

**Maintainers don't grow on
trees**



Getting new contributors



Getting new contributors

- Do cool stuff
- Tell people you're doing cool stuff
- Have a process for them to help you doing cool stuff

...but then what?

The anti-pattern

QuasarDB

December 11, 2023 – Matt Collins

I'm currently searching for someone to take over maintenance of QuasarDB, a time-series database used for high-performance data storage.

Looking for a maintainer to take over CloudWeaver

February 20, 2024 – Jason Cooper

We're looking for a new maintainer for the CloudWeaver project. I've been

March 4, 2024 – SarWilliams

Hey all, I'm in need of another developer to take over maintenance of Yarnspinner JS. If you're interested in keeping the project alive please let me know!

Looking for a maintainer to take over HexaCalc

November 28, 2028 – Laura K

I'm currently looking for someone to take over as maintainer for HexaCalc. Unfortunately I no longer have the time required to properly manage the project.

Looking for a maintainer

What happens when a maintainer leaves

- The project dies
- No-one has any real authority
- Awkward power struggle leads to infighting and forks

**When to look for a
replacement?**

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replacement?**

Before it gets to this point!

You could get hit by a bus

**You could have a career
change**

**You could have a career
change**

(and become a bus driver)

You could have a life change

**You could have a life change
(Like going to jail for constantly
running over developers in your
bus)**

“The right time to find your replacement is when you’re not looking for one”

Other benefits

Burnout avoidance

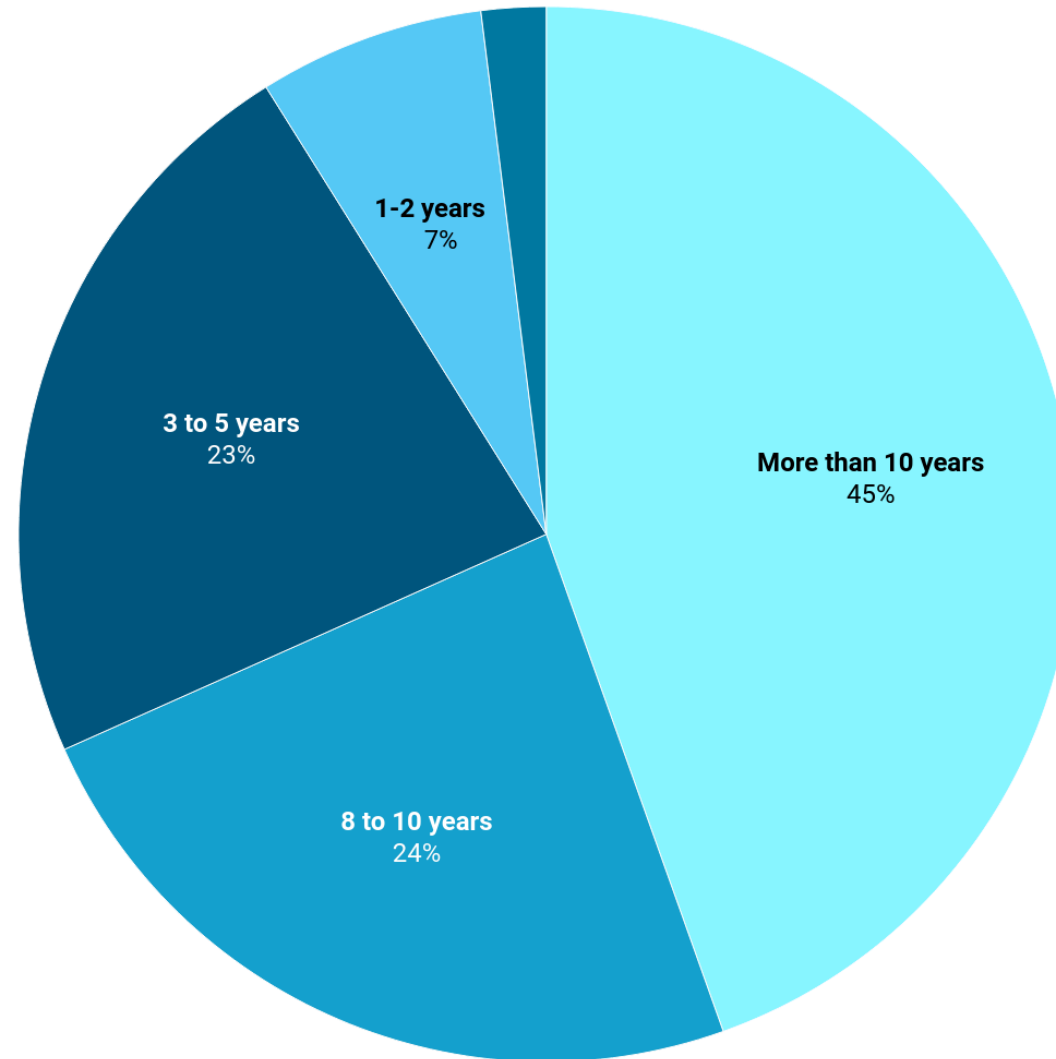
It keeps developers engaged



It keeps the ecosystem alive

How long have you been an open source maintainer?

More than 10 years 8 to 10 years 3 to 5 years 1-2 years Less than 1 year



N=344. Percentages add up to more than 100 due to rounding.

Chart: Heather Joslyn • Source: ["The 2024 Tidelift State of the Open Source Maintainer Report," Tidelift](#) • [Get the data](#) • [Embed](#) • [Download image](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)



How to turn devs into maintainers

Spotting the potential candidates

What make a good maintainer?

- Programming?
- UI?
- UX?
- Promo?
- Communication
- Commitment
- Having a vision?

**Not everyone is set to be a
maintainer**



Spotting a future maintainer?

Someone who:

- Makes lots of commits in the same topic
- Accepts feedback positively
- Partakes in the other tasks: Reviews, bugzilla, etc.

**Gets satisfaction in the product
being better, not in writing code**

Actionable items

Ask them to do things

- Start with reviews
- "Hey \$name, could you have a look at review <http://invent.kde.org/blah>, as you've done a lot of work on that area"
- "Feel free to approve anything if you're happy with it"

**Explain rationale behind
processes**

Empower

Empower

- Trust people to make decisions
- You can still be an influence
- "I think this is too niche a feature to support, but I'll let \$name have final say"

Empower - Provide official roles

- Sub-maintainer of \$component
- Co-maintainer

Encourage them to meetings

Help them feel ownership

- Use their role names in public
- Update any attributes page
- Force them to blog

**Don't take up 3 of the
Akademy talk slots so they
have a chance to speak...**

Summary:

- Find a replacement early
- Trust
- Empower early
- But importantly...

**Learn to let go of your
projects and give space**

...but most importantly

Watch out for busses

