

Women in Open Source: Challenges and Opportunities Proposal for Panel Discussion at GHC 2004

Objectives of the panel/workshop/presentation?

-To educate on and discuss themes of female participation in the Open Source Software movement.

Who should attend the panel/workshop/presentation?

-Anyone interested in the Open Source phenomenon and its potential to increase proportionate participation by women in the development of software.

Are there restrictions on attendance (size, background knowledge)?

-Some bare-bones background information on the Open Source movement and methodology will be presented by the moderator in the first 10-15 minutes to make sure everyone is on the same page

What is the format of the panel/workshop/presentation?

-Moderated Q&A with brief presentation at the beginning

What are the topics being covered?

-What is Open Source?

-How is Open Source development different to Closed Source development?

-What are the commonalities/differences in the experience of the panelists' involvement in Open Source?

-What additional opportunities (if any) are available to women in the Open Source movement?

-How are gender politics expressed in a globally distributed team?

-What should women engineers do to influence the Open Source movement in positive ways?

What is the proposed session length?

-90 minutes, including audience Q and A

Will there be written materials, and if so, what are they?

-Presentation slides outlining what Open Source is and how the methodology and team composition differs from traditional or Closed Source development.

What competing points of view will be discussed?

-Panelists come from different parts of the world and have interacted at different levels of the Open Source experience.

Two of the panelists have worked directly as engineers on Open Source projects. One of these, Justyna Horwat, has achieved some notoriety (first woman engineer voted to "membership" at Apache.org) but feels that there should be no difference due to gender in engineering. The other, Alolita Sharma, is currently trying to influence adoption of Open Source in India because she sees it as a great potential boon to all engineers and student engineers there (but particularly for women).

Two of the panelists are famous "managers" of high-profile Open Source communities. Mitchell Baker is by trade a lawyer and wrote one of the seed licenses that are the underpinnings of the Open Source movement. She has experienced career limitations due to affiliation with Open Source, first working to harmonize Open Source team dynamics within a non-Open Source company and eventually choosing affiliation with Mozilla over employment. Stormy Peters runs the Open Source Programs office for HP. Her role seems to have been less controversial within her company.

The Moderator is very concerned with the potential of Open Source to empower the next

generation of engineers globally (and particularly for female engineers) to take control of their careers and do their best work without suffering as much gender bias as is typical in the software industry today.

What knowledge can attendees expect to gain?

-Understanding of the components of Open Source methodology and the differences between Open Source and traditional software development. An appreciation for the types of roles women have found within the Open Source movement and the challenges they are facing. Possible leads and advice for how to start engaging in Open Source.

What are the number, names, and affiliation of the speaker(s)?

-Four panelists and a Moderator (plus one Alternate)

Moderator: Danese Cooper, Chief Open Source Evangelist, Sun Microsystems, Inc.

Panel Members:

-Mitchell Baker, Chief Lizard Wrangler, Mozilla.org

-Justyna Horwat, Sr. Staff Engineer, Sun Microsystems, Inc.

-Stormy Peters, Manager Open Source Programs Office, HPQ

-Alolita Sharma, CEO, Technetra (Indian Outsourcing firm specializing in Open Source)

Confirmed Alternate: Leslie Proctor, Director of Marketing, GNOME.org

What are the educational, technical, and professional background/qualifications of the speaker(s)?

-Danese Cooper *a technical manager for the last 15 years, including 5 years work at Sun exclusively on open source. Currently Chief Open Source Evangelist at Sun. She has served since 2002 on the Board of Directors of the Open Source Initiative (www.opensource.org). Ms. Cooper speaks professionally all over the world on open source topics. Ms. Cooper is a graduate of UCLA.*

-Mitchell Baker *worked for 10 years as a lawyer specializing in technology licensing for some of the biggest firms and companies in Silicon Valley before helping to launch the Mozilla effort and authoring the Mozilla Public License in 1998. She currently serves as Chief Lizard Wrangler at Mozilla.org and as Community Manager for OSAF. She also lectures extensively on Open Source topics. She holds a degree from UC Berkeley and a JD from Boalt.*

-Justyna Horwat *is a Software Engineer at Sun Microsystems and has been involved in Java-enabled web technologies for the past 5 years. She's been active in the Open Source community for several years and in 2002 became the first woman developer to be elected an Apache Software Foundation member. Ms. Horwat received a Masters of Computer Science from the University of Illinois.*

-Alolita Sharma *a dvises commercial and government clients on software engineering. She is a keen Linux enthusiast and also enjoys writing and lecturing on software and Web engineering. Ms. Sharma is affiliated with George Washington University.*

-Stormy Peters *works at Hewlett-Packard in Fort Collins, Colorado where she is responsible for HP's open source strategy, policy and business practices. She started work at HP in the Unix Development Lab and later became a founding member of HP's Linux division. Ms. Peters holds a computer science degree from Rice University.*

-Leslie Proctor *has been involved in the free software/open source movement since the late 1990s. She is currently serving on the board of directors of the GNOME Foundation. Leslie has written a number of columns and articles on open source issues and has spoken at conferences around the world on open source marketing issues. Ms. Proctor is a graduate of the University of Utah.*