Release management in Debian
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Can we do better?

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Qualifications

- not a member of the Release Team
- closely involved with sarge and etch releases
- release manager for Debian Installer for etch
- stable release manager for D-I for sarge and etch
- release manager for Installation Guide
- main editor and coordinator for sarge and etch Release Notes
- member of website team, done part of preparation for etch
- member of debian-cd team

Outline

1. Release Management

2. Stable release Management

3. The etch-and-a-half release

4. The Lenny release

ITIL definition

The Service Management process that encompasses the planning, design, build, configuration and testing of hardware and software releases to create a defined set of release components. Release activities also include the planning, preparation, scheduling, training, documentation, distribution and installation of the release to many users and locations. Release Management uses the controlling processes of Change and Configuration Management.

Simpler definition for Debian

Management aspect

- Planning and coordinating all activities that are needed to make a release possible, with the quality that's expected from Debian

Practical aspect

- Release team is responsible for the testing and t-p-u suites
- (Stable) release team is responsible for the p-u suite

Every DD is a release manager

... if only for the packages he/she maintains

Release management becomes more inportant

- for team maintained packages
- for very complex packages
- when you are also upstream
- for packages that have many interdependencies

I.e: when there is a need for coordination!

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Sarge installs broken after Etch release

2007:

- 7 April: Etch and 3.1r6
- 31 May: Retired from project
- 13 July: Fixed version of the installer available
- 28 July: Retirement final
- 15 August: 4.0r1
- 19 October: Retirement revoked
- 9 November: ftp-master.d.o down
- 28 December: 3.1r7

Planning and coordination

- use mailing lists instead of IRC
- be explicit about content and planning
- update on progress and changes
- discuss how to handle issues
- allow for review of release announcement

Outline

- Kick-off Debconf 2007 (Mexico)
- Mailing list created, some discussion
  no decisions, no action
- December 2007: options for installer support
- February 2008: installer support implemented, plan for CD support
- 26 July 2008: released with 4.0r4
  - kernel 2.6.24; based on D-I Lenny Beta2
  - 15 months after Etch -> etch-and-two-thirds
  - loop-aes encryption broken
- Practically all work done by 2 people
  - Dann Frazier
  - Frans Pop

Outline

Comparing Etch and Lenny

Sarge: released on 6 June 2005

	Etch	**Lenny**
Planned release date	4 Dec. 2006	Sept. 2008
Actual release date	8 Apr. 2007	14 Feb. 2009 (?)
Length of release cycle	22 months	22 months
Delay	4 months	5 months
Duration of freeze	4 months	6 months
Nr of release updates	18	12

Components of a release

- the archive: packages, architectures
  (toolchain, kernel, desktop environments, tasks, ...)
    - package migration (blocks/hints)
    - RC bugs
    - removals
- archive keys
- installer images
- CD images
- documentation (incl. translations!)
    - release notes, upgrade path
    - installation guide
    - website
    - wiki
- ...

Working with the rest of the project

- The firmware debacle
- Adding/dropping architectures: hppa, hurd-i386
- Package removals

Package removals

- loop-aes

"packages with RC bugs older than 20 days, with no activity from the maintainer qualify for a removal from testing; only packages that are leaf nodes in the dependency tree get removed this way"

- lilo
- update-manager/update-notifier
- resolvconf
- mplayer
- ntp

Package removals

- release when ready
- RT cannot (be expected to) oversee all possible consequences
- not motivating for maintainers
- packages that are removed drop off the release radar

Raphael Hertzog: #484129

Conclusions

- More focus on actual management: planning and coordination
- More pro-active
- Don't make important decisions in isolation
- Stimulate involvement of "regular" DDs