



Advocating for FreeBSD in 2022 and Beyond

BY ANNE DICKISON

Hercule Poirot. Sherlock Holmes. Jessica Fletcher. Dale Whitehead. What do all of these names have in common? They solve mysteries. I love mysteries. The rush you get when all the clues come together to form the answer. Solve the puzzle. It's so satisfying. Now you might be wondering what solving a mystery has to do with the subject of this piece. You see, for me figuring out the best way to advocate for FreeBSD is like solving a mystery. How are we going to get FreeBSD in front of the right people? Who are the right people? Why should they care? What tools should we be using? So many mysteries to solve.

Now for many folks, advocacy is also conflated with the dreaded M word. Marketing. I know, I know, it's even in my title. In the course of my 20+ years in this industry, I've heard the words sleazy, untrustworthy and useless thrown around when discussing marketing departments. Many communities, especially those in open source, see very little value in the "non technical" people selling their work. The thing is, I firmly believe marketing gets a bad rap. Of course, there are always a few bad apples. Marketers who focus on fantasy rather than fact. You know the type. Those folks make defending the role incredibly difficult. However, the reality is, marketing is essential for any open source project and I've had the good luck to work with some of the best in the business. In fact, the team of marketing folks at the Foundation work extremely hard to remain true to the heart of FreeBSD. We don't make up statistics. We don't oversell the features or make up something out of nothing. You can be sure that when we speak about the value FreeBSD brings, or the work we're doing to support the Project, we're not spreading propaganda. We're instead speaking to the benefits of using the operating system and becoming part of the community.

Whew. Now that we've gotten that out of the way, let's talk about the marketing department at the Foundation and our current and future advocacy efforts. As I said, there are so many mysteries to solve...

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What We Do

Advocacy... Marketing... Whatever you call it, the Foundation's efforts in this area cover a lot of ground. We create materials to help folks get started using FreeBSD. We promote the work that we, and others, do to improve the state of the OS. We speak at non-BSD conferences to introduce (and sometimes remind) folks about FreeBSD and what they'll gain by using it. We sponsor and help organize BSD-related events, such as Vendor summits, ensuring companies using FreeBSD have a place to be heard among developers. We create marketing partnerships with like minded organizations to make sure FreeBSD is in front of a wider audience. We create programs and materials to help you spread the word about the Project. There's also outreach to media, podcasts, student group presentations, and of course the production of bi-monthly the FreeBSD Journal. It's free, in case you have yet to check it out.

Expanding the Team

Thanks to the generosity of the FreeBSD community, the Foundation was able to add a marketing coordinator to the team last year. Bringing on another person has allowed us to expand our efforts in social media, create more getting started content in the form of how-to guides, quick guides and videos, and perform additional outreach. We also have a new technical writer allowing for even more original content. However, that is just the beginning.

Where We Are Going

Much like the Technology Team's Development Project Roadmap, our team also plans ahead as to what we should be promoting, when and where. Obviously, we have to be flexible when new developments, events and partnerships arise. There was a twitter thread recently discussing what else the Foundation should be doing to spread the word about FreeBSD. It was great to see that some of the things mentioned were already in the works for the next few months. It was also confirmation that we're on the same page as members of the community. That being said, here are just some of the things you can expect from us in the future.

- Articles on Security and FreeBSD and our efforts to improve FreeBSD and the desktop.
- Training courses that could be given in-person and online through places like LinkedIn Learning.
- FreeBSD in education. OS course development at the undergraduate level with the possibility of entering other levels of education.
- Working with community members to simplify the path to using FreeBSD – clearer documentation and simple getting started tasks.
- FreeBSD introductory workshops at places like SCALE19x.
- Continuing to grow our social media presence with more FreeBSD success stories, case studies and community member spotlights.
- Promoting the value of FreeBSD to corporations and individuals through company presentations and testimonials.

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- Gaining more media interest or attention in FreeBSD through PR contacts (podcasts, interviews, articles, etc.).
- A redesigned resources page on the Foundation site making it easier to find tutorials by topic, level, and type.
- Showcasing the impact FreeBSD has had on open source over the last 30 years.

Obviously some of these efforts are more in-depth than others and I'm sure the list will change as time goes on. You can be assured, however, that the marketing team here at the Foundation will do all we can to make FreeBSD part of the open source and operating systems conversation. It's been said that FreeBSD is one of the best operating systems that you've never heard of. We mean to change that. One solved mystery at a time.

Now we get to the part where you come in. Over time, I'm sure you've heard us say "we can't do it without you". Truer words were never spoken. The fact is, we are a small, but mighty team and while we work hard to cover all the areas suitable for the Project, we are always open to new ideas you may have about spreading the word. If your company is using FreeBSD, please reach out so we can see about creating a testimonial. Share your successes on social media or via our blog. We are always looking for guest bloggers. If there's an event, school group, coding club or meet up in your area that you think we should be attending, please [let us know](#).

I would be incredibly remiss if I did not express our gratitude for those currently advocating for FreeBSD. Folks like [@FreeBSDHelp](#) and [@klarainc](#) on social media and [RoboNuggie](#) and [GaryHTech](#) on YouTube. There's the [DiscoverBSD](#) newsletter, [Vermaden's](#) blog, and of course, the [BSDNow](#) podcast. That's the tip of the iceberg. Apologies to those I have missed. Our [resources page](#) also includes more places to look for FreeBSD advice, curriculum and community. We are always looking for updates to that page, so again, if we've missed anything please send them our way.

I've been part of the Foundation team for a while now and it's been quite the journey watching the advocacy program grow and change. So many mysteries solved and so many more to tackle. Thank you for your continued support of the FreeBSD Project and Foundation. We are looking forward to working together to shine an even brighter light on your favorite open source operating system.

ANNE DICKISON joined the Foundation in 2015 and brings over 20 years experience in technology-focused marketing and communications. Specifically, her work as the Marketing Director and then Co-Executive Director of the USENIX Association helped instill her commitment to spreading the word about the importance of free and open source technologies.

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