

Evolving KDE: survey evaluation and recommendations

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In the first half of 2015 the Board of KDE e.V. started [Evolving KDE](#). It has the goal to help the KDE Community get a better view of where it is, where it wants to go and how to get there. The first step was a survey of users and active contributors. The following document summarizes the results of this survey and gives recommendations for actions over the coming months.

The survey was taken by 202 individuals. 92 of them identified themselves as users and 91 as active contributors. (The rest specified “other”.) Most of the active contributors are involved casually or intermittent and are involved for 5 or more years. More than half of the survey responses came from Europe.

What motivates you and makes you happy when contributing within the KDE community?

The first question we asked was “What motivates you and makes you happy when contributing within the KDE community?” The responses indicate that most people are motivated by being in a great community. After that the technology is mentioned. Runner ups include: the potential impact one’s contributions can have, identifying with the ideology of the project, scratching one’s own itch and the potential for learning by contributing.

What do you appreciate in the KDE Community?

The second question we asked was “What do you appreciate in the KDE Community?” Survey responses here almost uniformly focused on the friendliness of the KDE Community. Openness was mentioned second-most. People also appreciate that it is easy for them to get support from others inside the community. Runners ups include: technical excellence, diversity and the products we produce.

What holds you back in your involvement with the KDE community?

The third question we asked was “What holds you back in your involvement with the KDE community?” The most mentioned theme here was time and energy. Among users then came the lack of skills as well as clear tutorials and help pages that give a clear entry point to contributing. There seems to still be deeply-held belief that unless one is a programmer it is not possible to contribute to KDE. Among the existing contributors the most mentioned points were then: a lack of vision and focus, lacking documentation and other help, in-group behaviour as well as a lack of skills.

What are your ideas to improve the KDE community?

The fourth question we asked was “What are your ideas to improve the KDE community?” Users very clearly demanded better documentation and entry points for newcomers here. After that came focusing on quality, more user-centered development and more outreach. Existing contributors mentioned about equally focus (but opinions differed in what to focus on), improved outreach activities and better documentation for getting involved. Then came a more active role of KDE e.V., outreach to specific groups (women, countries, etc), being more welcoming to commercial contributors and taking a more active role inside the Qt ecosystem.

Imagine yourself as a happy member of the KDE community in 5 years, what does KDE look like?

The fifth question we asked was “Imagine yourself as a happy member of the KDE community in 5 years, what does KDE look like?” The answers here focused a lot on bringing KDE’s software to more devices and the cloud and convergence - possibly by being a distributor directly to the end-user. Then came the focus on creating truly excellent free software that is better than any other - not just other free software. Continuing to be friendly and open was another major theme. Overall people expect KDE to be well known, its software used everywhere and still defending the freedom of our users - both by providing them with great free software and doing advocacy. We should be concentrating less on ourselves and more on the big ecosystem we are a part of and work together with other entities in it more closely. Respondents were also in favor of slightly more involvement by companies. Contributors have a clear desire for a vision and strategy. It seems it does not matter too much which vision and strategy it is as long as we have one.

Recommendations

Based on these findings the KDE Community should focus on the following over the next year:

- Develop our vision, strategy and focus
- Review all initiatives and products and evaluate which we should concentrate our focus on
- Improve recruiting and onboarding processes and documentation
- Simplify and clarify our main web-presence
- Develop ideas and processes for how to make better use of our social media presence, dot and other outreach venues