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Somewhat. (Today, every kid knows computers...)
- But I always did & do what I thought and think is sensible
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- If there is only one thing you can remember from this talk, then please remember:
 - Have fun. Do what you think is sensible. Think. Have fun.



1984...

- 1984 was when I started using computers...
- the Chaos Computer Club (CCC) did their first hack, which inspired me greatly. I wanted a computer!
 - CCC is a good example of “sensible authentic fun”... hackers are respected not feared in Germany – because of the CCC
- and got a C64 for christmas :-)
- switched to Amiga in 1987
 - starting 1988/89 I didn't use my computer much anymore - but then...



1992

- in 1992 I could either buy a big harddisc (104mb!!) or a smaller one and a modem...
 - I choose the modem and didn't sleep the first night
 - (the harddrive was nice, too...)
- got involved in BBS systems and email networks
 - so since 1992 I'm on the internet
 - but I only knew it was The Internet since 1994
- visiting Chaos Communication Congresses since 1992 – and learned a whole lot each year...



GNU/Linux

- first saw Linux in 1994 at a CCGongress
 - I had almost no idea about Unix
 - ifconfig with BNC ethernet cards...
- 1995 I finally installed Linux
- 1996 finally Debian. Puh :-)
- happy Debian user since then...



How my Debian involvement started...

- In 2003 I started contributing to FAI
- FAI = Fully Automatic Installation
 - Sysadmin / Maintenance tool
- DebConf had a rather poor / adhoc computer infrastructure
 - I knew how to improve it, and they let me do it!
- at DebConf5 in Helsinki I was root on all machines :-) I wasn't a DD but I was root. W00t!



How I really got sucked in...

- attended Debconf3 and DebConf4 in 2003+4 without wanting to become a Debian Developer
 - “too difficult”
 - I thought I didn't know enough
 - etc.
- joined NM (new maintainer process) in 2005
 - too busy working on Debian:
 - mostly due to Debian Edu and DebConf
- Debian Developer, holger@debian.org since 2007



DebConf

- DebConf5 was also the first DebConf with a videoteam – and we were on Slashdot!
 - DebConf3 had unpublished recordings, DebConf4 nothing.
- talks and slides available at <http://video.debian.net>
 - many other events covered (DebConf.es, FOSDEM, QA-meetings, ...)
- so I became involved in organizing DebConfs..
 - Linux Australia invited me over so that LCA2009 got preserved for eternity too
 - Suddenly I'm in Taipeh \o/



Debian Edu / Skolelinux

- Developer
- Documentation coordinator
 - Debian-edu-doc package
 - wiki to docbook, to po files, to pdf +html
- ftpmaster
- de facto release-manager
- Mentor



package maintainer

- when I joined NM, I didnt want to maintain packages. “There are enough already.”
 - But someone convinced me it's easier to join if do like everybody else...
 - not all packages were+are in good shape, so I took tuxtype and tuxmath
- and some software was missing, so I packaged olsrd and batman and then I saw munin needed help...
- ttf-liberation, piuparts, fai and the debian-edu packages are also maintained by teams I'm a member of...



Debian QA

- QA = Quality Assurance
- Debian *Policy is your friend. Trust the Policy. Love the Policy. Obey the Policy.*
 - lintian + piuparts
- piuparts = "package installation, upgrading and removal testing suite"
- I love QA. Besides Debians social contract, the Debian Free Software Guidelines and the people who make up Debian I think QA is what seperates Debian from the rest and makes it so good



What do I get from Debian work

- Fun
- Friends all over the world
- Knowledge
- Reputation / “Immortality”
- Improved my english (y español tambien) a lot
- Travel - look mum, I'm in Taipeh!
- Jobs / money



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- Jobs / money
- “Social security”...



Who am I ?



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Who am I ?

- I have fun and do sensible things. I'm authentic. And pretty serious!



Who am I ?

- If there is only one thing you can remember from this talk, then please remember:
 - Have fun. Do what you think is sensible. Think. Have fun. Be yourself!
- You and the people around you will appreciate that.



Different kinds of work I do

- Infrastructure design and deployment
- Consulting
- Support
- System administration
- Maintenance
- Hosting
- Webstuff
- Writing articles



What I cannot do

- well, a lot :)
- For example, I cannot code. Anymore. (Or so I thought... lately I've been happily hacking on piuparts..)
 - I'm involved in too many things
 - people ask me lots of stuff, so I get interrupted a lot
 - No practice
- But this doesn't really matter much for me. There are many different types of people needed in the free software world (and in the commercial world)



Customers

- >50% from outside germany
 - Mostly by word of mouth, a few via the website
- Currently mainly Oslo Linux Project and small businesses
- In the past also:
 - OLPC – but working with RedHat was no fun, as much as I liked (and like) the project
 - Big website for a business association in Spain
 - Some consulting, some small(er) websites
- A few constant customers, but mostly project work



How much do I work?

- Hard to say, I guess 50-60h per week
 - Usually 15-20h paid work, sometimes 5, sometimes 50
 - 5-10h unpaid work which is work related
 - 20-30h Debian/free software work
- Usually when and where I want to
 - But sometimes on sundays or very early in the morning or late at night.
 - But sometimes while at a conference or such



Someone needs to do the dishes (or clean the toilet)

- Not everything I do is fun:



Someone needs to do the dishes (or clean the toilet)

- Not everything I do is fun (for me):
 - Taxes
 - Accounting
- But it must be done properly!
- Know your weaknesses and find solutions



Some general advice

- Have fun, do what you think is right. Always.



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- Set your own goals and follow them



Some general advice

- Have fun, do what you think is right. Always.
- Set your own goals and follow them
 - Measurable
 - Reachable
 - Write them down



Excursion: my goals 5 years ago

- Make enough money not to have to worry about money
- Only work on/with free software
- Travel, see the world



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- There were more... which I can't really remember, so I've lost track of them and probably haven't succeeded in...



Excursion: my goals 5 years ago

- Make enough money not to have to worry about money
- Only work on/with free software
- Travel, see the world
- There were more... which I can't really remember, so I've lost track of them and probably haven't succeeded in...
- While finishing the slides I remembered another goal, which appearantly wasn't important to me:
 - Don't work too much :-)



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- Set your own goals and follow them
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Some general advice

- Have fun, do what you think is right. Always.
- Set your own goals and follow them
 - Measurable
 - Reachable
 - Write them down and make sure you find them later
- You need self discipline
 - Self discipline is really really important
 - And self discipline shall *result* in fun!



Thank you for your attention!

- Questions?
- Comments?
- Jobs?



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- Jobs?

<http://layer-acht.org/slides>



Food for thoughts #1

<http://kitenet.net/~joey/blog/entry/Socialstructuring/>

- How I lived, rent-free, for years on land I didn't own.
- Why I don't think about asking for money when I fix someone's computer or help them get something working or host something for them on the web.
- Why I've not bought land to put my yurt on, and keep being unsure it's a good idea.
- How contributing to free software isn't just throwing my time away for no return.
- Why I get to travel to interesting places so frequently and inexpensively.
- Why I'm housesitting this week.
- How I get fresh eggs, plant sets for the garden, summer produce.



Food for thoughts #2

<http://rondam.blogspot.com/2006/10/top-ten-geek-business-myths.html>

- Myth #1: A brilliant idea will make you rich.
- Myth #3: Someone will steal your idea if you don't protect it.
- Myth #4: What you think matters.
- Myth #6: What you know matters more than who you know.
- Myth #7: A Ph.D. means something.
- Myth #10: Having no competition is a good thing.
- Summary: Success in business is not about having a brilliant idea. Bright ideas are a dime a dozen. Business is [hard work]. It's that simple. And that complicated.

