

Background

An Open Source project's success relies on the engagement of both its developer and user communities. OpenStack has been successful at creating an environment where both users and developers of the software go above and beyond in engaging and involving themselves personally in the success of the project.

However the parallel way this engagement was built resulted in two separate groups that grew in separate places. While some of that separation is warranted (governance ensuring all concerns are represented, or topics being discussed being predominantly more developer-facing or user-facing), most of it is a consequence of the structure rather than reflecting a reality. While topics being discussed can be separate, nobody is really 100% on one side or the other.

The “forum” event acknowledges that by removing the “dev” or “ops” branding of the event and just defining a set of topics for discussion. Some of them more operational, some of them more development-oriented, but everyone is welcome to join and participate in the discussion. However beyond that event, we still have “workgroups” that are either branded “dev” or “ops”, while in most cases they would benefit from just defining a topic and having everyone participate in them.

Proposal

Replace current workgroups by OpenStack SIGs (Special Interest Groups) made up of individuals with a shared interest. SIGs are not attached to Ops vs. Dev part of the community. They may have a scope that is more about operational concerns, or a scope that is more around development concerns, but they are not branded as "ops" or "dev", so generally everyone feels welcome to participate in them and will be encouraged to.

The overarching aims of SIGs are to:

- Remove the branding around workgroups, the same way the Forum removed the branding around the discussion event days, to encourage anyone interested in the topic to join and participate as an equal
- Focus on defining the scope and goals of the workgroup, and not limit or discourage the participants

- Fix the situation where some of the current workgroups (like the API WG) sit in the middle between upstream workgroup and UC workgroup and are forced to artificially choose one side.

The success of the feedback loop rests on the establishment of bilateral communications, based on mutual understanding between those writing the software and those using it. This is largely an effort of cultural creation - developing common language, respect for the tough work both parties face and the empathy in process that this unlocks.

Implementation details

In terms of governance, git repositories used by workgroups currently have to fall on one side or the other. We would create a list of “SIG” repositories that sit on both sides (and where contribution gives voting rights on both sides). In terms of mailing-lists, workgroups currently either use openstack-dev or openstack-operators to hold their discussions. We would introduce a SIG list to hold all SIG discussions (or alternatively one mailing-list per SIG).

Key Risks

Directly related to the aims, are the following key risks:

- “SIG” naming (while being familiar to Kubernetes folks) sounds more like a lobbyist group than a group of people trying to get things done. We could keep the “workgroup” name to avoid that connotation.

Some User Committee workgroups are almost like UC subcommittees. Replacing them wholesale by a “neutral” workgroup might limit or reduce the activity/reach of the UC. Maybe some of those should stay as specific UC subcommittees.

Motivation

Individuals participating in these groups will have many different motivations. For example:

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Social Implementation

The build of these groups is largely that of culture creation, described in this section.

Initial phase

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Initial User engagement phase

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Initial Developer engagement phase

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Wider Developer engagement phase

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Wider User engagement phase

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End Game

Technical Implementation

Governance

Onboarding

Offboarding