

ApacheConBrainStorm

You can help [ApacheCon](#) evolve into a better event by offering your feedback and suggestions. What would you like to change or not change? Help the conference planners by providing detailed proposals and concrete suggestions. Or add your support to an existing proposal here.

Please keep suggestions focused and concrete. Feel free to add new wiki pages if you have larger, specific proposals.

April 2008, the conference committee asked ASF committers in a survey various questions about Hackathon events. The result of the survey is available as a PDF attachment: [ASF-Hackathon-Committer-Survey-April-2008.pdf](#).

ApacheCon the conference and... Everything Else

There are really two different yet related events we should work on:

- [ApacheCon](#) itself, a formally organized conference that we've all come to know (and love?). Likely includes a Hackathon, community spaces, and likely to be changing from your feedback.
- Meetups, Gettogethers, separate Hackathons, and other community events. [ConCom](#) would definitely like to support and promote more focused, PMC and community led events, which may or may not be at the same time as [ApacheCons](#).

Looking into <http://wiki.apache.org/apachecon/WiFi> I noticed something that might be interesting:

http://martenvijn.nl/svn/ApacheCon/62.12.12.2/mrtg/10.42.0.1_1_v-week.png

If the graph is right, and the errors of people without a laptop/wifi or with several devices can be disregarded (iPhones, Nokia phones, etc.), there is something of interest. The data about wireless macs could be used for getting an independent estimate of people "around" the place. If nobody around knows the exact meaning we could ask marten.

The idea could be extrapolated if we had historical data on relative attendance of people from the beginning of the hackathon to the conference proper, and also conference attendance data. Just a wild idea.

Hackathon Costs

Should the Hackathon be Free? (add your name to the list below)

- YES
- YES, but only to certain people/groups (rbowen - free to committers and those they personally invite) (sgala - we've always paid t-shirts, beer has been subsidized or should be paid individually too also)
- NO, but it should be cheap (costs for beer and t-shirts) (niclas - I don't mind paying a bit. Euro20 for free flow of beer for two days would be great!)
- NO, I don't care what it costs (wrowe agrees, cheap reg cost for stuff - not "space")

Note: the cost structures for most event spaces are vastly different between Europe (conference space is expensive) and the US (conference space can be cheap). While this shouldn't affect what we *want* the Hackathon to be, it does have an effect on how we structure larger events.

Move the Hackathon

In order keep Hackathon costs down, *particularly in Europe*, the hackathon could be moved to a nearby, cheaper location. This might be a local hall, university, or office. Registration for the hackathon would be separate from the conference. The hackathon would shutdown during the three days of the main [ApacheCon](#) conference where we would still have an *online lounge*. The intention is to reduce the cost of the hackathon and increase the number of people who could attend.

Counter Argument

Moving the hackathon off-site is not only inconvenient, but limits the mixing of hackathon attendees and training attendees. It also adds complexity to running and promoting the event. A separate hackathon might also been seen as competing with, rather than working with, the main conference, siphoning away registration. We want a successful hackathon, but not at the expense of the main conference.

(niclas - Instead of moving the Hackathon out of the main event, move both to a cheaper location. There are both universities as well as companies capable of housing the event at little or no cost to us. Even consider to co-locate [ApacheCon](#) with another (potentially commercial one) conference(s), where they provide the space, organization, cost and so on, we just bring our formats, our people and fun.)

Open up Hackathon Registration

Traditionally, the hackathon has been reserved for Apache committers and members and special guests. This was due in part to the necessity of limiting the number of attendees given the space available. Rather than limit the audience, the hackathon should be open to any interested person.

(niclas - We preach an open development. Live up to it!)

Counter Argument

Costs for space are going to rise with the number of attendees. If we open it to everyone, we might need to have registration ahead of time to get an idea of space requirements. Traditionally, people have just showed up, and neglected to register.

Dedicated Project Mini-Tracks

Dedicate half a day, or a full day, to a specific project or group of closely related projects. Allow at least some of this time to be planned and organized by the project PMC (with assistance from conference planners). This could allow project mini-conferences, with coordinated talks, panels, demos, etc.

(niclas - yes. Every PMC should be allowed its own track, either half or full day, provided that they get at least N number of registered attendees, for instance 3 months before the conference. Failing that, the track is pulled. This pushes promotion of the conference to the PMCs which I feel is not involved enough.)

Un-Conference the Conference

We should have less (or no?) traditional 50-minute sessions, but instead have un-conference tracks. These could be dedicated to specific projects, or open to just about any topic.

Similarly, we could emphasize more Fast-Feather like talks over 50-minute sessions. (see How to include more projects?)

(niclas - we should aim at expanding the audience and not detract existing one. By increasing FF, BOFs, project tracks, and other new concepts, are not necessarily mutually exclusive with current presentation and training formats.)

Counter Argument

We have been, for quite some time, very focused on end-user and administrator training. By not having a published schedule, we'll immediately lose half of our attendees. This is a clear difference between existing committers who already know about our projects, and new users who want to learn the overviews.

How to include more projects?

We have 60+ top level projects. How can we include more of them in the conference program?

Rather than have 50-minute sessions, we could have more Fast-Feather talks.

Focus on Training

We should have more full-day and two-day training courses and more directly promote and market these events. Successful training classes might allow the conference to remain profitable (or affordable) while the rest of the conference transitions to, for example, a more un-conference like format.

Run Two Conferences

Rather than try to run a developer/community focused conference and a user/business focused conference at the same time, have two different conferences. Perhaps alternate between US and Europe each year.

Conference of Conferences

Rather than run a single event during one week, run several coordinated events throughout a week. For example, two days could be a hackathon at a cheaper location, one day could be an un-conference (or several project-focused un-conferences), and the last two days are a more expensive user /business conference at a nice hotel. Each day or event would be targeted at a specific audience (developers, specific project community, enterprise users, etc.).

(niclas - I think this is a bad idea.)

Question the Speaker reimbursements

ApacheCon is one of the very few conferences that pay speakers expenses. By removing this, we would be able to invite more speakers and it would no longer be necessary to look at clustering multiple talks from one speaker to reduce costs.

As an addition, the PRC (ex Travel Assistance Committee) could offer some compensation for the speakers who wouldn't be able to make it because they would have to pay the costs from their own pocket.

(niclas - I only know of the Oredev conference which my company organizes. It pays expenses for many speakers, but not our own in-house ones, and speakers that promotes company products. I think it makes sense to allow a bit more product pitches, and other commercial perks, to both make the sponsorship more valuable as well as improving the financials.)

Location

US [ApacheCon](#) is in a different city every year. AC EU will have been in Amsterdam three years running (after next year). Amsterdam is a great city and all, but variety is the spice of life, as they say. Let's look at providing fresh venues that provide the right balance between attending the conference and taking in the culture and fun that good locations have to offer.

(niclas - Agree. Amsterdam is great, but there are many great cities in Europe.) (wrowe adds - not only many great cities, but more affordable great cities.)

Leave Things Alone

[ApacheCon](#) works. Why are we trying to change it?

(wrowe notes attendance is much lower than it could be, putting financial pressures on the event and limiting the travel and lodging subsidies available for speakers etc, with better turnout the cost and the number of speakers can be adjusted. Also - it only works "well" because it has been repeatedly tweaked ... why not continue to tweak it?)

Conference Website Technology - Upcoming

Concom has used the "fireswamp" system that runs the CFP process and ran the live website up until 2005. Since then, we've been continuing to use the old CFP system, but have been using a new live website from 2006-on. We hope to build a [completely new conference management system](#), and you're welcome to make suggestions on the spec or volunteer to help by participating on [concom-site -at\) apache.org](#).