



Ubuntu Membership Survey

September 2011

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Overview

This document presents data collected in a SurveyMonkey survey that went out to everyone who has applied to an Ubuntu Membership board in the last two years. The goal of the survey is to assess the quality of the Ubuntu membership application experience and identify areas where we can make any improvements.

This document does not contain recommendations or next steps; it does though contain references to patterns or behavior that I have observed in the results.

Approach

The survey was created by myself, Jono Bacon, and reviewed by Daniel Holbach and Jorge Castro and released on 15th August 2011. The survey was closed on 30th August 2011.

154 invitations were sent out and 83 full responses were gathered. I believe this presents enough data to be generally representative of the community experience.



Results

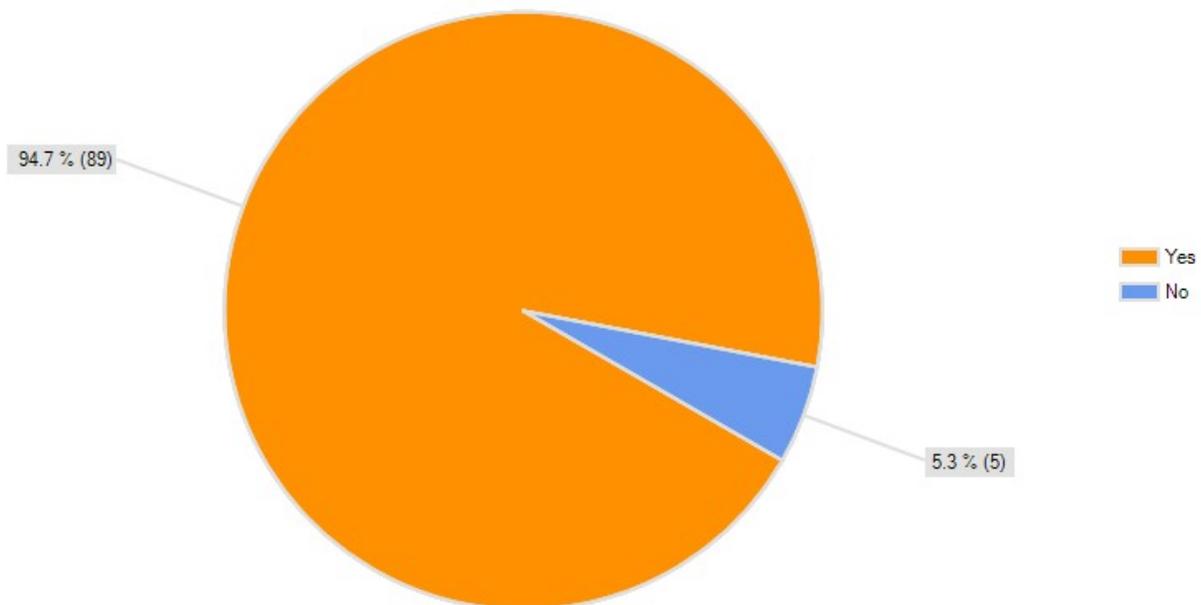
The results presented here are the graphed results outlining the feedback for each question. The latter two questions required text input and those results are collated there.

Question 1: Are you an approved Ubuntu Member?

This question seeks to determine how many approved members are filling in the survey. Those who responded NO here have applied to a membership board but have not yet been approved.

95% of participants are Ubuntu members.

Are you an approved Ubuntu Member?



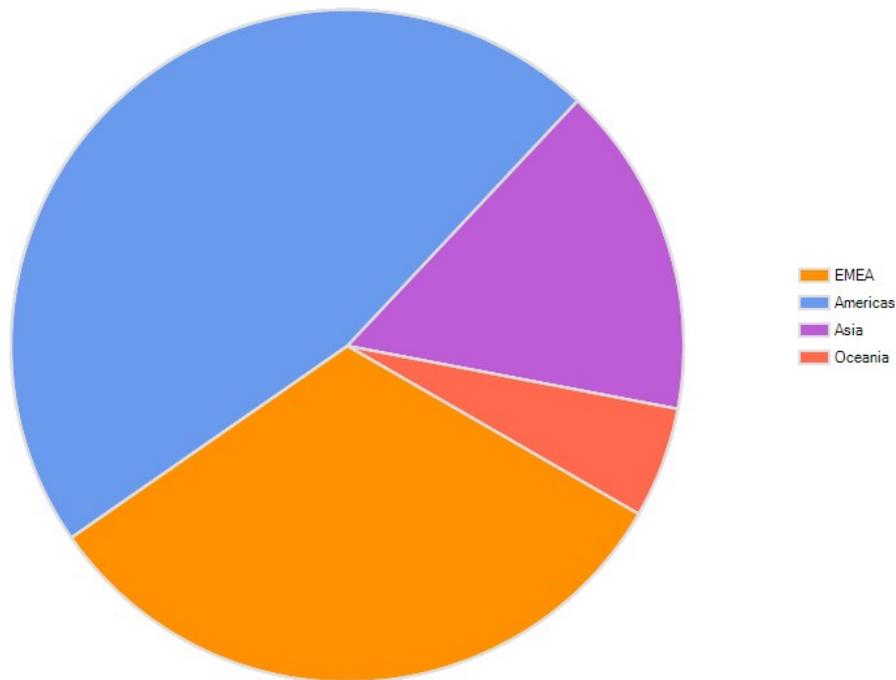


Question 2: Which Membership Board did you apply to?

This question seeks to determine which boards the respondents applied for membership too.

Unfortunately due to a snafu with SurveyMonkey, the EMEA option was not present for around 30minutes when the survey was released, but many participants highlighted EMEA as their choice in the comments. The graph below does not include these additional responses, so you should accommodate for a few more EMEA participants.

Which Membership Board did you apply to?



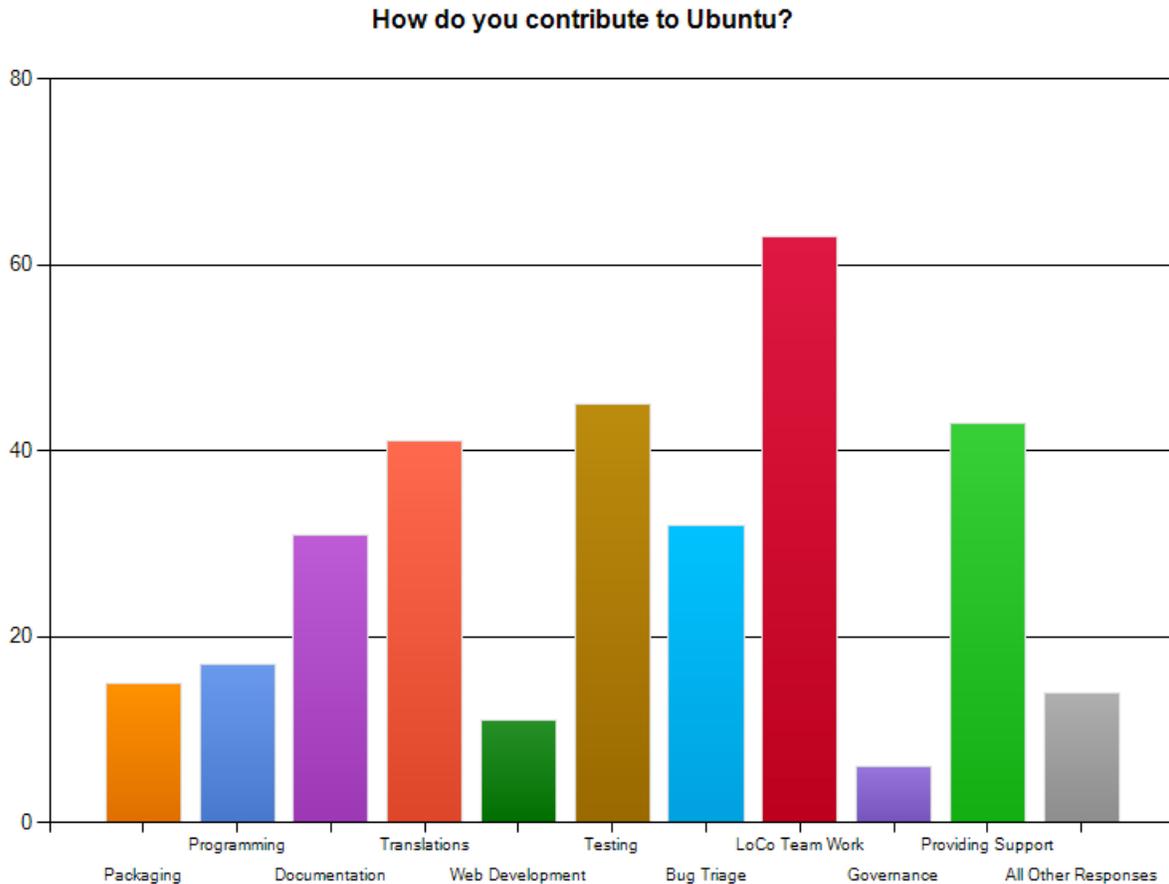


Question 3: How do you contribute to Ubuntu?

This question is intended to get an idea of which parts of the project the respondent takes part in. This questions allows for **multiple answers**, so it is likely the respondents ticked the boxes that apply to them.

The four most popular areas highlighted are:

1. LoCo Teams.
2. Testing.
3. Providing Support.
4. Translations.

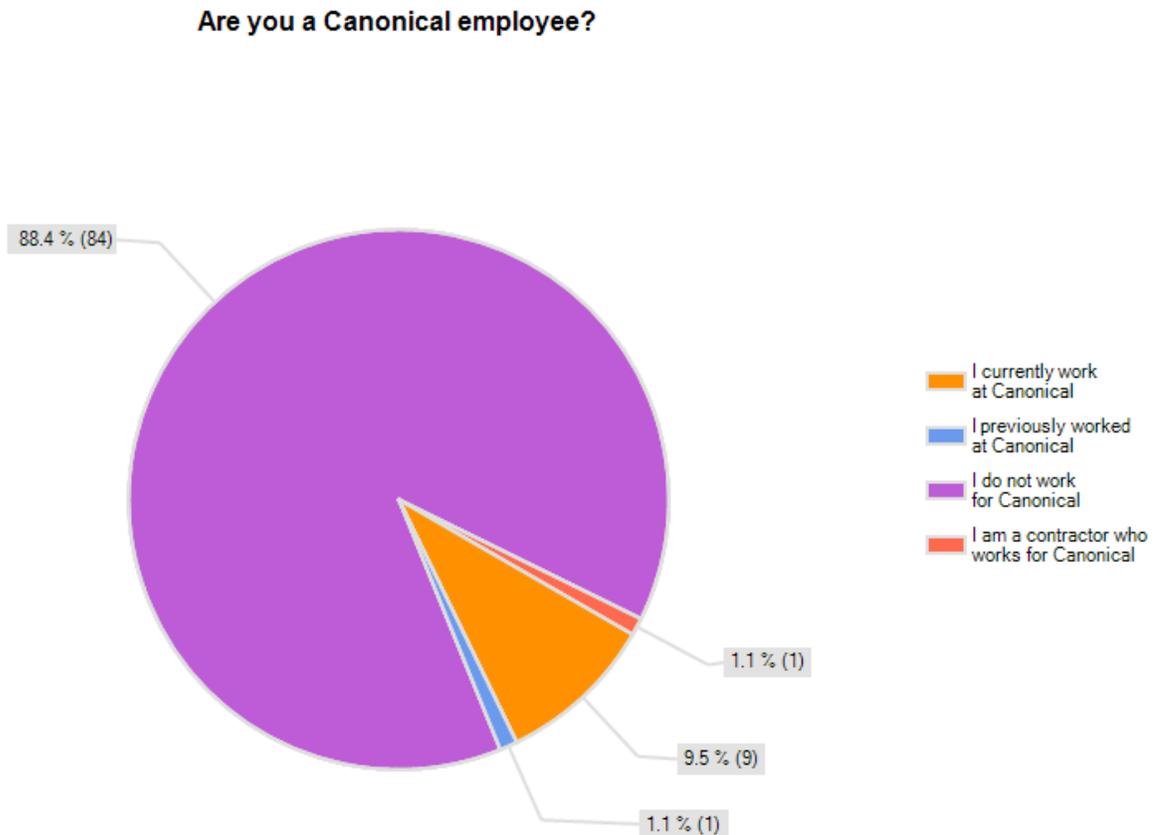




Question 4: Are you a Canonical employee?

The goal of this question is to see how many participants are currently employed by Canonical. While we would not ordinarily ask for the workspace of respondents, Canonical is a special case with it's level of investment in Ubuntu, and there has been some concerns by some Canonical staff expressed regarding aspects of the membership process. This question is mainly designed to help show which proportion of respondents work at Canonical.

Only **1/10** of the respondents are employed by Canonical.



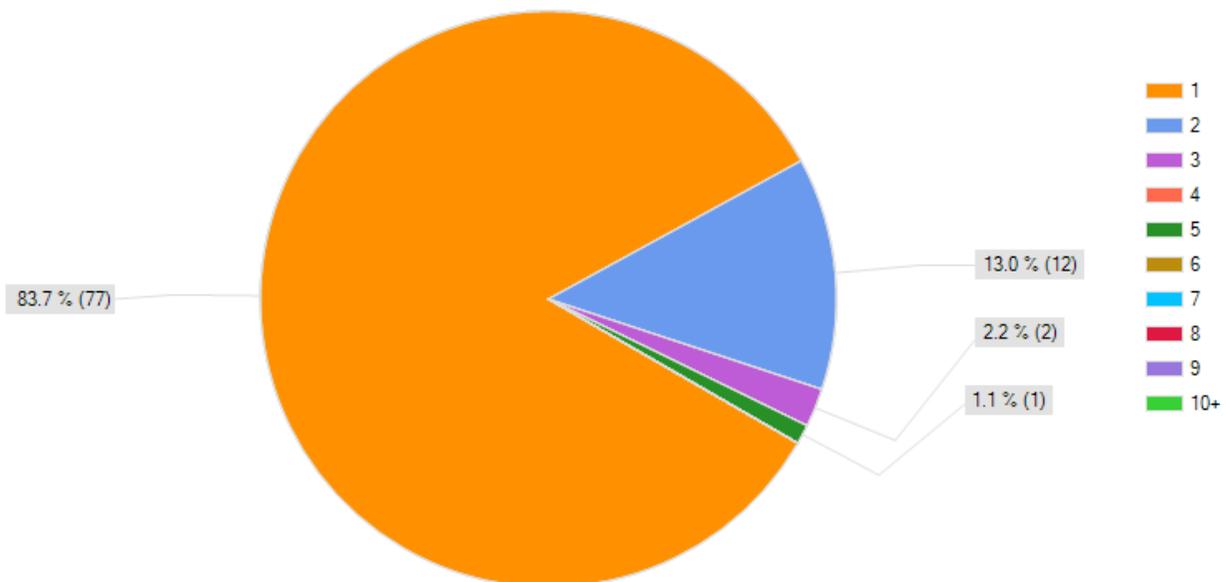


Question 5: If you are an approved member, how many times did it take you to get approved?

This question is designed to show how many times it takes a typical community member to achieve membership. This provides some useful insight into the commonality of people succeeding on their first time or subsequent times.

84% succeed on their first time, **13%** on their second time, **2%** on their third time, and only **1%** on their fourth time.

If you are an approved member, how many attempts did it take to get approved?





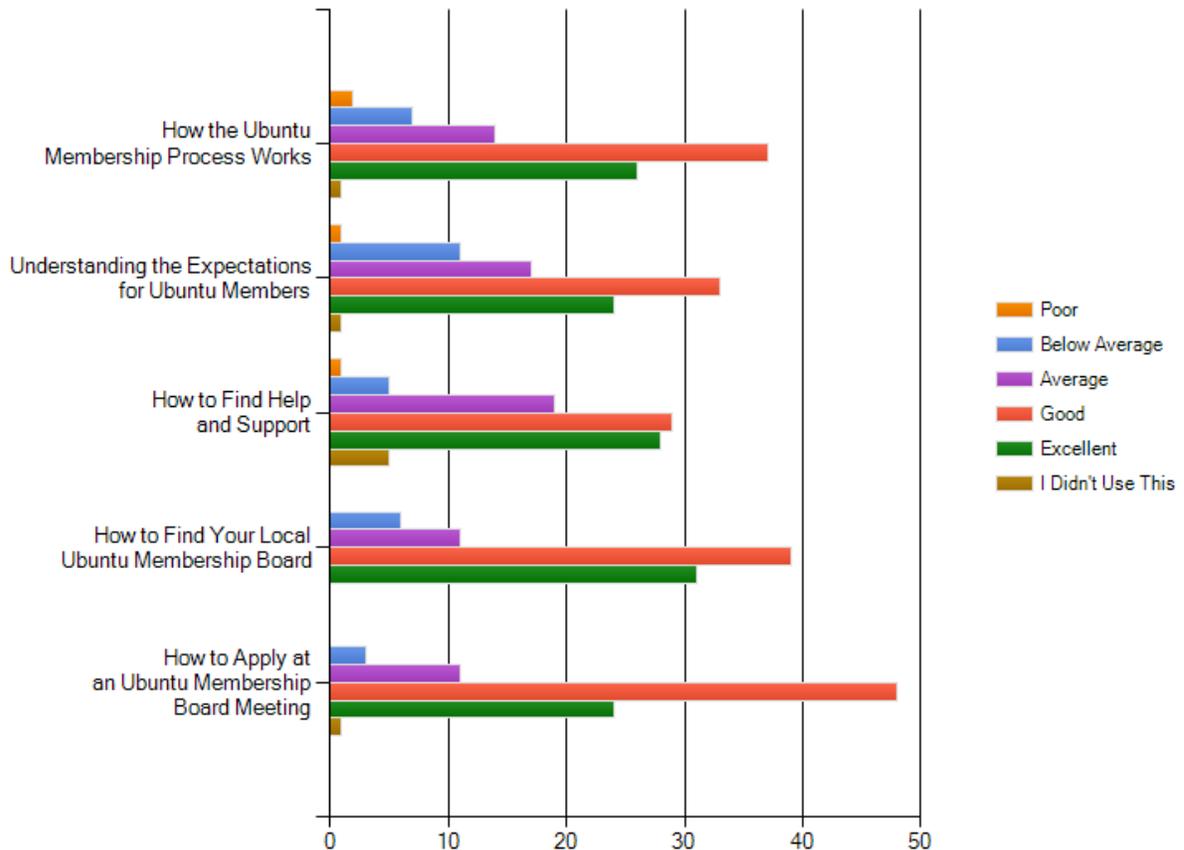
Question 6: Please rate our documentation.

The goal of this question is to determine how well documented and prepared the respondents feel about understanding the needs and expectations and the process of becoming a member.

The majority of respondents felt like all attributes highlighted in the question were either **Excellent** or **Good**, with particularly positive responses for *finding your nearest board, how to apply, and finding support*.

The primary concerns and areas of focus here were on *how the process works* and *setting expectations* for membership which had higher **Poor** or **Below Average** responses..

Please rate the following documentation





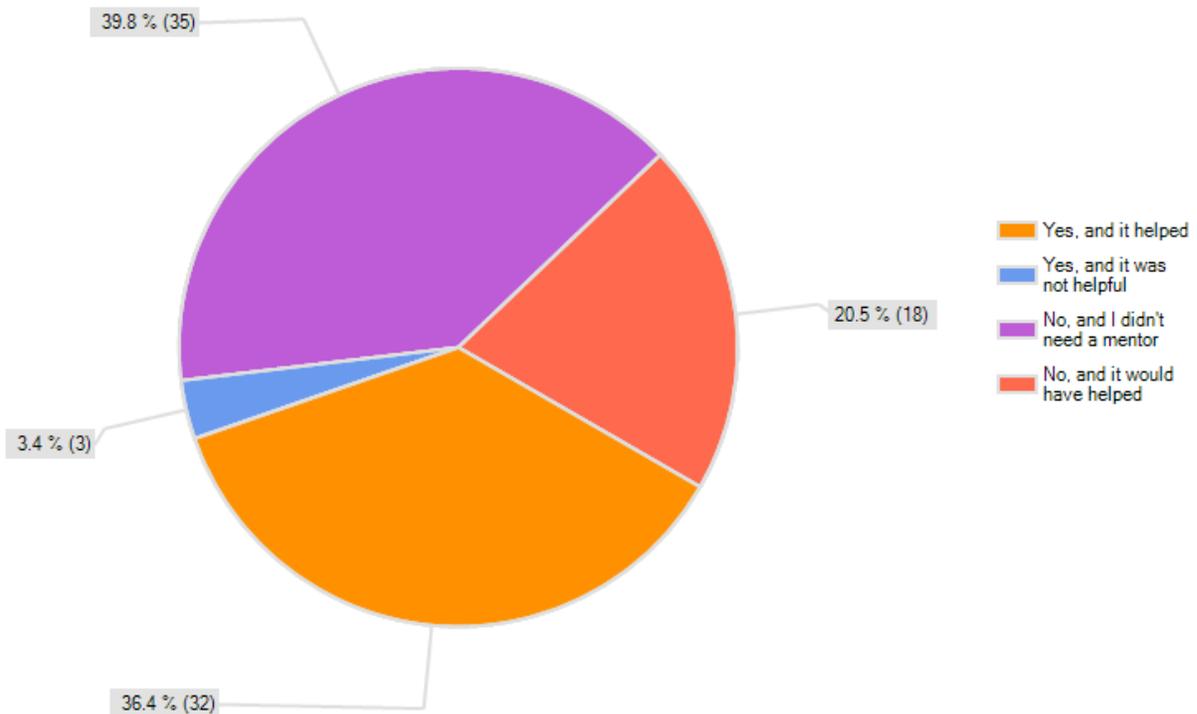
Question 7: Did you have a mentor to help you through the process?

This question was designed to provide some insight into whether mentoring provides a useful function for achieving Ubuntu Membership. The responses here were interesting:

- **36%** - Yes and it helped.
- **40%** - No, and I didn't need a mentor.
- **21%** - No, and it would have helped.

These results suggest to me that mentoring is a useful function for some people but not others, and the results suggest that it has been useful before enough or could be deemed to be useful enough to warrant the continuation and growth of Ubuntu Membership mentoring facilities.

Did you have a mentor to help you through the process?



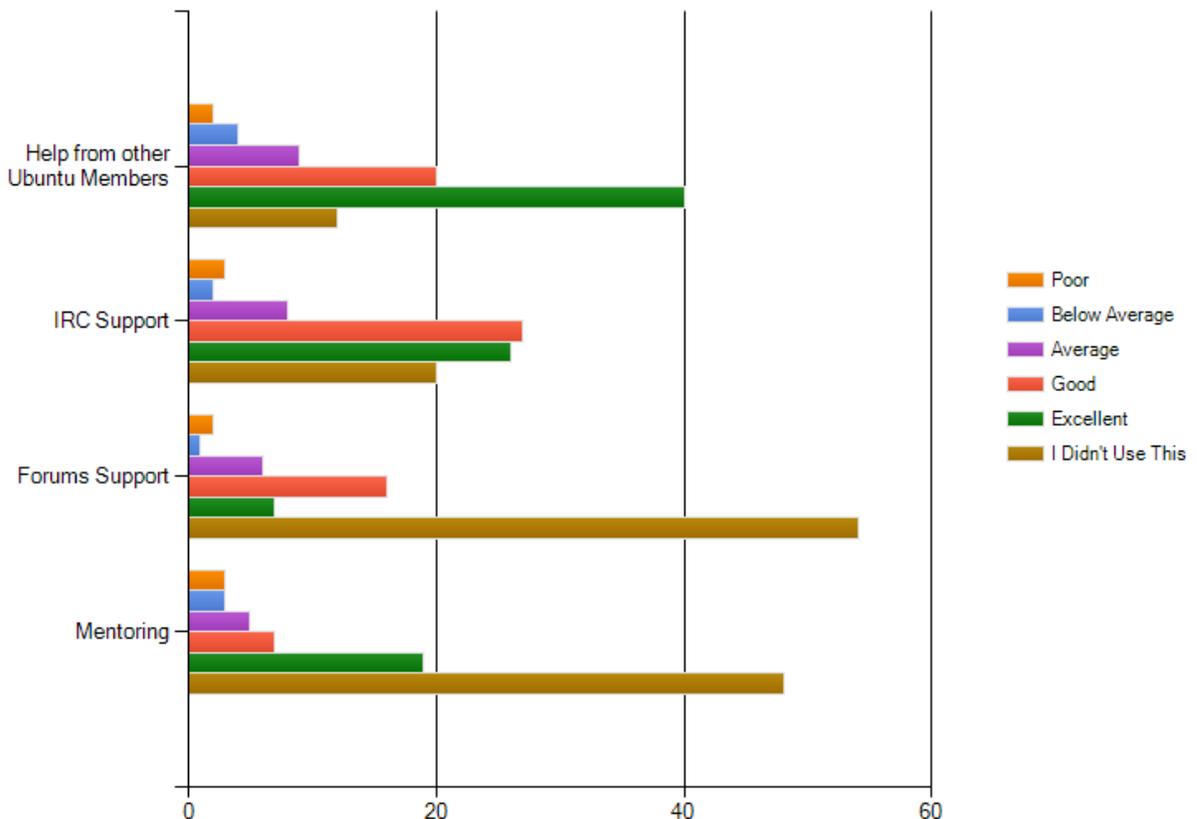


Question 8: Rate the support and guidance.

The goal of this question is to provide insight into where respondents looked for help when navigating the Ubuntu Membership process.

The results suggest few used mentoring or the forums for help, and most sought help from other Ubuntu Members. Likewise, those who did get help from other Ubuntu members considered it to be **Excellent** and **Good**. IRC came in next as an area of valuable support.

Please rate the support and guidance you received in helping you to go through the Ubuntu Membership process





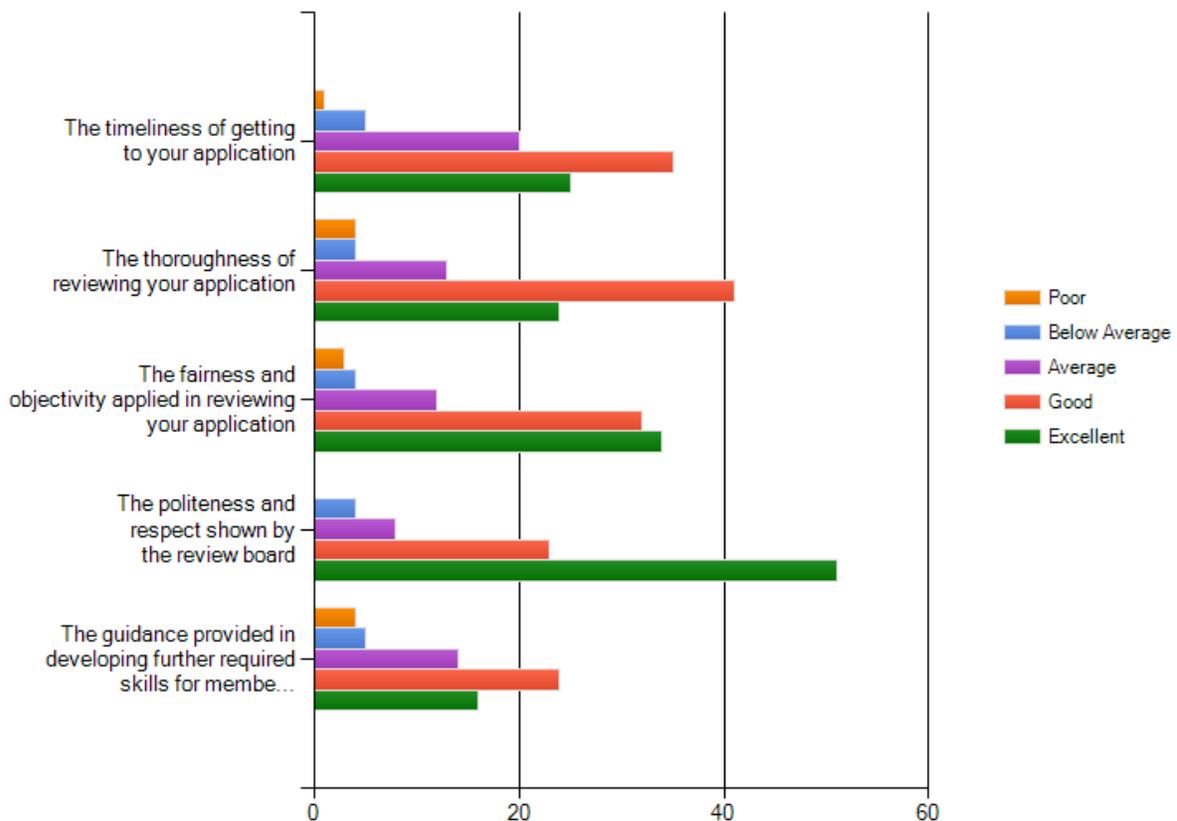
Question 9: Rate the meeting.

With the previous few questions focusing on the preparation elements of gaining Ubuntu Membership, this question seeks to gather input on the experience of attending the Ubuntu Membership assessment meeting. This question aggregates all input from all respondents and is not broken down into the different membership boards.

Politeness and respect had generally **Excellent** results, and the *thoroughness and objectivity* of the application was considered **Excellent** and **Good**.

The area where we may want to apply more focus are in the *timeliness* of getting to the application which had a high **Average** rating. There could also be more focus on providing *guidance for developing further required skills* to achieve membership which had a high **Average** rating.

Please rate the following and how they applied to your experience in the assessment meeting.





Question 10: What areas do you think work well in the Ubuntu Membership process?

The aim of this question is to highlight the primary takeaways from the process that were positive for the respondents. The full list of responses is shown below, but I pulled out the key themes and these were the most popular themes in order (most popular at the top):

- General Process.
- Documentation.
- Meeting.
- Board capabilities.
- Politeness and Respect shown by the board.

The *General Process* theme was by far the most popular with far more responses than each of the other themes.

Full List Of Responses:

- The Documentation
- In the verification and the intention to know the interviewee is willing to contribute to Ubuntu. In the meeting time for the interview, are adequate and perfect The number of members doing the interview is good because one way of seeing things, there are various opinions which then is reflected in the vote if the respondent meets the necessary
- I think the whole process is rather streamlined and well-working.
- I think all the process, preparation, presentation and post approval, is fine as it is.
- Evaluation of new Ubuntu members and monitoring after approval.
- I think it works fine, but I don't follow any process since last year.
- I can't think of anything to make the process better.
- I guess it would be better if you could put more stuff and detailed information about the whole process of membership in the current wiki page.
- The politeness and respect shown by the review board
- If you care enough you are in and we are all about motivating and keeping up the good work.
- All
- Clear explanation about the membership process is good
- Preparation for applications, including signing code of conduct, registration on launchpad.net, openid, and setting up profile in ubuntu
- The process is clear and the guidance is user-friendly.
- It was relatively easy to do, and the board was very helpful during the meeting.
- The requirements are quite well set out. I understood what was required of me to



Ubuntu Membership Survey – September 2011

- achieve membership and what the process was.
- I think the process, as a whole, is a good idea. Giving people some recognition for the contributions they make, and make them feel like they are part of a special group is a good way to build a community.
 - The Boards seem to generally take their job seriously, and review applicants with due respect and thoroughness.
 - I think it works great
 - That is there and well regarded.
 - The Board members themselves are well picked for the task, and the process overall is simple and effective.
 - Ease of application. Straightforward review process.
 - The mentions of other members.
 - Loco teams work
 - Accessibility and Support.
 - Up until the actual irc meeting, the process works very well. I think we could do a better job at defining or removing requirements, but the documentation of the process as a whole is good.
 - Quite honestly the only thing that worked well was the membership board members who wasted too much of their valuable time doing the review, questioning and voting.
 - I think the IRC meetings and the providing feedback on what would help someone get membership in the future (if they aren't approved initially) tend to work extra well. I also think the regular meetings (so applicants know when they'll need to be at a meeting) is a definite positive.
 - Wiki for testimonials is great.
 - It works great for packagers and irc operators.
 - The process works well, I have no comments.
 - The requirements or expectations could be a little more clear
 - The board members are polite and courteous.
 - I think the board does a great job, are timely, and very courteous in their dealings.
 - Everything defined works great.
 - Have a process itself its great to give something back to people who do stuff to make Ubuntu great.
 - forums, help pages
 - Really don't know...
 - IRC meetings are fast, efficient.
 - It worked really well a year ago, I'm not convinced it still does (but this is only based on 1 incident).
 - The irc interview.
 - It is well documented, the application process is easy to do



Question 11: Which areas do you feel don't work well in the Ubuntu Membership process?

The goal of this question is to identify any areas of concern that we can focus on to streamline and improve the Ubuntu Membership process. The full results are presented below, but the following five elements were the major themes in order of popularity, with the top item being by far the most common theme:

- Expectations of membership.
- Meetings coordination, publicity and quorum.
- Objectivity of the board.
- Not requiring English to participate in the process.
- Documentation of the process.

Full List Of Responses:

- Responsibilities of an Ubuntu member should be more clearly communicated before and after the approval process
- The bureaucracy needed and the fact that not all the contributions are taken in account and correctly considered (writing Docs or translating seems really more considered than helping with code).
- ** I think we need to improve on the requirements to qualify for membership, (translation of documents about membership, proof of membership, the importance of membership, any way I can work after obtaining the membership), etc. ** The idea is not simply to achieve a membership, the idea is: if I am recognized as an Ubuntu Member, but now I have another way to go, another goal, work harder. ** I think we have to improve if a member of the local community chooses the membership, the LoCo as the most representative Contact should be part of those who are requesting membership, and date of membership meeting, should even be spread by mailing list, of course it is not clear that a fair gift of membership, but certain members through their contributions and work are to meet to gain membership officer placing links on requirements, and other things that I explained above,
- I think the membership for non-technical contributions could benefit from a set of defined rules/guidelines.
- Perhaps more focusing on Meritocracy, explaining, in different ways what we must understand and recognize as a merit, why the Ubuntu Community (and Ubuntu Membership) is based on it, could make candidates expectations more realistic.
- Until now, no, just that it would be great if done the meetings in the language in which it is accepting a new member Ubuntu.
- They used to be fine, I presume they remain the same.
- My only surprise was when I received an automatic email to renew my membership recently. I understand the need for this but it took me by surprise and I think it also



Ubuntu Membership Survey – September 2011

took sabdfl by surprise...

- The objectivity of the process and the available before-process information
- Not that I can think of.
- Meeting Scheduling and announcement to the applicants should be considered as wiki pages are not updated properly
- locos. in the case of the asian locos, many people in decision-making positions are too focused on their power and position rather than their functional duties. they seem to have agendas to keep new members out, rather than encouraging new members to join.
- Meetings. I have made multiple suggestions on making an RSVP system so that the people who need to attend the meeting can say that they will or wont make it so proposed members don't waste their time showing up when noone else does.
- It may take much more time for those who is not a good english speaker to prepare.
- I wasn't sure if membership was the appropriate path I should follow. A large majority of my contributions were technical in nature and only had ~4 month contribution time but had excellent recommendations which I believe helped me out. I believe I was supposed to go in as a contributing developer but was not sure how to do it at the time.
- I had a glitch where the Oceania board meeting was cancelled without notice purely by board members not showing up. This apparently is not uncommon.
- I feel like it's still largely subjective. At some point, I feel like you should be able to *know* that your contributions are sufficient to earn membership. It's not given, but earned. However, I see a big difference between the low level of contribution that some people have (and they are basically given membership), vs. people who go before the review board and have had excellent contributions but get grilled about them, and sometimes even asked to do more and come back later to try again. I think we could be turning some people off, who would otherwise be strong contributors.
- Lots of people still seem to think it is very difficult to become a member. We should communicate "significant and sustained contribution" better, and hilight different areas where people can contribute.
- guys have too much power and in a few minutes do not understand what I did for the ubuntu community (after 5-6 years of commitment), only checked for a few easy things without looking further
- some people go for membership with a limited understanding of the point of it, and what the board is looking for. I wrote about this some time ago <https://lists.ubuntu.com/archives/ubuntu-women/2009-December/002285.html>
- for those who ave applied a couple of times, a more direct approach to getting them a mentor to save them becoming dis-heartened.
- After i was declined membership at the first meeting, i was queued for the next meeting 3 different times, but due to a lack of availability of board members at a few meetings, i didnt get approved until 6 weeks later, i was ok with this, and i understand that the board members are all volunteers, but i felt it detracted from



Ubuntu Membership Survey – September 2011

the process a little.

- Measurability. A wider implementation of karma would be helpful.
- The karma: A translator get quick a lot of karma. A developer don't get the same karma for a lot of commits.
- Developing
- I have no objection to any area.
- The approach by the board to make membership and the process of gaining it into an exclusive, fraternal-like situation, rather than an inclusive, community. The default response should be "yes", not "no". If someone takes the time to fill out an application and showup to an IRC meeting, they CLEARLY want to help Ubuntu....why should we ever turn them away? What is the message we are sending when we do this?
- Sorting out where to apply, and then having to create a "brag" page. The "brag" page is very off putting, being able to reduce it to a simple list of additional contributions that is not covered by lp or other activity would be much better.
- I think somehow some of the basic suggestions for making sure your application is as good as possible (such as getting testimonials) often get ignored, but I'm not sure how to get people to pay attention to them as something that's important for the membership boards to make their decisions.
- Signing the agreement is convoluted and took me an hour to complete as well as needing me to install crappy firefox. I've seen too many users ask for help on this too and i am still unsure how it actually got done. I think I fluked it. Why not just email a code to the user for them to paste in the page?
- Almost all tasks that involve writing code are written off by the approval committee. This discourages participation from application authors who wish to target ubuntu as a platform for their software.
- I feel like I was scrutinized a bit more than average, and even criticized because I was also a Canonical employee.
- Sometimes, members decrease their participation after get membership. Would be nice if all members pass through a process of renewal to see if they still alive in the community, even occasionally. The renewal time could be the same as in the launchpad. Regards, and thanks for the opportunity for leave some words. It could be more simple than the membership process, just for get some testimonials. I have some ideas about that.
- I can not think of anything at this time. Well, possibly make it a easier to find out where and how to apply.
- The expectations for becoming an Ubuntu Member and the benefits of being an Ubuntu Member are not entirely clear.
- Lot of people on my loco team don't apply because it's in english only. They have to write a page, and expose their work in a foreign language and it's not so easy for everyone.
- I wish there were a site dedicated to the various Ubuntu Membership levels and an



Ubuntu Membership Survey – September 2011

- application for scheduling your IRC meeting.
- Some areas are undefined, especially for people who write code for Ubuntu on like Launchpad, or other projects that very critical and focused on Ubuntu.
 - I think that the "WHen you are ready" area is not clear. Also where to find some guidance in addition to Ubuntu Beginners Team, but is not the Team mission as is a team to help beginners not prospective member (they are not beginners)
 - All the things I described in the previous questions.
 - Discoverability of the process. Regional board wiki was outdated at the time of my application. It can be difficult to become Ubuntu Member if nobody is vouching at the meetings / helping with application.
 - I believe Ubuntu membership is a stand-alone process which is distinguishable from the programming team membership, which even has it's own rules and board, but apparantly not. I believe governance, documentation and support is at least as important as code contributions, and that it makes sense that the two were divided as different entities, as it is often done by, and needed by, a totally different kind of people. This should still be applicable.
 - Availability of interview times. The wiki was confusing a little. Not many understand what membership means or even that it exists.

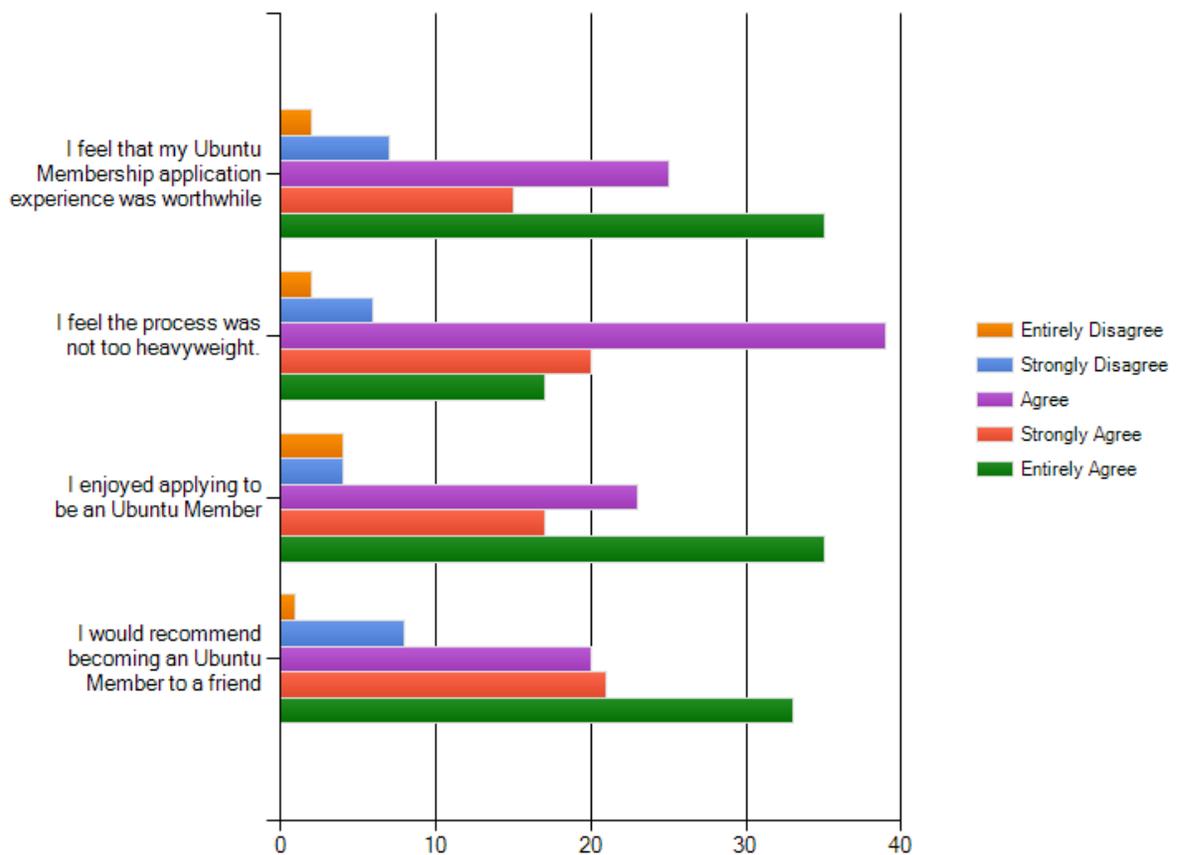


Question 12: Overall conclusions.

This question is designed to get a general take from the respondents on how worthwhile the process was to participate in, how heavyweight it is, and how much they enjoyed it.

The majority of participants reported generally very positive feedback in how the process works with many saying they **Entirely Agree** that it was worthwhile, that they enjoyed the process and would recommend it to a friend.

How would you answer these questions?





Further Discussion Points

Based upon the feedback presented here, my general takeaway is that the Ubuntu Membership process is functioning well and generally meeting the needs of the community in a responsive, objective, and representative manner.

There are however some areas that could serve well as discussion points for future improvements:

- **Setting Expectations** – there was a lot of feedback that suggests that the expectations around membership are unclear. This survey has outlined primary areas of participation (e.g. LoCo Teams and Translations) so we could explore methods of clearly defining expectations in those specific areas more.
- **How The Process Works** – some feedback suggested that elements of how the process works were unclear. A documentation review could be useful
- **Mentoring and Support** – attitudes to mentoring was divided in the feedback. The feedback did suggest that some find mentoring useful and the best support comes from other members – we could explore ways of better connecting prospective members to existing members (maybe rotated meetings, AskUbuntu or something else).
- **Meeting Improvements** – feedback suggested concerns about the timeliness of getting to applications (e.g. prospective members are sitting around for hours before the board gets to their application) and meetings not going ahead due to lack of quorum. We could explore finer grained timing of application reviews and possibly expanding the boards to prevent the quorum issue.

These topics will be discussed with the Community Council and the various Membership Boards.