Organizational Culture and Structure at FreeBSD
Nothing to learn from Business Schools ;)

Dr Frederic Culot – PhD, (almost) MBA
culot@FreeBSD.org

Institute of Biostructures and Bioimaging,
Naples, Italy
April 6, 2013
Trailer

Noob Meets Investors

I Kick Ass!
I Can Has Cash?

Sure-

Gurgle

One Year Later-

You Better Be Creative
You Punks!

Mr Wolf to the Rescue!

Onoes!

I Can't Get No Innovation!

I'm Mr Wolf

1 Solve Problems
大纲

► 介绍

► 组织文化
  - 文化：wtf？
  - 授权
  - 动机和需求金字塔
  - 创意刷和 NIH 综合征
  - 活力

► 组织结构
  - 自我组织
  - 自然系统
  - 跨边界
  - 虚拟团队

► 总结
  - FreeBSD 特征
  - 所以呢？
  - 最后思考
Sustaining innovation: is organizational culture involved?

“An organization’s culture is what determines how people behave when they are not being watched.”

-- Tom Tierney, former managing partner, Bain Consultancy
Organizational culture, wtf?

- Deal and Kennedy (1982): culture defined as “The way we do things around here”

  - refers to the attitudes, rituals, symbols, values within an organization

- Examples of core values:
  
  we challenge traditional thinking and bureaucracy  
  we lead by example  
  we respect the individual  
  we act with integrity  
  fast is better than slow  
  focus on the user and all else will follow  
  you can be serious without a suit  
  ...

Deal, T. E., Kennedy, A. A.
Empowerment (1/2)

Cooperative, Committed, And Proactive workforce

Marchington, M., Goodman, J., Wilkinson, A., Acker, P.,

Semler, R.,
Empowerment (2/2)

► FreeBSD developers control when, on what and with whom they want to work

► truly self-managing work teams with almost no limits to their autonomy

► high-involvement work system which can be very effective

Bowen, D., E., Lawler, E., E.,
Motivation and pyramid of needs

Need for self-actualization (challenging projects, opportunities for innovation and creativity, learning at a high level...)

Need for self-esteem (recognition of strength – intelligence, prestige and status...)

Social needs - belonging (acceptance, group membership, love and affection...)

Need for safety and security (physical safety, economic security, comfort, peace...)

Physical survival needs (water, food, sleep, health, sex...)

Creative swiping, no NIH syndrom (1/2)

▶ Peters (1987): Put NIH (Not Invented Here) behind you and learn to copy (with unique adaptation/enhancement) from the best

⇒ Proudly Found Elsewhere

▶ Huston and Sakkab (2006): creative swiping improves the rate of innovation
Creative swiping, no NIH syndrom (2/2)

- pf
- ZFS
- DTrace
- MAC
- ...

I wonder if they will advertise win 8
LOOK WE PUT A DUMBED DOWN TABLET INTERFACE ON A PC OS
HOW BRILLIANT
isn’t it what’s freebsd trying to do?
we run great on PDP11-based tablets
Playfulness

► Schrage (2000): “Innovation is less the product of how innovators think than a by-product of how they behave. [...] You can’t be a serious innovator unless you are **willing and able to play**.”

Schrage, M.,
Sustaining innovation: which organizational structure to set up?

“Structure follows strategy as the left foot follows the right.”

Self-organization

▶ Workers organize their day-to-day work in a professional manner

▶ Semler: “Semco’s standard policy is no policy”

do not instill a few values to be respected by all employees, but
promote autonomy and diversity

---

Semler, R.,

---

```plaintext
becanadabald | man, waiting for chromium to build is like waiting for a frenchman to win a war
icanhasarm   | not fair, you know it will fail in the end
touche!      |
canadabald   | if only the french had a way of conveying the sentiment of touche...
```
Natural system (1/2)

► Scott: “a collectivity whose participants share a common interest in the survival of the system and who engage in collective activities, informally structured, to secure this end”

► informal structure

► variety of interests and plurality of goals

► evolves and adapts depending on changes in both internal and external environments but does not rely on strict plans and strategies

Scott, W.,
Natural system (2/2)

- Segmentation of work and interests (3 types of commit bits):
  src, ports, docs

irc

- canadabald: icanhasarm: you want pictures of me, in my underwear, hacking freebsd while watching sci-fi?
- icanhasarm: do you happen to hack freebsd?
- canadabald: icanhasarm: you know i don’t really, I just hack Makefiles for ports
- icanhasarm: oh of course, that
Boundary spanning (1/2)

▶ Aldrich et al. (1977): boundary spanning -> information brought to the organization from outside, by networking across traditional organizational borders

▶ Newell et al. (1990): the more boundary spanners an organization has, the higher its degree of innovativeness


Boundary spanning (2/2)

► comitters are students or have official jobs

► opportunity to discuss with other engineers
► ability to keep pace of latest developments in various areas
► facilitates inward flows of information

I have a trick, I have a windows desktop
it’s so cool because you can use communicator
and do you know what communicator have?
ANIMATED SMILEYS
wow like caramail chat!
a bit, except they are professional smileys
because communicator is a serious tool
look how professional it looks
Virtual teams (1/2)

► different locations, electronic communications, projects live 24/7

► Young (1998): “powerful way of working, new production units of knowledge and innovation” BUT “the notion of control goes out of the window, along with management in its strict sense”

► Storey et al. (2005): few examples of successful implementation of such teams

Young, R.,

Storey, J., Salaman, G.,
Virtual teams (2/2)

- FreeBSD: living proof that virtual teams can bring great success
- Live 24/7/365

Giaglis, G., M., Spinellis, D.,
Summary

tacoz | icanhasarm: sorry I only pay attention half of the time

tacoz | but keep on talking, it’s interesting :)

BSD Day Napoli 2013
FreeBSD traits

► A post-industrial organization
► A natural system
► A missionary structure

► flat hierarchy
► full decentralization
► flexible and informal structure
► norms as a mean of coordination and control
► variety of interests and plurality of pursued goals
► permeable boundaries between insiders and outsiders
► use of advanced communication and computing technologies
► little planning and control, no strict strategy but focus on adaptation instead
So what?
“[treat] employees as volunteers just as you treat customers as volunteers, because that’s what they are. They volunteer the best part – theirs hearts and minds.”

Questions?

Thanks to:

► FreeBSD Foundation and Logos for financial support
► pgj@, gianni@ for the organization
► xkcd.com, cmx.io for illustrations
► friends at #telestore for feedback and inspiration