State of Fedora

OSCON 2009

Karsten Wade
Community Gardener, Red Hat

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Fedora's four foundations

FREEDOM – Dedication to free software and content

FRIENDS – Strength of the community

FEATURES – Commitment to excellence

FIRST – Commitment to innovation

http://fedoraproject.org/wiki/Foundations

Fedora's focus on contributors

WHO IS FEDORA “FOR”?

How appropriately lowered barriers to participation and focus on contributors grows an amazing project ...

... that is much, much more than a Linux distro

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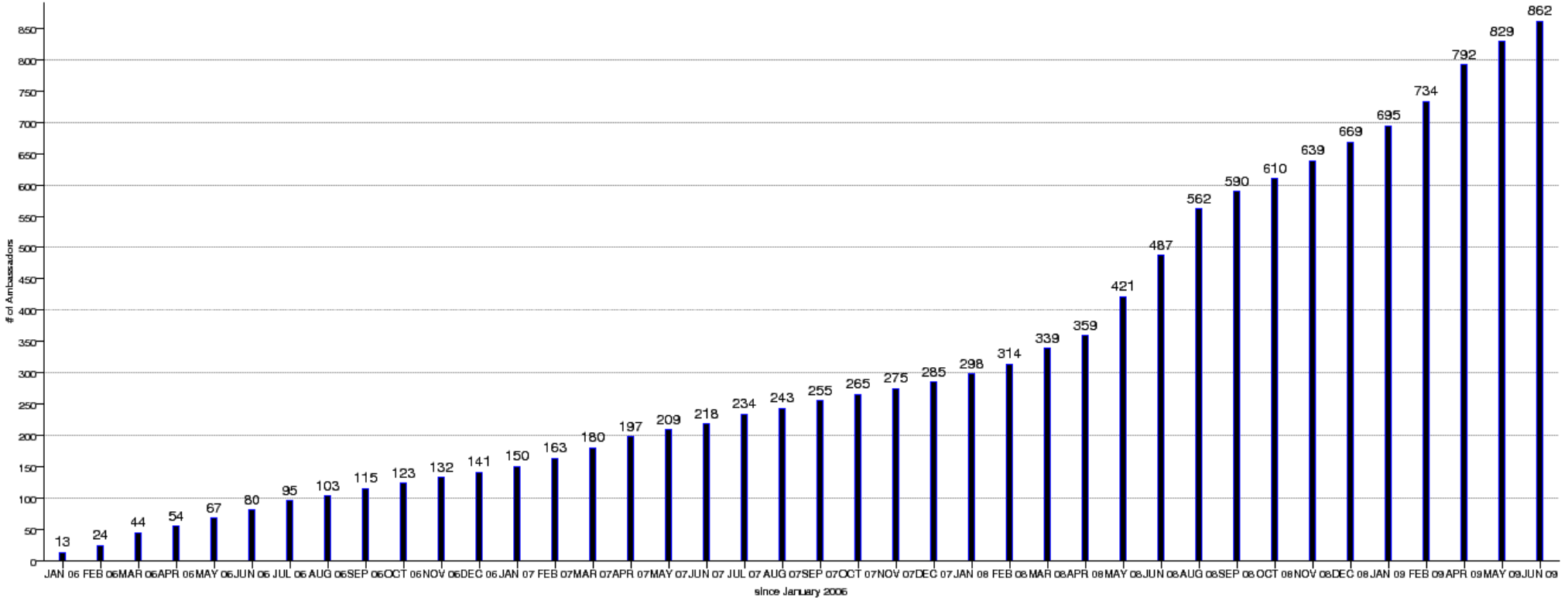
https://fedoraproject.org/wiki/Statistics

Ambassadors – 2005 to 2009



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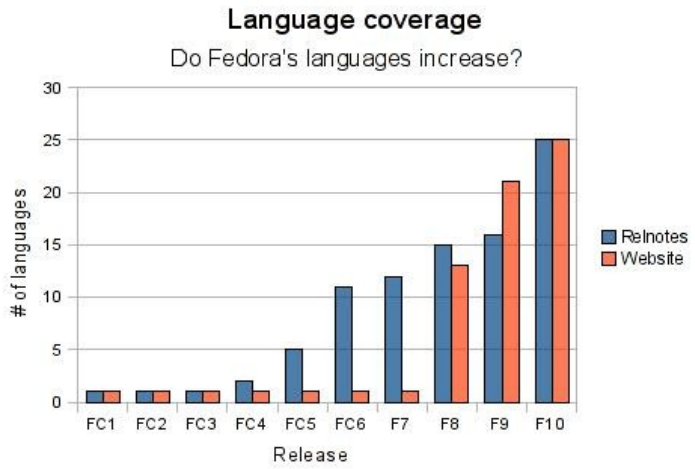

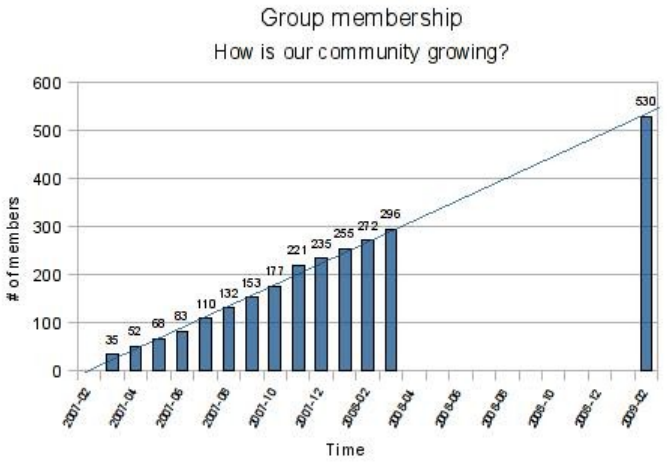

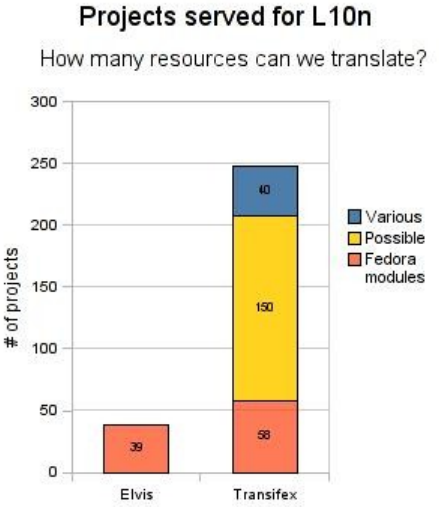

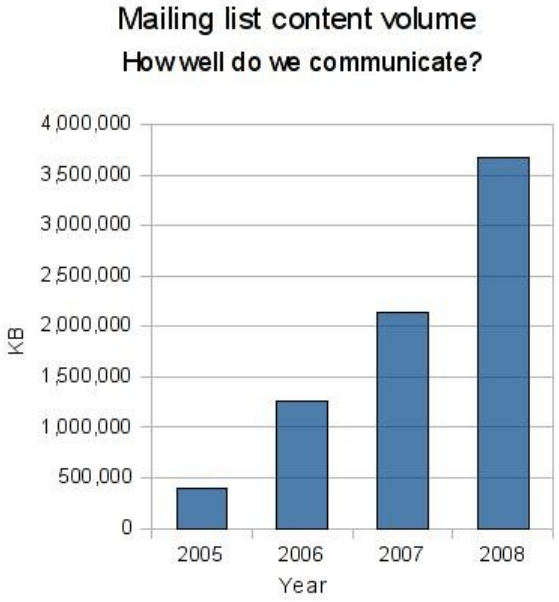

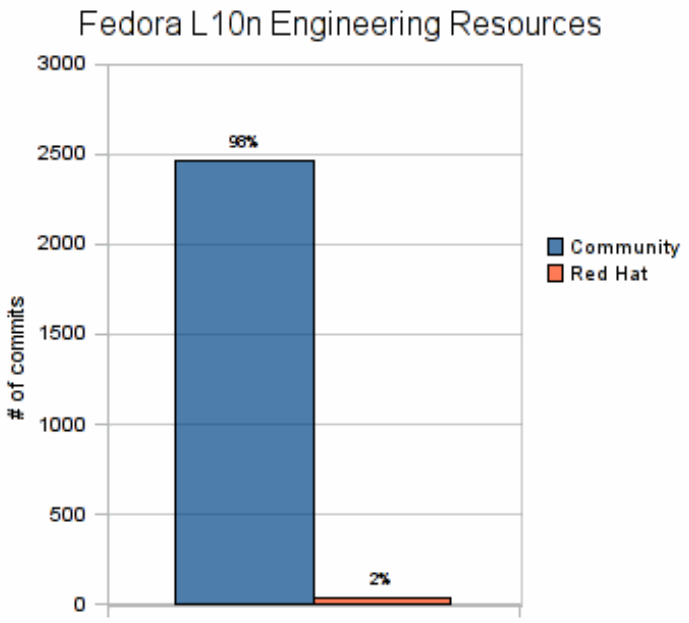

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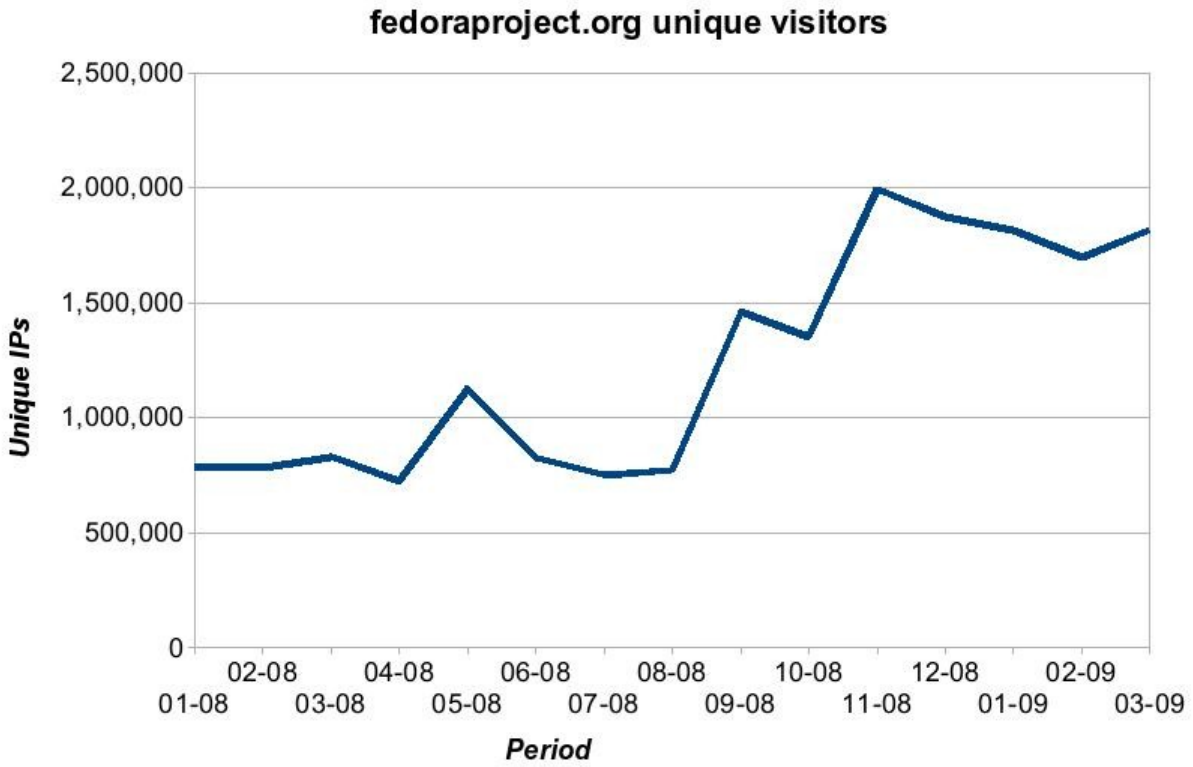

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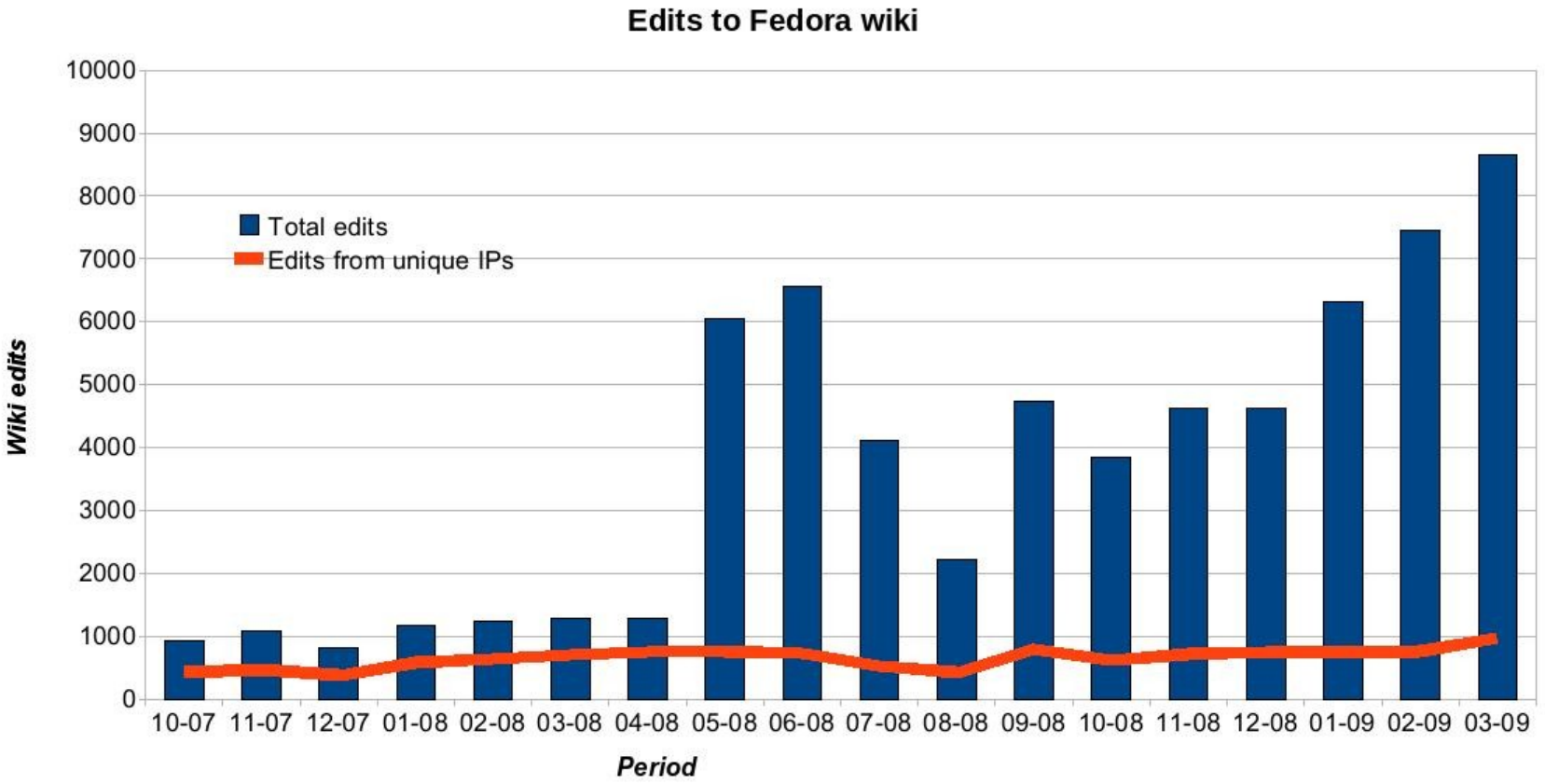
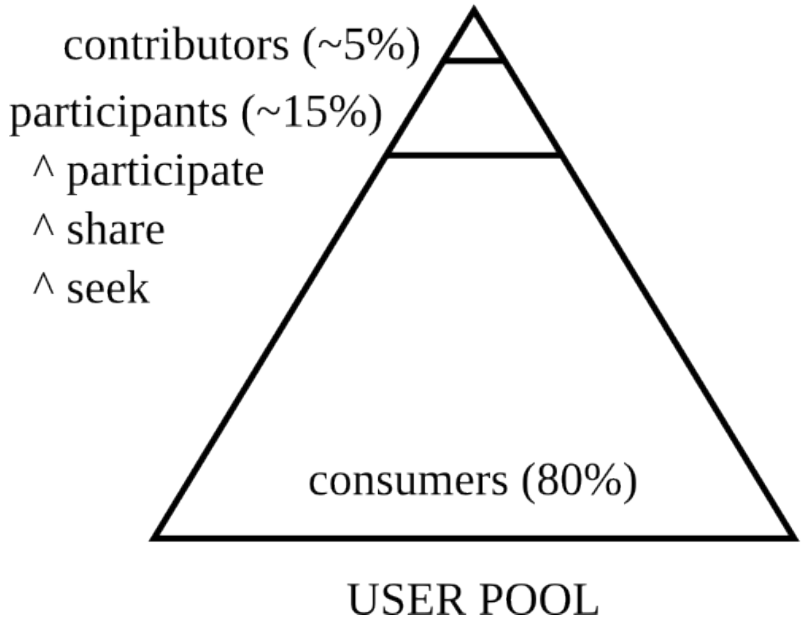


Communities of participation



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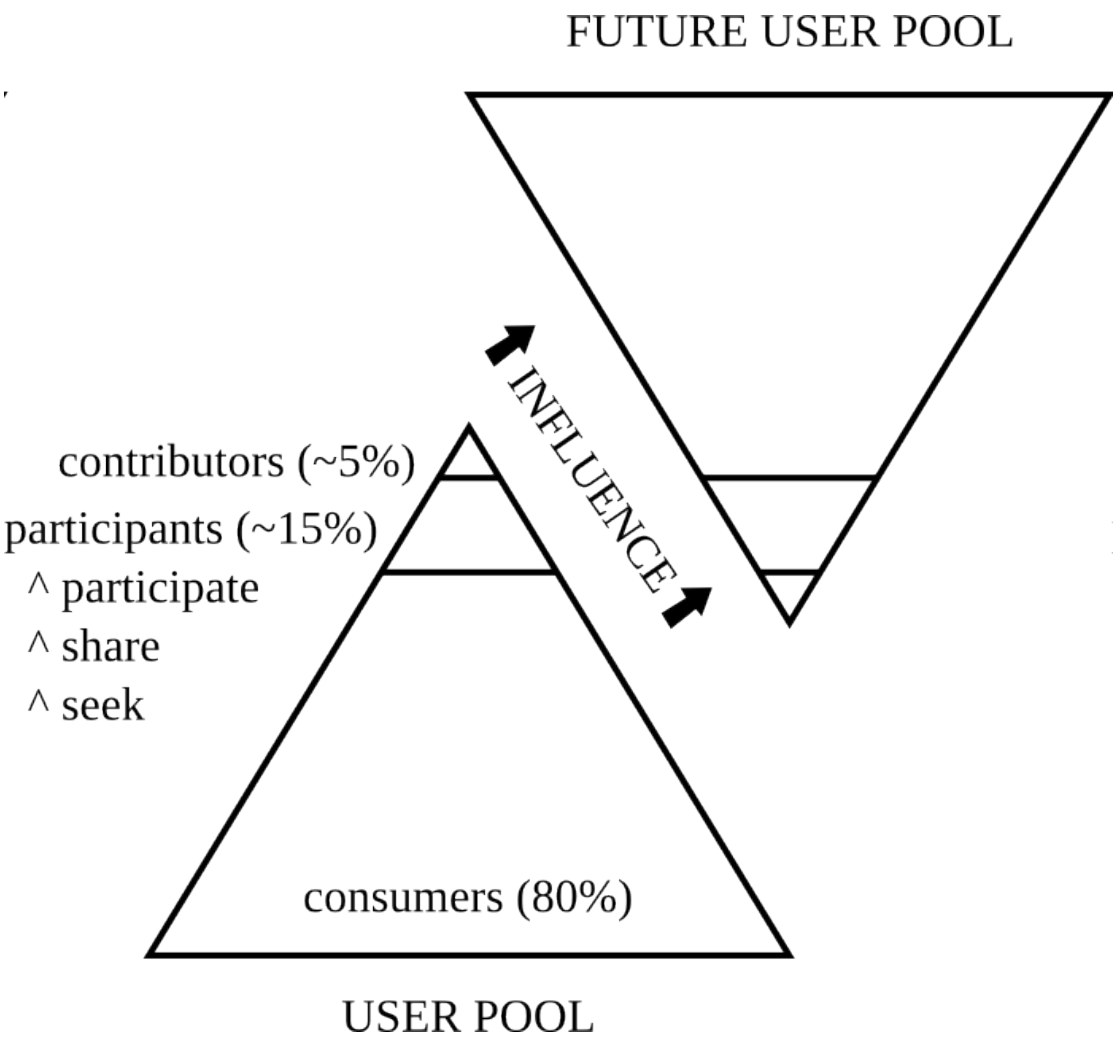

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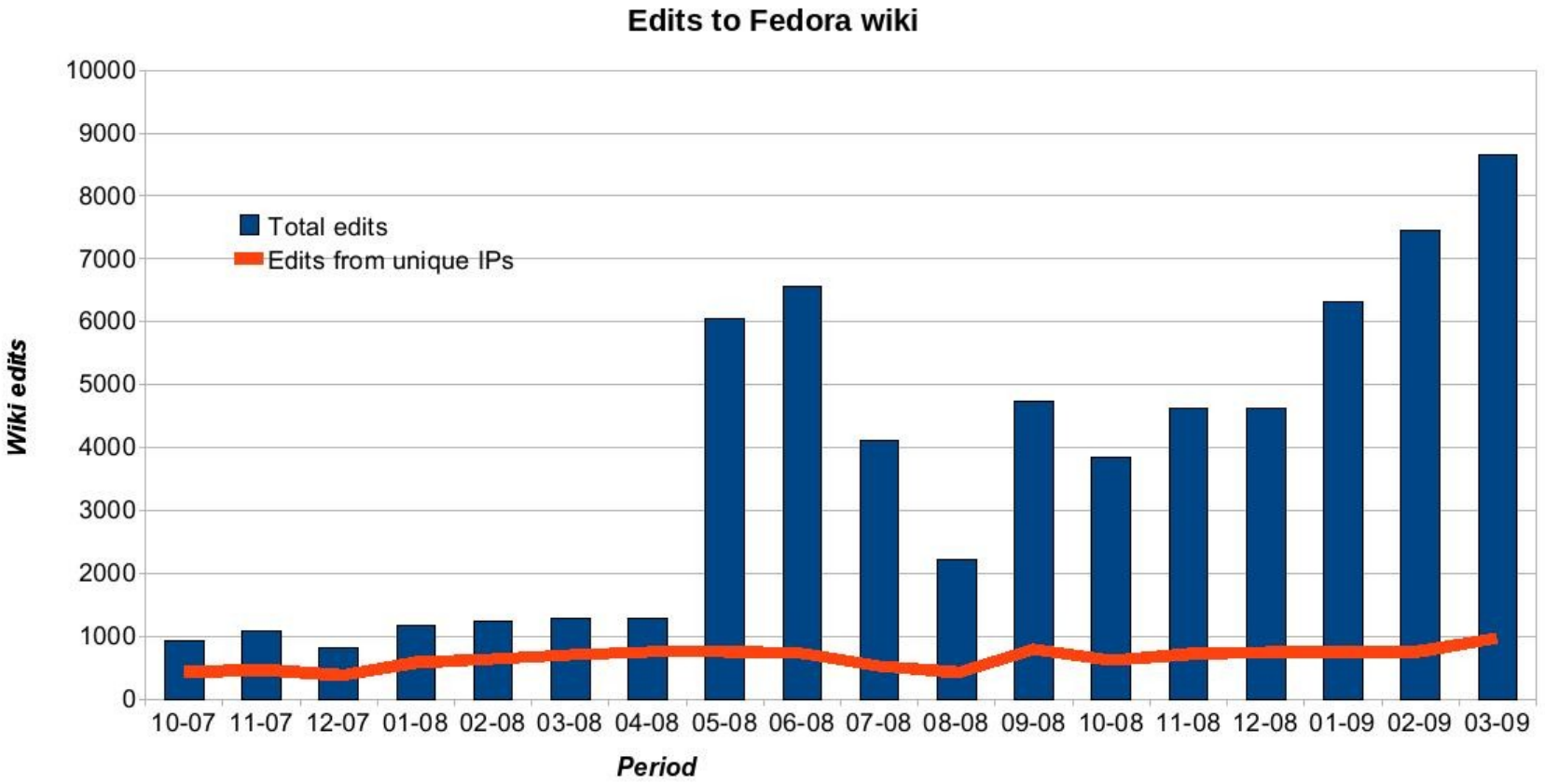

Questions?

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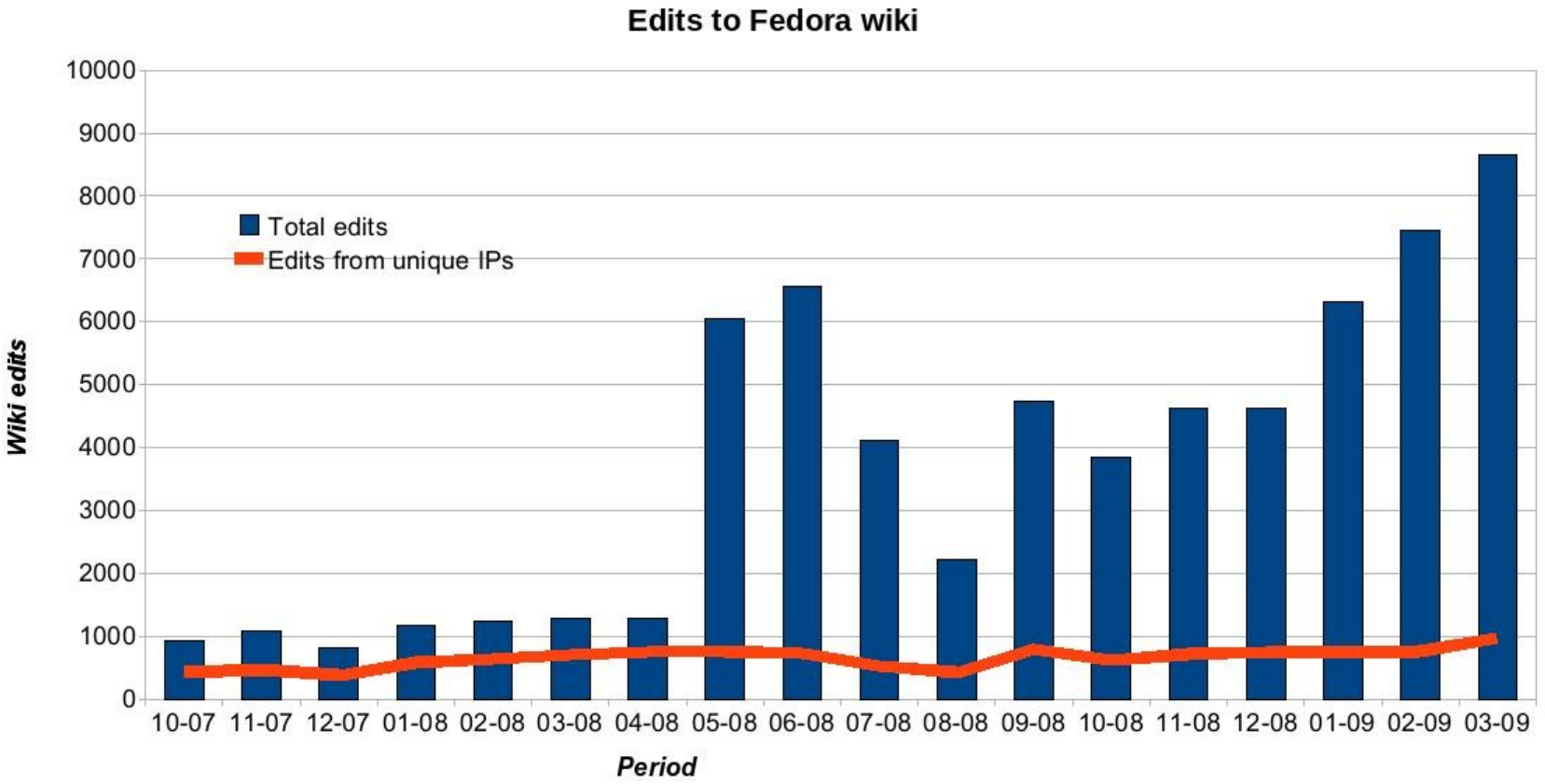

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Goals - introduce me, learn about the audience make-up, learn what they know about open source and community projects such as Fedora.

Does open source affect your business? Academic interests? Are you an educator or a student?

Is open source applicable to your life or not? Your personal life?

It is no longer a question if open source is a viable software development methodology, and it is less of a question if the open collaboration methodology is useful when applied to other disciplines.

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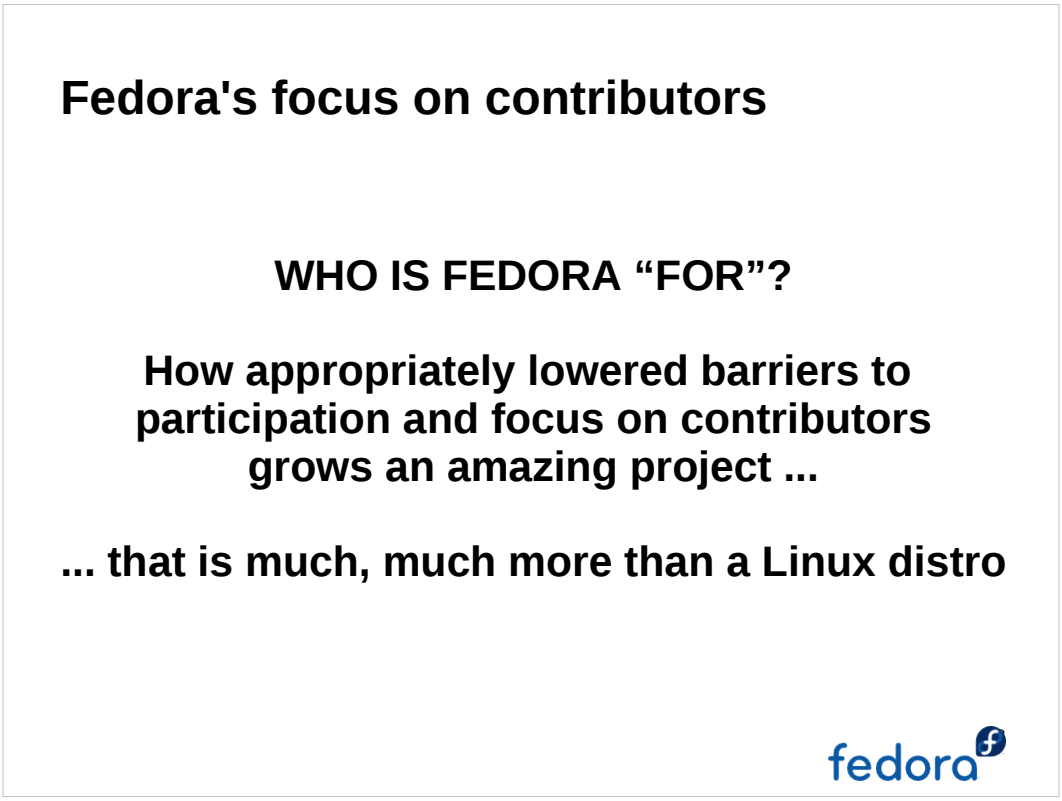
Understand and be prepared to speak on the four freedoms and how that fuels remix and free culture. Examples of why it is relevant:

- Underpinning for all free and open source software
- Creative Commons and millions of musicians sharing ideas freely
- Sharing culture so that a small contribution of e.g. a how-to video adds to a pool of how-to videos you and your friends draw on
- Rapidly developed and responsive social tools creating participant communities that mirror the open source communities that build the software underneath the social tools. Do viral memes move from the code to what is written with it?



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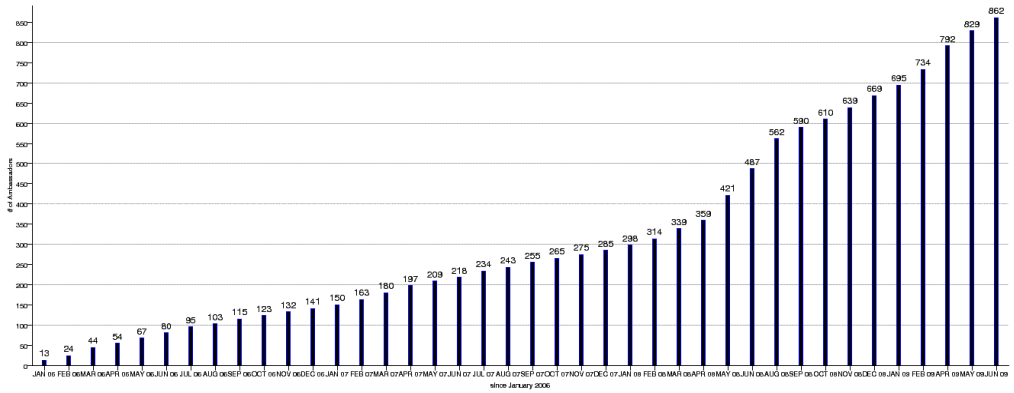

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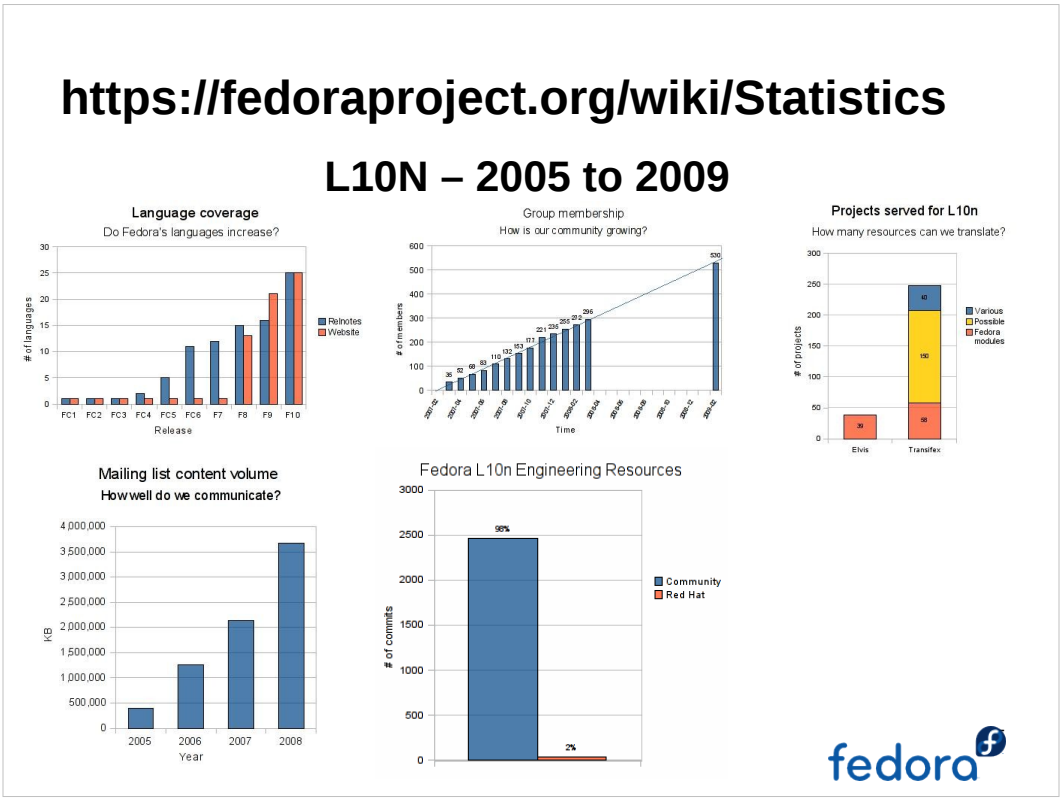
Goals - Take a few minutes to talk about participation before explaining why it's so important to you and your future that you do some of it.

What is a participation community? How is it different from a user-focused or consumer community?

Participation communities invite people to get more by doing more, usually with a force-multiplying effect. They put in N, they get back Nx5. Participation communities have something you can do and make it possible to do it, whatever it is.

There are a certain group of people, who are quite large in number, just along for the ride. They fill up a lot of space on the bus, but they don't contribute much more than sometimes paying a fare. And none of that for most FLOSS.

YES - When looking at how and why we build communities of participation, there are clearly some evident truths, and a handful of best practices and reasons.



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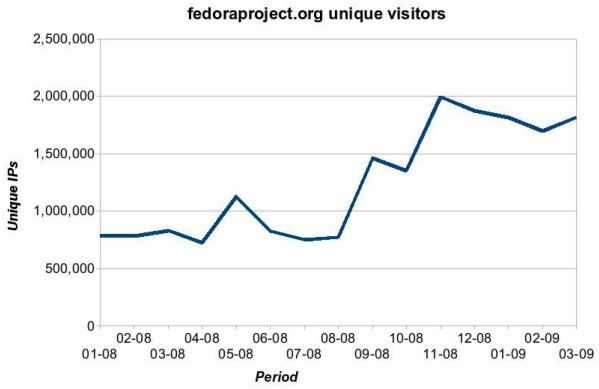

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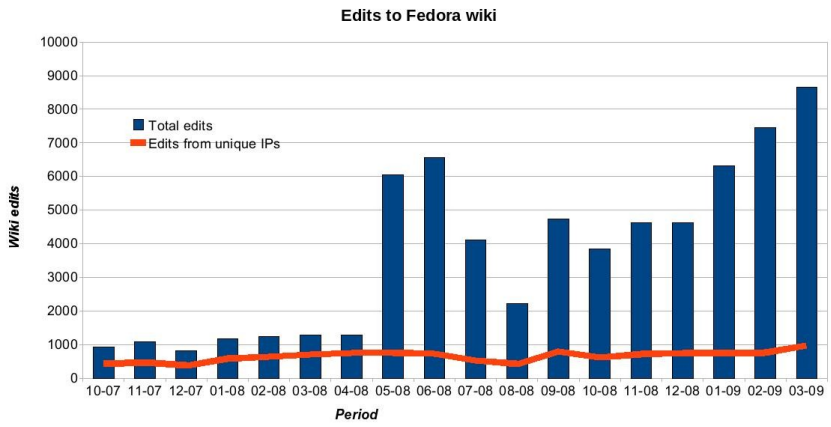

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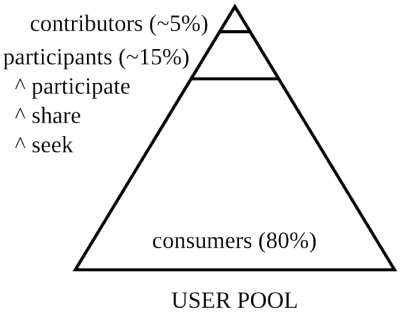

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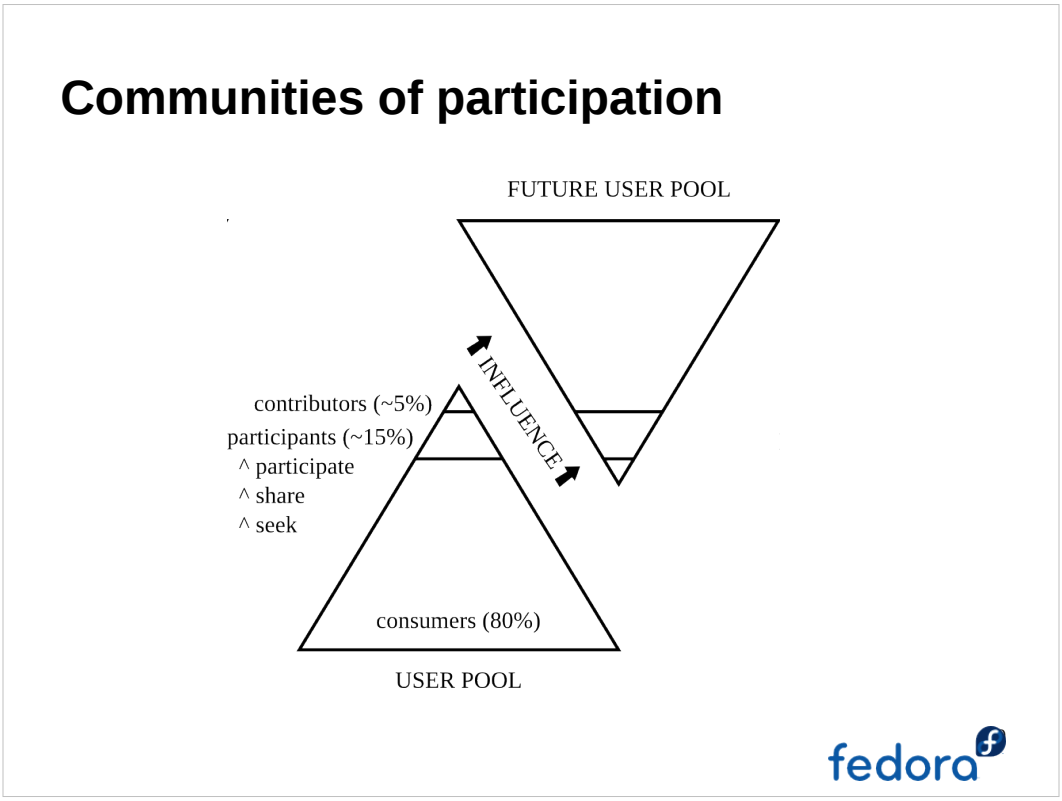
This is the pyramid of contribution, and it demonstrates one of the most important evident truths. Imagine it as representing one pool of users, such as iPod owners, ProTools users, or users of a Linux operating system. Out of every one hundred of them, there is a break down of participation levels that is a set of numbers we reverse engineered by observation in the wild. These correspond to other similar figures, such as market research showing that for every 100 users on specialty forums on the web, 90 are passive readers, 9 are commentators of varying degrees, and 1 will be a strong contributor in one or more areas of the forum.

Similarly, in FLOSS we see that about 80% are drawn to simply use a piece of software, with minimal interaction beyond that. Some of those people are going to be drawn to participate, usually first by seeking knowledge, then my sharing that knowledge and new knowledge they learn, and moving up to self-recognition and group recognition as a participant. Somewhere in there, a % of the participants will rise all by themselves to be full contributors. This is the evident truth we so over and over.

Most marketing practices have traditionally focused on the 80%. After all, if they have 80% of the money ... We focus on the contributors and the participants, and here is why ... (next slide)

"You cannot normally take someone from zero to contributor; they have to pass through some % of the stages of participation, then self-select to contribute. Participants can be drawn in and even created, but contributors are self-made." - another way to say the evident truth



The contributors are the group that have the greatest potential of positively influencing the largest number of future people, including drawing in other participants and contributors. This is a very important, evident truth.

The consumer portion of the pool has the lowest impact on influencing new people. For every five or ten persons from this group, they might influence the buying decision of one person.

The participant group is self-identified. This role occurs everywhere, for example, the instincts, research, and deal-seeking of a fashion-wearing friend who influences the purchasing decisions of all his friends.

The contributor group that has the greatest potential to influence, thus drawing in even more people (future groups.) To illustrate, there was a point in 2008 when the Fedora Project decided to change from the Moin Moin wiki to Media Wiki. While scalability on the IT/infrastructure side was key, we hoped to benefit from the wider base of MW users (people who know the syntax and conventions), and some of the Wikipedia page authoring and maintenance magic.

In all this, an email came to the Infrastructure group from Ian, who had been participating a bit in some parts of the Project, but hadn't found somewhere to make a real contribution that mattered to him. He offered to help, give him a shout, and the Infra lead, Mike, did that right away. Within a few weeks, Ian was everywhere – debugging migration scripts, coding and integrating PHP modules, and most importantly, teaching us the MediaWiki Way. Whenever we stray, this young man who is now the Wiki Czar, would set us on the right path. He makes sure we get all the value we can out of the amazing base of community documentation best practices that the Wikimedia Foundation have amassed. When Ian started all this, he was a 16 year old high school student looking for something to do where his schoolwork wasn't satisfying.

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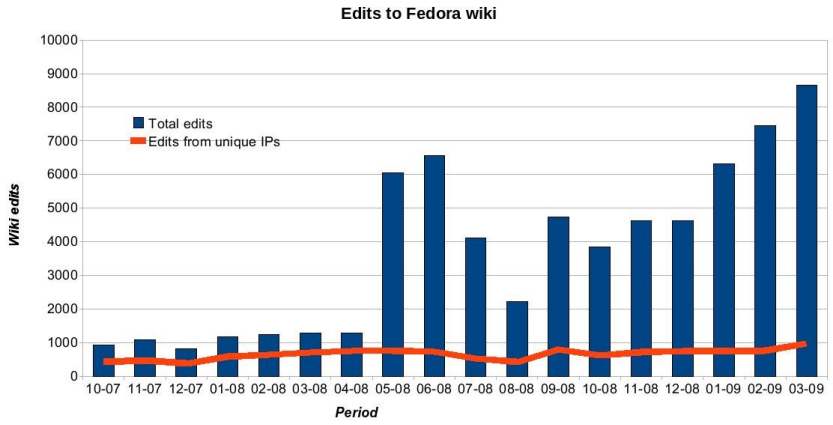

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Was this convincing?

Do you feel inspired to participate and also to encourage others to participate?

Do the ideas make sense?

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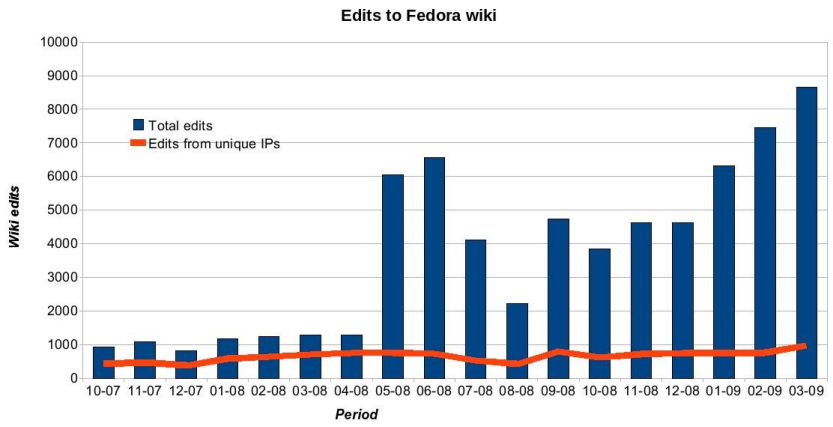

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