Proposal

for a Position as

Python Advocacy Coordinator

by

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1 What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is an effort to <u>effectively communicate</u> a <u>message</u> to a <u>targeted audience</u> on a <u>recurring basis</u> and <u>listening to responses</u> from the audience, to refine the cycle. Advocacy is a continual process, with inputs, outputs and monitoring mechanisms.

Therefore, an advocacy effort must be able to address the following questions:

"effectively communicate"

How do we reach the people? Which forms of communication channels should be used?

"message"

What should we be telling people? Different messages for different audiences? Advocacy needs to talk inside, to the existing community, and outside, to those not yet aware of Python. The messages are different.

"targeted audience"

Who are the people we would like to attract into the Python community? What different needs and ways of communicating do they have?

"recurring basis"

Once initial contact is made, how do we support them in their exploration of the community? How do we keep them interested and turn them into contributors/collaborators?

"listening to responses"

Advocacy needs intelligence from those in the community and also about those we would like to attract. Web traffic statistics, email feedback, online polls and conference attendance numbers are some ways of attaining this.

A natural question is, if the message is going <u>to</u> a targeted audience, from whom is it coming? The answer must be, <u>not</u> the coordinator, but the community. A coordinator must make a good faith effort to transmit what the community is saying and not let it take on his personal biases. On some level, the office of advocacy is the voice of the Python community.

2 Why Fund a Coordinator Position?

The community has a diverse set of efforts, often informal and splintered, advocating the use of Python. However, some opportunities are missed and there are overlaps in energy. To bring these efforts together, to provide a certain guidance to the overall process, some coordination is called for. Therefore, I propose the creation of a position of Advocacy Coordinator.

A special emphasis is placed on the *second* word in the title "Advocacy Coordinator". Advocacy is a big job and not one that can be performed by one person, and the list of tasks below makes this clear. Such a coordinator would reach out to the community and leverage the work of others. He would set direction and manage resources, with input from the PSF board

and Python community. But a coordinator must also be a programmer, not just a cheerleader, and contribute to the actual development of the advocacy support projects.

Because of the effort involved, and to maintain a steady focus, I propose the coordinator position be funded as a full-time position. Purely volunteer efforts are often diluted and even when funded as a part-time position, coordination may take second place to other activities.

The initial term would be six-months, with an evaluation at that point by the PSF board, and and hopefully renewed for another six months. This stable level of funding allows the coordinator to concentrate on the advocacy task.

3 What Exactly Would Such a Coordinator Do?

The following represent some of the tactical efforts involved in an advocacy effort, roughly in order of their priority, based on early feedback from the PSF board.

3.1 Moderate an "Advocacy Mailing List"

While there is a *marketing-python@wingide.com* mailing list on which we've discussed some of the advocacy issues, I suggest we create new list. My thinking is that "advocacy" has a less commercial flavor than "marketing", to which some people are sensitive, and that the list should be hosted at python.org to show it has official standing. Perhaps one of the following names:

- advocacy@python.org
- advocacy-list@python.org
- advocates@python.org

One benefit of moving and renaming the list, letting people resubscribe, will be to measure how much people are willing to make concrete contributions of content under the new advocacy framework.

3.2 Establish an "Advocacy Center"

Initially a bit of infrastructure. A first step would be to establish an "advocacy center" on *python.org*, either under the existing URL space or perhaps the subdomain *advocacy.python.org*. I envision the space consisting of two areas: the existing Moin Moin wiki facility, and a dynamic content engine such as Zope 3 (my preferred choice), hooked into the PostgreSQL database on *python.org*.

One goal is to avoid adding more burden to the *python.org* maintainers, so the Zope3 instance would possibly be hosted elsewhere.

3.3 Encourage Others to Contribute to Python

In line with the "coordinator" focus is an outreach effort, figuring out how to get more contributors to Python, at all levels, and making changes so we can better invite new people into the community. The initial focus would be on content contributors.

3.4 Garden an Advocacy Wiki

While some say that wikis are imperfect communication channels, they work well for inviting community input when there is a gardener, to seed it with topics, harvest ideas, and prune

regularly. A gardener folds in suggestions, applies corrections and then removes the original comments. The coordinator would be that gardener. At various times the coordinator would put up draft advocacy documents and FAQs for design and review by the community.

3.5 Maintain a Media/Collaterals Library

Part of the message of advocacy is white papers about Python, flyers for handout on college campuses/at user groups, and business/vanity cards that advocates can hand out when they meet someone interested in learning more about Python.

There is also a need to collect slide presentations and class handouts from instructors and store them in a central place for others to reuse, under an appropriate license.

And with the rising wave of pod/screen casts, some way of providing links, perhaps via RSS, to Python-related casts would be beneficial.

Also the "Python Success Stories" could become an additional type of useful content for this library.

People have volunteered to provide such materials, and so a place to store them is needed.

3.6 Write Articles for Trade Magazines

The coordinator would write articles for various magazines, and encourage others to do so as well, to showcase Python in certain fields of endeavor. I've written for Dr. Dobbs Journal, and they just established a column about Ruby. Perhaps they might accept one about Python. Some random topics that would highlight the strengths of Python are:

- Comparison of the Various Web Frameworks Available for Python
- DB-API and Using Python with Popular Databases
- Interoperability: Writing your PostgreSQL Database Stored Procedures in Python
- Interoperability: Extending the Blender 3D Application with Python
- Interoperability: Using Python with OpenOffice.org
- Alternative Databases: Object Databases (ZODB, Durus) with Python

Such articles likely would be a very effective action item, influencing significant numbers of people.

3.7 Work to Promote Python Use on Campus

There is a strong need to get students and teachers using Python in schools and universities, seeding the college scene to get students to form on-campus Python user groups, and lobbying the professors to give Python airtime in classes. Which drives the issue is an open debate. At PyCon it was offered that until Python appears in the curriculum students won't use it because they only want to learn skills with vocational value, and so professors must drive the issue. Others thought the students were in a good position to lobby their school to teach Python, if not for credit then evening talks and non-credit courses.

By providing flyers, class presentations/handouts under a reuse license, and a registry of available guest speakers, a strong promotion effort can be mounted.

3.8 Implement and Maintain a Registry of People

The purpose of the dynamic content engine, mentioned earlier, is to supply various information lookup and registration capabilities. A key part of coordination is maintaining a registry of useful resources.

- consultants, searchable geographically and by specialization
- speakers, organized by area, topic and cost
- potential employers of Python developers
- user groups, organized by area
- 'shared interests' index over member logins

To support some of these, the advocacy site would implement member logins. This login information also provides some statistics on the Python community, and an avenue for contacting this set of people, for conference announcements and online polls.

One of the challenges facing the Python community is finding its users. Many of the Python programmers in Dallas are not members of any of the major Python mailing lists, and were hard to reach about PyCon or local meeting opportunities. Providing a *python.org* logon would be one step toward finding them so we can count them, organize them, speak to them and facilitate their talking to each other. To promote synergy, Python people need to be aware of others, where they are and what they are doing.

3.9 Work to Collect Statistics on the Python Community

Perhaps some of these already exist, but if not, a coordinator would work with others to establish web traffic statistics reporting for the websites *python.org*, *python.net* and *pycon.org*. Establishing a baseline and then monitoring how it changes as the advocacy effort ramps up will give the PSF board some insight into how the effort is working.

As an example of the information that can be collected, I've set up traffic statistics on *us.pycon.org* at:

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http://demo:demo@www.timecastle.net/awstats/awstats.pl?config=us.pycon.org
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3.10 Establish a Registry of Python-Friendly ISPs

A major aspect of Python is its use in serving web content, and I often hear people ask where they can find an ISP who supports Python. In similar fashion, there are ISPs who wonder if anyone would notice if they added Python support. By offering the ISPs publicity in such a registry, and providing a central index of Python-based hosting, both parties would benefit.

There is an existing *PythonHosting* wiki page, from which this registry would be constructed.

3.11 Continue Working on PyCon Conference Efforts

During the ramp-up to PyCon, the coordinator would assist where needed.

3.12 Participate in the Site Conversion Effort on Python.org

During slow times it is a natural role for the coordinator to assist in the *python.org* site conversion project.

3.13 Work to Establish a PSF Store

Down the road a bit, the coordinator could wrangle resources for a PSF Online Store, for raising funds by selling T-shirts, buttons and bumper stickers advocating Python. Volunteers have spoken up offering design services. Remember that people <u>want</u> to promote Python so let's encourage and support them.

There is an existing store at http://www.cafepress.com/pydotorg, created by Tim Parkin, on which this promotion effort would be built. The site needs some publicity.

4 How Would Success of Advocacy Efforts Be Measured?

Because of the distributed nature of advocacy work, the PSF board needs a way to monitor efforts. The first manner in which advocacy work would be visible is a more active advocacy mailing list. A coordinator would post frequent updates on various projects. Note that it would not be the raw traffic on this list that would indicate success but rather the visibility into the process that it provides. A quiet list might indicate that not much coordination was occurring.

Periodically, say once a month, the coordinator would prune the mailing list, compiling it into a status report to the PSF board for those members who don't have time to follow the list. These reports would be a basis for renewal of the coordinator position.

More numerical results would be obtained from the web traffic, conference attendance and perhaps mailing list postings statistics. Also an increase in registered user groups around the world would be a good indicator of success.

Non-numeric results would be measured by whether materials are actually written and get used/printed.

5 What are Some of the Challenges Involved?

1. There will be a need to balance the goals requiring the creation of new infrastructure against those involving the creation of new content. The advocacy effort is neither completely a programming task nor a technical writing task, but a blend of the two, and input from the PSF on where to set the balance point is welcome.

2. Related to the above, there is a need to minimize the load placed on the python.org maintainers. The balancing comes in the degree in which to build on top of the existing *pydotorg* infrastructure, with its strengths and weaknesses, versus when to strike out and create new infrastructure, such as some form of dynamic/database web content for registries.

6 Why Pick Me to Fill the Position of Coordinator?

6.1 My Qualifications

I would love to take on the task. Making PyCon happen was a lot of fun, and I think I was a good organizer. However, I can't afford to focus 100% on Python advocacy without income, as I did for several months for PyCon. I'm currently between contracts, and have experience in both advocacy and distributed work environments. I am established as a corporation, under the name *Tau Productions Inc,* and therefore the PSF wouldn't have to worry about tax scenarios. The PSF would just contract with my company and I would cover all required taxes.

For details of my past work, my resume can be found online at:

http://www.taupro.com/Resumes/resume_jrr

6.2 My Philosophy

I enjoy organizing, technical writing and teaching, as well as heavy coding. Through efforts in local user groups, I've been working to encourage others to participate in the Python community.

I believe that the Python star is accelerating, that Python is poised to become the dominant language in key sectors over the next five years. It's why I started the DFW Pythoneers, why I invested so much energy into PyCon this year, and why I hope to see the Python community come together and surprise many with its come-from-nowhere flash finish. There are some key Python technologies just now arising, such as eggs, components and PyPy, and we need to get the message out about this cool stuff we're grinning about.

I don't believe in a magic advocacy bullet, like full-page Wallstreet ads, but think that by taking multiple small steps in diverse areas, we can build up tremendous momentum.

I don't believe "Ruby is the Enemy". I believe we grow the dynamic languages pie, not fight over the pieces.

Python does not need traditional PR, a cutsey saying, or a talking head.

A post I made to the *marketing-python* list, which triggered this proposal, may be informative about my approach:

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http://wingware.com/pipermail/marketing-python/2006-March/005610.html
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6.3 My Needs

To keep the wolf from my door and focus on the task, I propose a fixed dollar amount, rather than an hourly rate, with its attendant tracking complexities. This position would be full-time and be my primary focus. I suggest payment arrangements be for the PSF Treasurer to cut a check around the middle of each month, starting in August.

Because of the wide distribution of this document, I've specified the actual figure in private email to the PSF Chairman but be assured it is a lower figure than a senior software consultant, my usual role, can make in my region. My intent in making this proposal is not to 'get rich' off the PSF but to be afforded just enough financial resources that I can make a difference in the spread of Python.

7 Questions an Advocacy Effort Must Be Able to Answer:

Effective communications means sometimes the answer changes according to who is asking. The Advocacy Center would draw on community input to develop on-line FAQs for the following questions.

A primary focus will be on answering the question "how can I do X with Python" because new users will be attracted by ease of solving their particular problem(s) more than anything. This questions leads to the further question, "what is the best package/framework for doing X?", with pointers to the tools to download and some quick start information.

7.1 Audience: IT Manager

1. What is Python?
2. Why should I hire Python programmers?
3. Where can I find Python programmers for my project?

4. My people only know Java and I want them to utilize Python. Where can I send them?
5. Who actually uses Python? Anyone I've heard of?
6. What kind of problems is Python good for?
7. What kind of problems is Python NOT good for?
8. Python is open-source so it only works on one of those open-source platforms?
9. Where can I hire a Python evangelist to come speak at my company? My user group?

7.2 Audience: K12/College Students/Teachers

1. What is Python?
2. Why should I learn Python?
3. Where can I find a job doing Python?
4. I'd like to use Python in teaching my K12 class - can someone help?
5. I'd like to use Python in teaching my college class - can someone help?
6. I'd like to polish my skills, where can I take classes?
7. I like Python but I can't reach my management/co-workers. Help?
8. Who uses Python? Anyone?
9. What kind of problems is Python good for?
10. What kind of problems is Python NOT good for?
11. Python is open-source so it only works on one of those open-source platforms?
12. Where can I find others interested in Python, such as a users group?
13. Where can I hire a Python evangelist to come speak at my company? My user group?
14. What is the best package/framework for doing X?

7.3 Audience: Scientist/Engineer

1. What is Python?
2. Why should I learn Python?
3. Where can I find Python programmers for my project?
4. I'd like to polish my skills, where can I take classes?
5. My boss says I can attend a conference; where is one for Python?
6. I like Python but I can't reach my management/co-workers. Help?
7. Who uses Python? Anyone in the science/engineering fields?
8. What kind of problems is Python good for?
9. What kind of problems is Python NOT good for?
10. Python is open-source so it only works on one of those open-source platforms?
11. Where can I find others interested in Python, such as a users group?
12. Where can I hire a Python evangelist to come speak at my company? My user group?
13. What is the best package/framework for doing X?

7.4 Audience: C++/Java Programmer

1. What is Python?
2. Why should I learn Python?
3. Where can I find a job doing Python?
4. Where can I find Python programmers for my project?
5. I'd like to polish my skills, where can I take classes?
6. My boss says I can attend a conference; where is one for Python?
7. I like Python but I can't reach my management/co-workers. Help?
8. Who uses Python? Anyone?
9. What kind of problems is Python good for?
10. What kind of problems is Python NOT good for?
11. Python is open-source so it only works on one of those open-source platforms?
12. Where can I find others interested in Python, such as a users group?
13. Where can I hire a Python evangelist to come speak at my company? My user group?
14. What is the best package/framework for doing X?
15. Can I become certified in Python? How about at Brainbench.com?

7.5 Audience: Language Dabbler

1. What is Python?
2. Why should I learn Python?
3. Where can I find a job doing Python?
4. I'd like to polish my skills, where can I take classes?
5. My boss says I can attend a conference; where is one for Python?
6. What kind of problems is Python good for?
7. What kind of problems is Python NOT good for?
8. Python is open-source so it only works on one of those open-source platforms?
9. Where can I find others interested in Python, such as a users group?
10. Where can I hire a Python evangelist to come speak at my company? My user group?
11. What is the best package/framework for doing X?