Two Years at the head of the Native-Lang Confederation: At the heart of OpenOffice.org

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Summary

- Some background about the Native-Lang Confederation (NLC)
- Overview of the NLC growth and expansion
- The roles of the NLC
- The policies and guidelines of the Confederation
- Past and Present Challenges
- Our successes
- The world domination (or what lies ahead)
- Q & A

Some background about the Native-Lang Confederation

- In the beginning:
- Guy Capra, one of the earliest contributor of OpenOffice.org, starts the French "lang" project
  - *At that time, Guy Capra thought the non-english speaking communities were not represented. He felt that the Project was losing energies, opportunities, market share and volunteers.*

    - The goal of this new category inside OOo was not well perceived at first by the rest of the community, and there were fears of secession

    - More "lang" projects followed: German, Italian, Dutch, Spanish

Overview of the NLC growth and expansion

- In September 2002, Guy Capra leaves its effective role inside OOo, nominates Sophie Gautier at the head of the French project and Charles-H. Schulz at the head of the Native-Lang Category. Louis Suarez-Potts remains the Co-Lead of the category.

- The Native-Lang projects are still a small constellation of communities but their contributions in terms of documentation and users's support are gaining importance.

- More projects are created: the Japanese project, will quickly rise as an heavyweight community pervading the entire "OOo process" from users support, documentation, localizations, development, marketing...

Overview of the NLC growth and expansion

- As new projects emerge (Danish, Czech, Chinese), a proactive, yet discrete strategy is being undertaken inside the NLC: attracting more potential projects, faster, in order to give a "competitive advantage" to OOo, and to stegnthen the base of the NLC.

- By september 2003, more than 25 projects are active or in development stage.

  Despite some efforts to slow down the pace of expansion, the Native-Lang Project, renamed Native-Lang Confederation of OOo in early 2004, counts 40 registered projects in june of the same year.

- These projects span the entire world. They are notoriously well implanted in Europe, Asia, and Middle-East.

The Roles of the NLC

- At the beginning, Native-Lang projects were supporting users, translating/writing documentation, helping/fixing some localizations.
- Soon, the emphasis was also put on marketing and local promotion.
- In the mean time, many projects started to work on their own localizations together with the L10N project, and increasingly, the L10N teams were forming new native-lang projects.
- QA of the localized builds has then been declared mandatory, as each native-lang project was responsible of its own build. Even builds localized by Sun are now QA'ed by the corresponding native-lang project.
- As some projects grew in importance and in ressources, genuine, independent development went under way.

The Roles of the NLC

- Developments of add-ons, plugins and specific macros, as well as development and QA tools have been created by the Native-Lang Projects.

- Today, the NLC can now act as a recruitor of talented developpers who can contribute directly to the central trunk of OOo.

- A more recent role of the Native-Lang projects is to collect data on local businesses working on/providing services on OOo and SO.

- In 2001, we started from:

linguistic communities representing users & developpers

to

communites of users, developpers, marketers, localizers,

ISVs, businesses, governments, QA volunteers... in 2004

Policies & guidelines of the NLC

There are two different kind of policies inside the NLC:

- project's setup policy: guidelines are available from the very first proposal of a project, to the set up of the new project's web site.

  First step: proposing a native-lang project on the dev@native-lang.openoffice.org and discuss@openoffice.org lists. It is the duty of the NLC leads to estimate the viability of the request and answer to it. After that, the NL projects' leads can "vote" for the newly formed project.

  Second step: setting up the project's page & domain, granting CVS access & commit privileges to the new project's lead.

- policy on the project's governance: The NL projects are autonomous and there is a non-intervention policy by default, except in some cases: lack/absence of leadership, orphaned project, complaints from the NL community itself. The community can change from project's lead whenever it wishes, without the intervention of the NLC leads.

Past & present challenges

- All native-lang projects are not created equal: strong differences in terms of ressources and know-how.
- But all of them have the same good will, and the most commited communities around....
- Lack of communication inside the NLC
- Lack of cooperation: some projects are "left in the dark"
- another consequences of the lack of ressources: many projects cannot fullfill their missions (i.e: local promotion, QA, development, etc...)
- With more than 40 communities, how to avoid the implosion of the NLC?

Our successes

- Having created the most dynamical community inside OOo
- Having helped OOo gain a significant market share (> 50%?)
- Worldwide distribution and evangelization of OOo
- In some cases, succesful governmental lobbying
- Global support of OOo users in their own languages
- "incubator lab" for new development initiatives: add-ons, plugins, macros & corporate devs
- Building a new "culture"and an indentity
- Representing the diversity of the Free and Open Source Software community.
- Uniting diverse interests, purposes, cultures in a Confederation.

The Road ahead...

- Due to the increasing number of incoming native-lang projects, the setting up of new forms of organizations and processes will be necessary in the short-mid term.

- It's all about management, not leadership.

- Transforming the Native-Lang developpers into a full-fledged development force inside the OOo process and the trunk of the OOo software.

- New areas of (main) expansion:

  - Africa

  - Australasia

  -Native American languages

  - Forming an English language project

- Pervading the entire OOo process & partnering with international entities such as UNPD

- Higer, faster, bigger, better...

Questions?

Thank you for your time!