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July 12, 2017 by Sarah Gooding

Sustain Event Draws 100 Attendees to Discuss the Sustainability of Open Source Software



More than 100 open source project maintainers and industry leaders gathered at the GitHub headquarters in San Francisco last month to discuss the long-term sustainability of open source software. The [Sustain](#) event, put on by a relatively new organization called SustainOSS, did not follow a

traditional conference format with talks and keynotes but was intentionally left unstructured to foster open discussion.

Organizers expected 50 attendees but ended up with double their estimates. The \$50 ticket price covered day care, travel assistance, food, and other miscellaneous event costs. Attendees shared insights from their diverse backgrounds and participated in collaborative working sessions and various discussions facilitated by organizers.

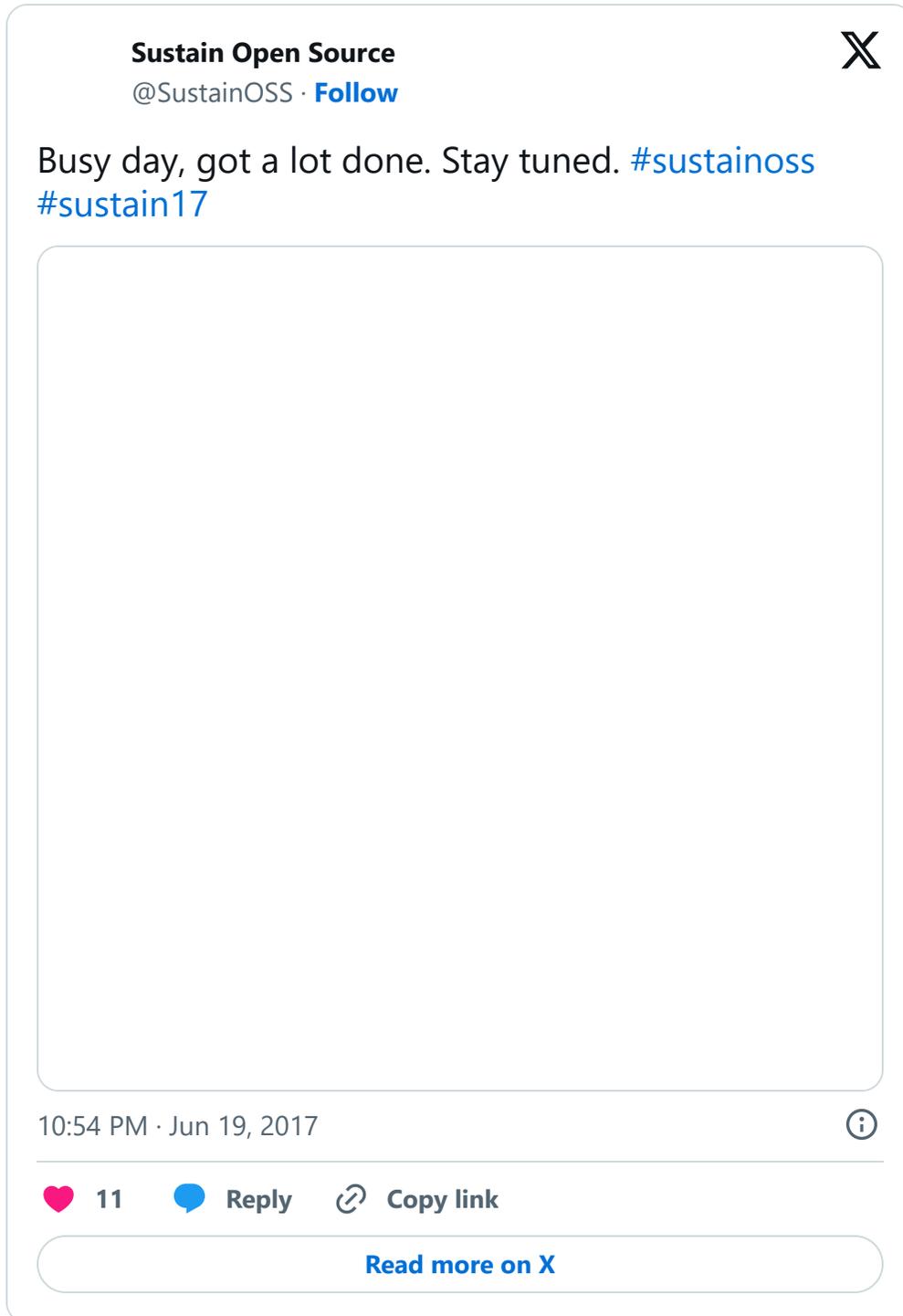
<https://twitter.com/saikofish/status/876863604670304257>

Co-organizer Alanna Irving shared in her [wrap-up post](#) how the team [used Open Collective](#) to make the event's finances transparent and offer payment options for participants and sponsors. The service has recently added a new feature that allows collectives to communicate event info and sell tickets.

Representatives from large tech companies attended the event, as well as contributors from various open source projects and foundations, including Google, Amazon, Paypal, Airbnb, Red Hat, JS Foundation, Linux Foundation, Apache Foundation, npm, FontAwesome, GulpJS, and more. Irving published a few insights from the discussions that she and her colleagues are applying to their work at Open Collective:

- Introducing money in open source is less controversial than we thought. The main issues are related to how.
- The coder role is only one among many equally important roles: community builder (for onboarding and creating a healthy ecosystem), documentation writer, fundraiser, and public advocate.
- Companies want to support open source communities. This is now more clear than ever.
- It's easier for some companies to make in-kind donations rather than cash. We're working on making this easier, and will share more about it soon.
- Projects that companies publicly support need to have accountability and respect codes of conduct, in order to avoid PR nightmares.

On the day following the event, SustainOSS organizers tweeted out a link to [a new forum on GitHub for discussing open source sustainability](#). Proposed topics include fundraising, governance, contributor retention, productivity, and managing corporate relationships. It was created to offer a safe place for open source sustainers to collaborate with each other in the open and contributors have already submitted some practical ideas for discussion, such as [adding a standardized FUNDING or SUSTAINABILITY file to repositories](#).



Sustain was inspired by inspired by the [Maintainerati](#) event held in London in May 2017. The similarly unstructured event brought together open source maintainers who share similar challenges. GitHub also hosted the [Wontfix Cabal](#) event at its San Francisco headquarters in February, which highlighted some of the difficulties related to maintaining OSS projects. Events focused on maintaining and funding OSS have been popping up in the past two years, as more people become aware that open source infrastructure has a critical sustainability problem.

The SustainOSS organizers will be releasing a more detailed article on the event soon. They are also open to considering hosting other Sustain events in different locations. Follow [@SustainOSS](#) on Twitter for the latest updates.

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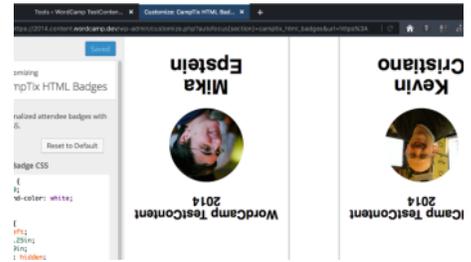
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