



Experience from ROS Boston:
How to ROS like a BOS

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ROS BOSTON

Who are we?

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Open Robotics
ROS Melodic Maintainer
ROS 2 Core Contributor

Movelt Maintainer
ROS1 Community Contributor
Former Baxter & Sawyer Maintainer



Why do we host a ROS meetup in our community?

- Meet fellow roboticists nearby
- Discover cool things people are working on
 - Research
 - Companies
 - Startups
- Find local collaborators for projects
- Venue for roboticists to meet with companies to find work
- Networking
- It's fun!



Overview of our events

- Focus around ROS and Gazebo
 - Open source heavily encouraged
- 35-50 attendees per event
 - Free to attend
- Rotating event venue
- Meetup format:
 - 30 minutes food/networking at the start
 - 2-3 talks per event
 - Talks ~20-30 minutes
 - 30 minutes reserved for networking among attendees



How do we find time to organize this?

- Do it whenever we can (2+ month cadence)
- Not a huge time sink
- Helpful to have multiple people organizing
 - Split up workload
 - Have events even when co-organizer is missing
 - Leverage the power of multiple people's networks
 - More fun
 - @alexacela, thanks for your help the last year!



Event component: Venue

- Rotating set of venues
 - Pros
 - Attendees get to see different places
 - Different set of attendees based on location
 - Cons
 - Regular attendees have to go to different places
 - Regular attendees may not be able to make all venues
 - Some venues have stricter policies
 - Security
 - Locked doors
 - Sign NDA
 - Additional logistical burden on organizers



Event component: Sponsor

- Provides money for food, drinks
- Optionally provides prizes
- Can also provide the venue and talks
 - But too much focus from one company excludes others
 - We allow a single talk but focus on other speakers for the rest



Event component: Speakers

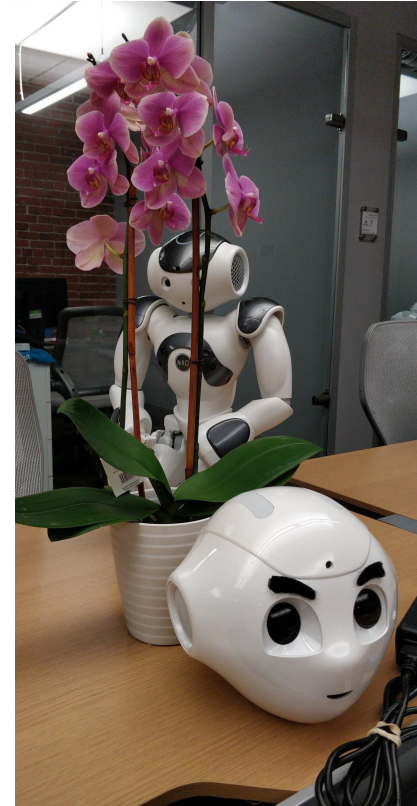
- Strive for speakers from different backgrounds
 - Academia
 - Industry
 - Research
- Use personal networks to find speakers
 - Ask nicely :)
 - Offer free pizza
 - People are excited to present their work
- Talk format
 - Technical talks preferred
 - 20-30 minutes (leaving 5-10 minutes for questions)
 - Open-source robotics or ROS/Gazebo related (or both)





Event component: Advertisement

- We use <https://eventbrite.com> to organize the event
 - Also general advertising
- Post event details to <https://discourse.ros.org/local>
- Have a sign in sheet at each event
 - Send direct email for next event to past attendees
- Partner with a local tech incubator has given us access to even more roboticists
 - Thanks to Joyce Sidopoulos from Massrobotics for much help!



Event component: Frequency (rcipy.Rate)

- 4-6 events per year
- Ideally one every 2 months
- More important to keep events at regular interval (trying to get better at this!)
- Community appreciates frequency
- Helpful to organize next event before current event takes place



Launching the event

```
from launch import LaunchDescription
from launch_ros.actions import ComposableNodeContainer
from launch_ros.descriptions import ComposableNode

def generate_launch_description():
    ros_bos = ComposableNodeContainer(
        node_name='ros_boston_event',
        package='ros_boston_event',
        node_executable='component_container',
        composable_node_descriptions=[
            ComposableNode(package='venue', node_plugin='venue::Venue'),
            ComposableNode(package='sponsor', node_plugin='sponsor::Sponsor'),
            ComposableNode(package='speakers', node_plugin='speakers::Speakers'),
            ComposableNode(package='community', node_plugin='community::Community'),
        ],
        output='both',
    )
    return LaunchDescription([ros_bos])
```



Future work: Improving community experience

- A website
 - Blog posts
 - Information for speakers
 - Past and upcoming events
 - Slides
 - Pictures/Videos of the events
- Making/hosting recordings of the talks
- Hackathon
 - Slightly more work to setup
 - Hands-on experience



Closing remarks

- Organizing events is very rewarding to us
- Helpful to local community
- Not a huge amount of time and effort (if you have multiple people to share the work)
- You should do it too!





Questions?

@clalancette
@iantheengineer

