Twitter Thread by Adam Wathan



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This is my favorite HN thread in a long time, so (positively) surprised at the support in the comments:

https://t.co/nx8ZfDB5Bc

Maintaining open-source is brutal, and feeling obligated to acknowledge, review, and respond to every attempt to contribute is a huge burden to carry.

When I saw this tweet from @dhh the other day I couldn't help but s/email/open source contribution/, but it makes me feel horribly guilty to suggest that anyone should feel anything but grateful for unsolicited free work from contributors.

https://t.co/pg6dK0EGpI

> You are not obligated to spend even a moment of your precious time on this planet dealing with emails you did not ask for, do not want, and aren't interested in responding to. The unsolicited email is an assault on our natural proclivity to reciprocity.
>
> — DHH (@dhh) January 25, 2021

But the reality is even though folks are generally trying to help by contributing, those contributions still cost the maintainer more than they cost the contributor, in terms of time to review, stress worrying about making time to review, and long term maintenance.

And unlike email where as long as you can convince yourself it's totally fair to not respond to unsolicited email it's okay, on GitHub there's a public counter signaling to the rest of the world that you are a poor steward of your project if you can't keep the number low.

And also unlike email, the only way to ignore something while also dismissing it from your "inbox" is to take an explicit action (closing the issue/PR) that sends a notification to the person, highlighting how rude you are if you don't craft a thoughtful reason for closing.

It's a tough problem because no one really wants to discourage contributions, it's great to have help from talented people who can fix things you haven't had time to fix, but something about it in practice just always feels impossible to keep on top of.

Almost all popular open source projects on GitHub have *hundreds* of open issues/PRs, many even *thousands*. That's way beyond the event horizon, those contributions will *never* be addressed.

All they do is sit there creating guilt.

I don't know what the answer to this whole problem of managing contributions really is but "closed to contributions" unintuitively feels like the only strategy I've seen to actually making open-source maintenance feel sustainable.

You'd think crowd-sourcing maintenance would help, but it actually creates more work than it could ever save. It's a shitty reality because it's really hard psychologically to convince yourself that you're not being an unappreciative asshole by not responding to every issue/PR ■