An aerial photograph of a rugged mountain range, likely the Himalayas, with a clear blue sky above. The wing and tail of a white airplane are visible in the foreground, extending from the right side towards the center. The text is overlaid on this image.

Listening to the Needs of Your Global Open Source Community

FOSSCON 2016

Elizabeth K. Joseph
@pleia2

Elizabeth K. Joseph

- Been organizing Open Source communities since 2002 (starting right here in Philadelphia!)
- Spent 6 years on the Ubuntu Community Council
- Going on 4 years on the OpenStack Infrastructure Team

A photograph taken from an airplane window, showing the white wing of the aircraft extending from the right side of the frame towards the center. Below the wing, a vast, rugged mountain range is visible, with numerous peaks and valleys. The sky is a clear, pale blue. The text "8 Tips!" is overlaid in the center of the image, positioned over the wing.

8 Tips!

Elizabeth K. Joseph | @pleia2

An aerial photograph of a rugged mountain range, likely the Himalayas, with a clear blue sky above. The wing and tail of a white airplane are visible in the foreground, extending from the right side towards the center. The text is overlaid on the sky and mountain areas.

Our starting point:

My open source project is no longer a cabal

(or, I don't want it to be)

Elizabeth K. Joseph | @pleia2

Tip 1

Provide a simple way for contributors to contact project owners

Lots of options

- Email! Mailing list, or list of contacts
- Bug/ticketing system
- Chat channel (but be sensitive to time zones)
- Forum

Tip 2

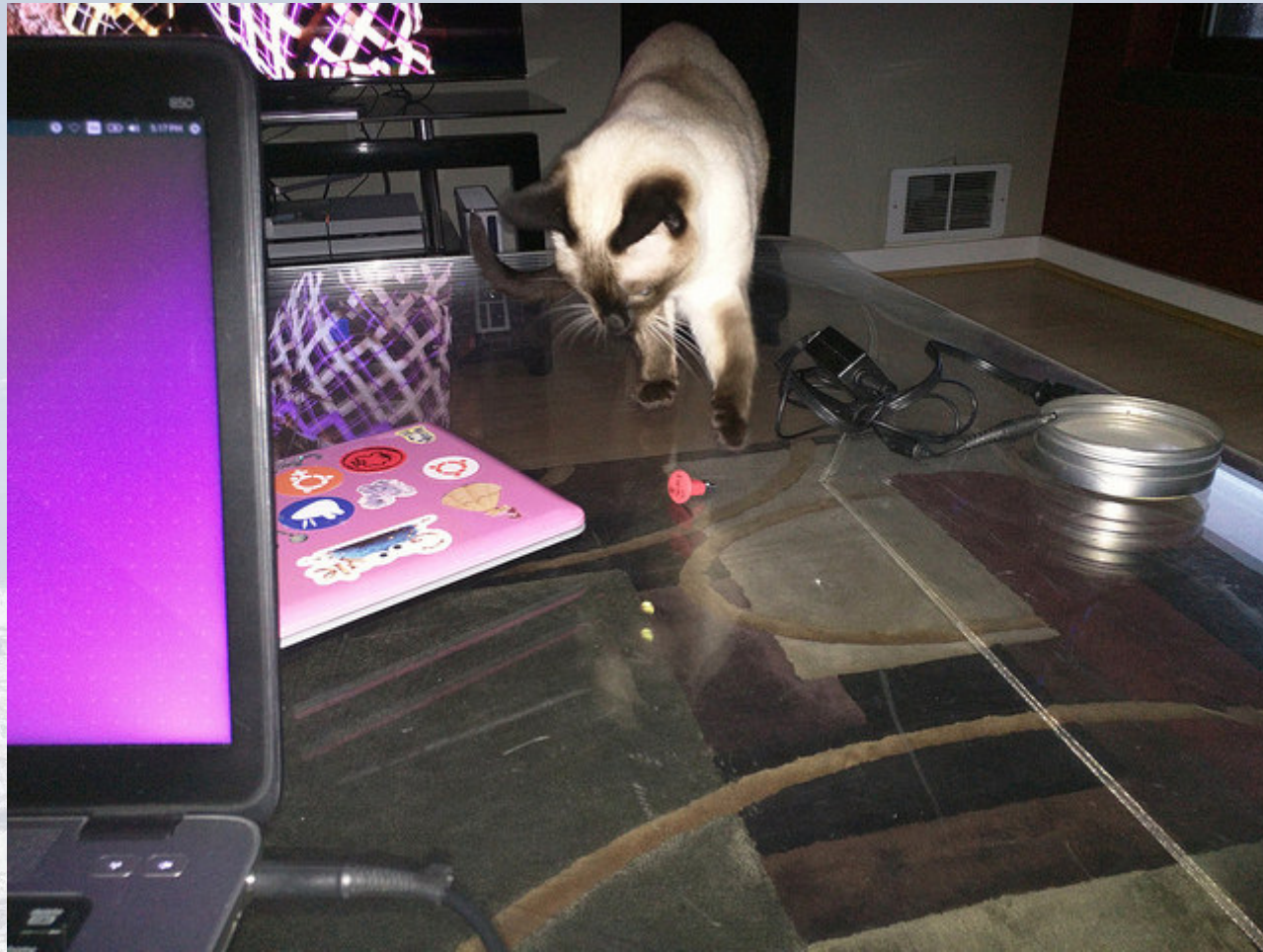
Acknowledge every piece of feedback

Even if you don't like the feedback,
and want to hide



Elizabeth K. Joseph | @pleia2

Even if you have a *Very Good Reason*
for the way you're doing things



Elizabeth K. Joseph | @pleia2

Even if it makes you feel
unappreciated



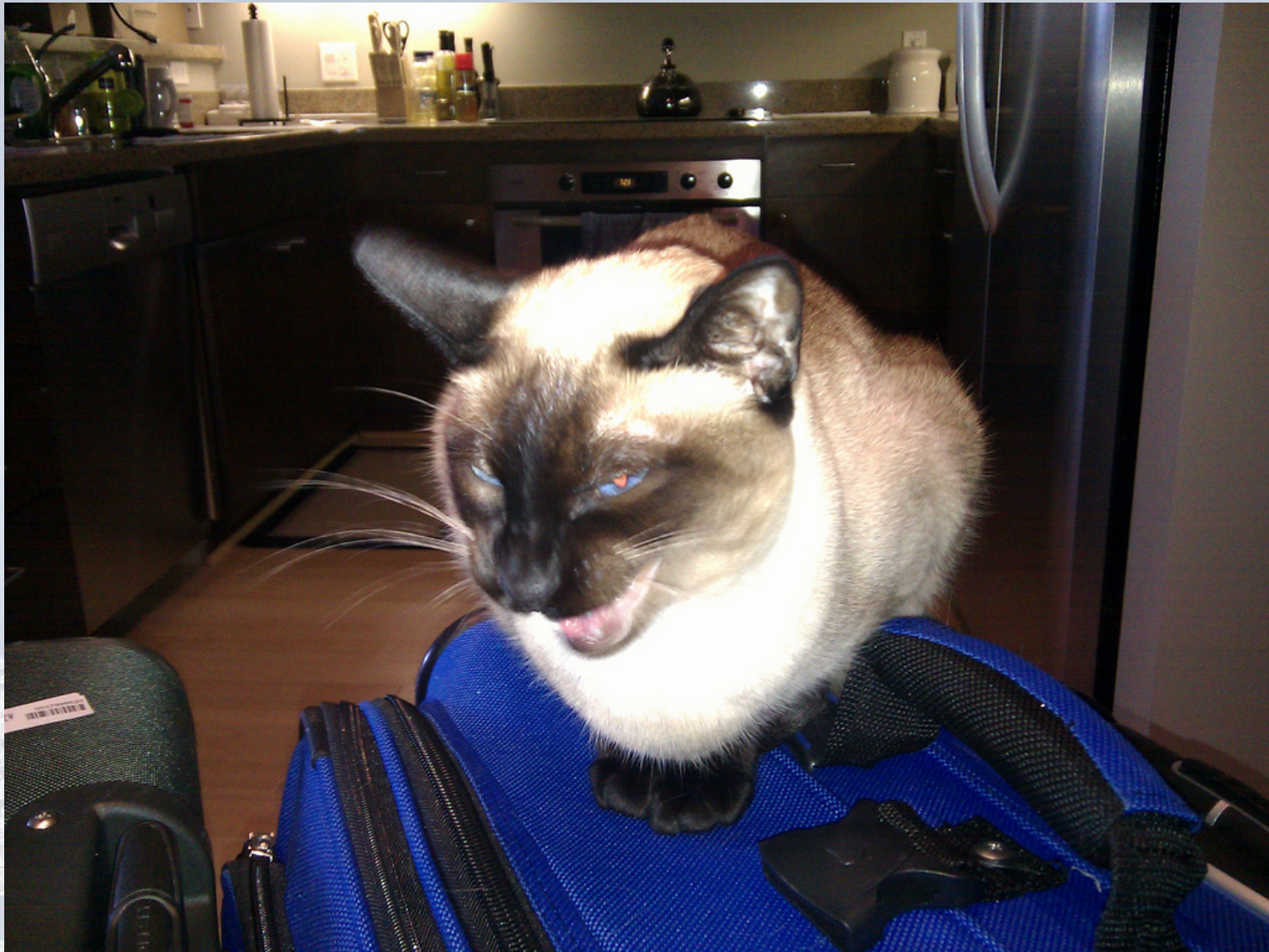
Elizabeth K. Joseph | @pleia2

An actual exchange


“I’m curious as to why the infra team keeps ignoring the issue we are trying to bring to you attention for past three days?”

“well, the last two days were the weekend”

“That sounds like a reply I would get from IT from the 1990s”



Elizabeth K. Joseph | @pleia2

A photograph taken from an airplane window, showing the wing and tail section of the aircraft. The wing is white and extends from the right side of the frame towards the center. Below the wing, a vast, rugged mountain range is visible, with numerous peaks and valleys. The sky is a clear, pale blue. The text "And yet..." is overlaid in the center of the image, positioned over the wing and the sky.

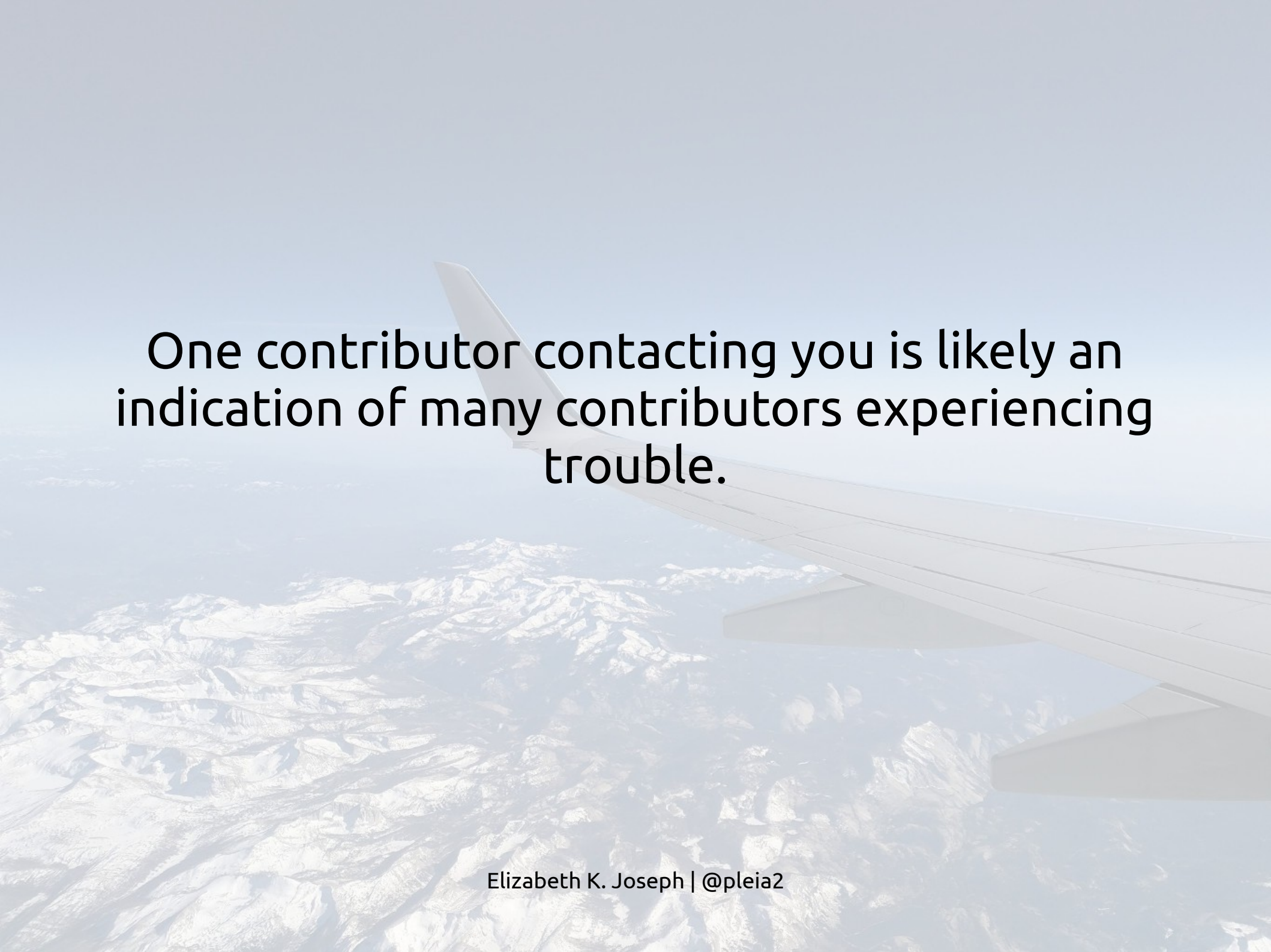
And yet...

Elizabeth K. Joseph | @pleia2

A view from an airplane window showing a mountain range below and the wing of the plane in the foreground. The text "Don't let it fall into an unresponsive black hole." is overlaid on the image.

Don't let it fall into an unresponsive black hole.

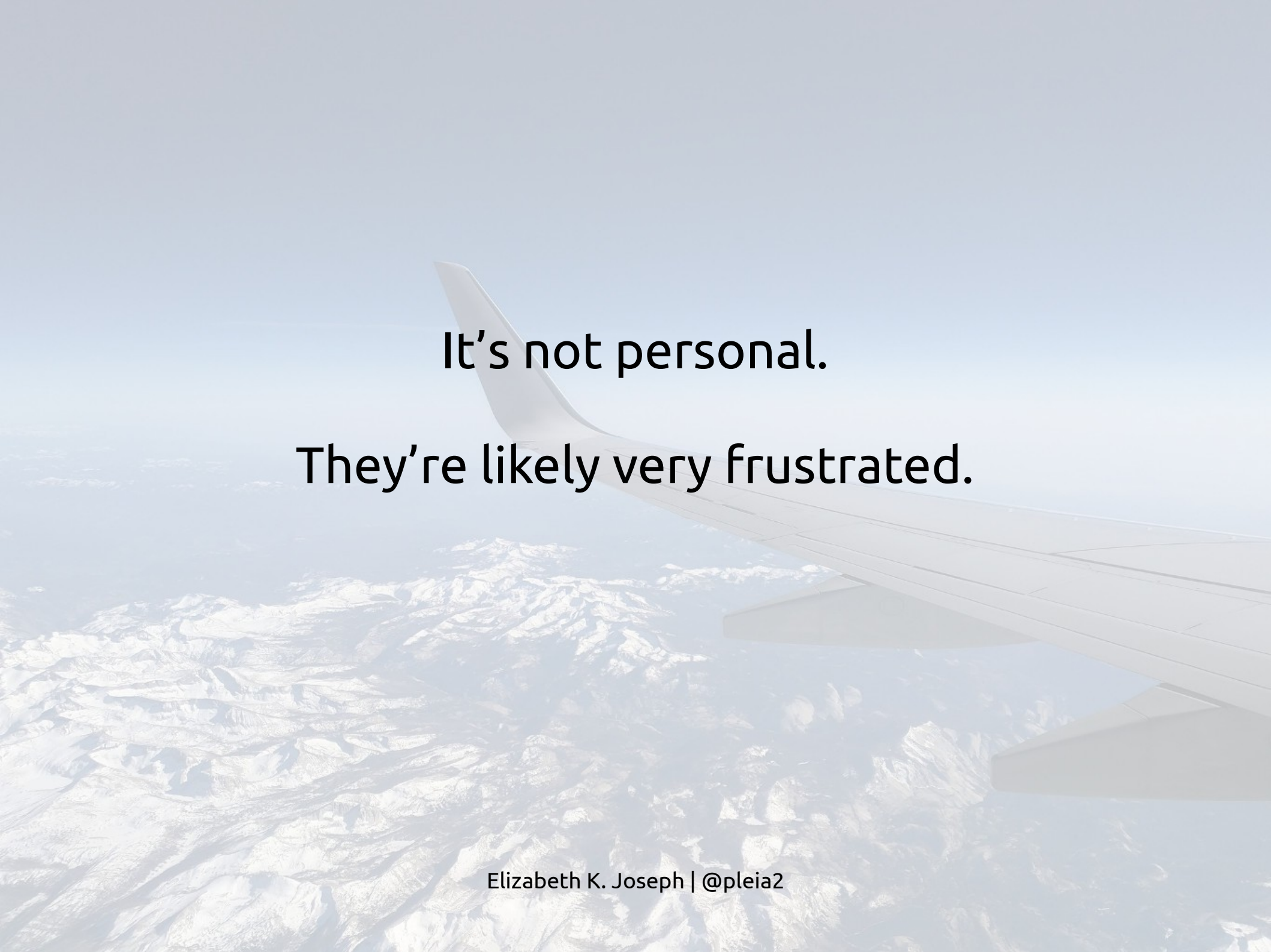
Elizabeth K. Joseph | @pleia2

An aerial photograph of a vast, rugged mountain range with snow-capped peaks and deep valleys. In the foreground, the white wing and tail section of an airplane are visible, extending from the right side of the frame towards the center. The sky is a clear, pale blue.

One contributor contacting you is likely an indication of many contributors experiencing trouble.

Tip 3

Stay calm



It's not personal.
They're likely very frustrated.

Acting out of the goodness of your heart, or something




Thanklessly
Maintaining
Open Source
Software

ORLY?

@ThePracticalDev

Source: <https://twitter.com/ThePracticalDev/status/765215047580807168>

Elizabeth K. Joseph | @pleia2

An aerial photograph of a vast, rugged mountain range, likely the Himalayas, with snow-capped peaks and deep valleys. The sky is a clear, pale blue. In the foreground, the white wing and tail section of an airplane are visible, extending from the right side of the frame towards the center. The text "In the end, the project will benefit!" is overlaid in the center of the image.

In the end, the project will benefit!

Elizabeth K. Joseph | @pleia2


Tip 4

Openly communicate potential changes and ask for feedback

An aerial photograph of a rugged mountain range, likely the Himalayas, with a white airplane wing visible in the lower right foreground. The sky is a clear, pale blue. The text is overlaid in the center of the image.

Mailing list thread
Poll of your community
Meeting topic

Elizabeth K. Joseph | @pleia2

An aerial photograph of a rugged mountain range, likely the Alps, with a white airplane wing visible in the lower right foreground. The sky is a clear, pale blue.

“it seemed like one of those things where giving folks a heads up and/or a time to give feedback before pulling the trigger would be friendly.”

- Monty Taylor

<http://lists.openstack.org/pipermail/openstack-dev/2016-August/100562.html>

Tip 5

Check in with teams

Elizabeth K. Joseph | @pleia2

Our current schedule:

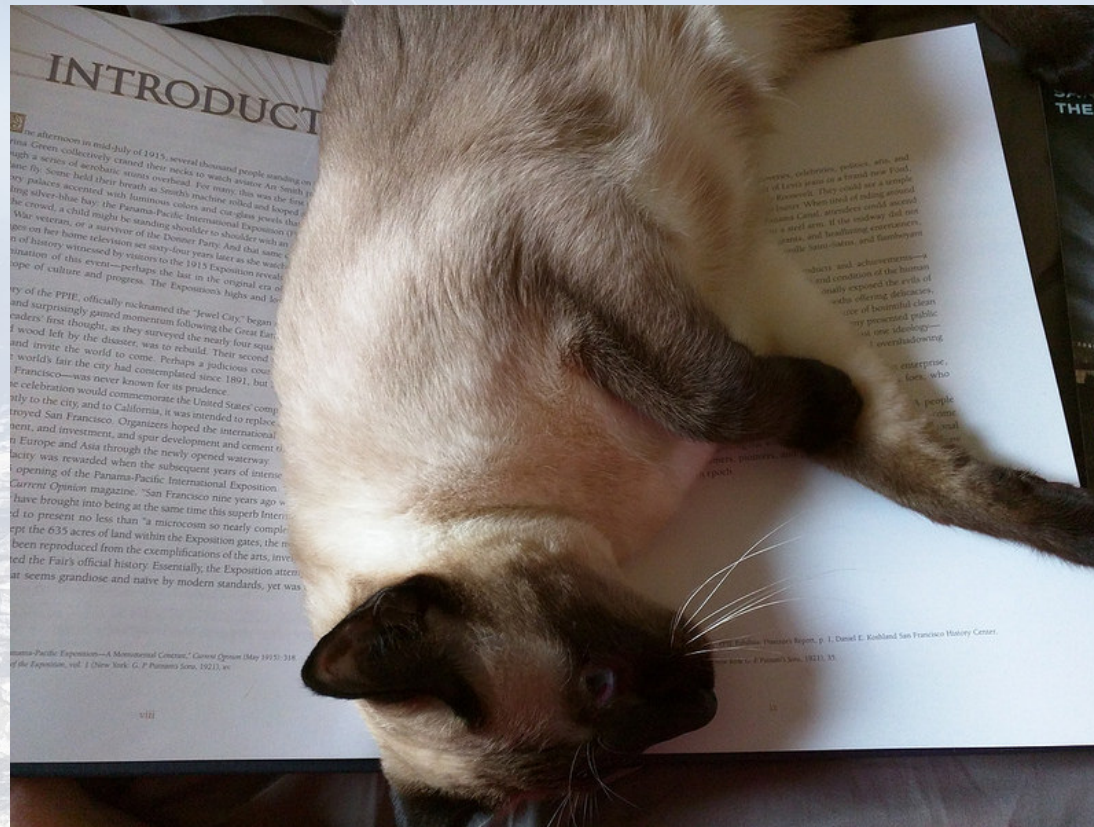
- 2016-07-21 - Desktop 17:00UTC - Developer Membership Board 17:30UTC
- 2016-08-04 - Ubuntu GNOME 17:00UTC - Snappy Team 17:30UTC
- 2016-08-18 - Xubuntu Team 17:00UTC - Ubuntu Studio Team 17:30UTC
- 2016-09-01 - Ubuntu Technical Board 17:00UTC - LoCo Council 17:30UTC
- 2016-09-15 - Doc Team 17:00UTC - QA Team 17:30UTC
- 2016-10-06 - IRC Council 17:00UTC - Canonical Community Team 17:30UTC
- 2016-10-20 - Kubuntu Council 17:00UTC - Membership Board 17:30UTC
- 2016-11-03 - Ubuntu Mate 17:00UTC - Lubuntu 17:30UTC
- 2016-11-17 - Ubuntu Core/Phone/Desktop 17:00UTC - Server/Cloud team 17:30 UTC
- 2016-12-01 - Ubuntu Governance 17:00 UTC
- 2026-12-15 - Forums Council 17:00UTC - Core Apps/Phone 17:30UTC
- 2017-01-05 - QA Team 17:00UTC - Translations Team 17:30 UTC

Check In Questions

- Do you have any problems with tooling?
- Do you have any problems with processes?
- Do you have the resources you need?
- If one thing could make your life much easier, what would it be?
- What is working well?

Tip 6

Document your processes



Elizabeth K. Joseph | @pleia2

...but don't beat people with the
documentation



Tip 7

Read between the lines

An aerial photograph of a rugged mountain range, likely the Himalayas, with a clear blue sky above. The wing and tail of a white airplane are visible in the foreground, extending from the right side towards the center. The text is overlaid on the sky and mountain areas.

You have a way for people to communicate with you

You acknowledge feedback

You document things

And still...

“By the way...”

> Note that this will only be true if the change's parent commit in
> Gerrit was the branch tip at the time it landed. Otherwise (and
> quite frequently in fact) you will need to identify the SHA of the
> merge commit which was created at the time it merged and use that
> instead to find the post job.

Without wanting to diverge too much from the topic at hand, I believe this is why those of us who only occasionally want to look at post job output usually just give up! Keeping this in your head for the once every few months it's needed is hard ;)

Workaround tool

I could never remember the formula for constructing the URL either, so I built this to help me: <https://pypi.python.org/pypi/git-os-job>

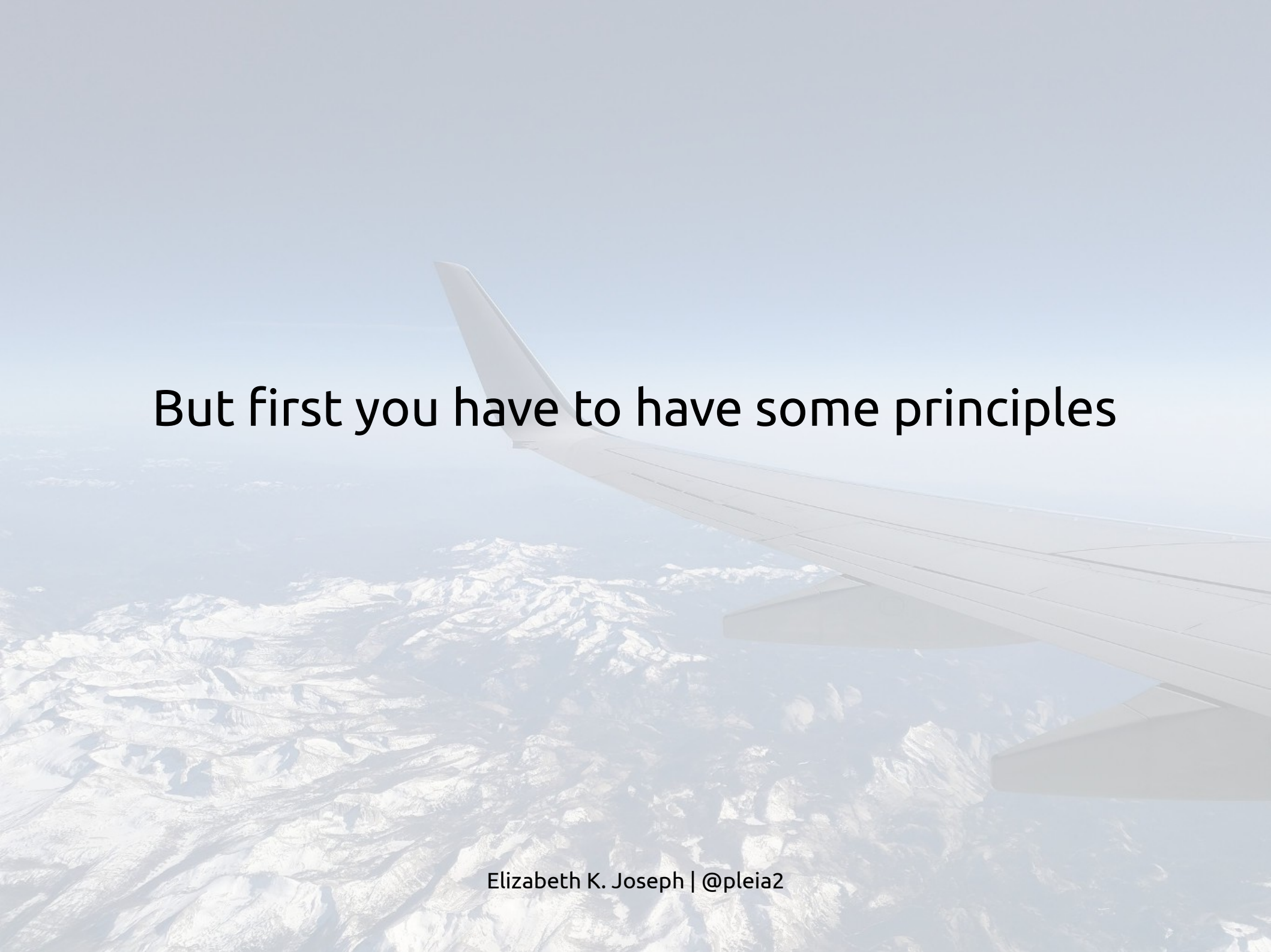
Workaround DIY

“I’ve been downloading several gigs of logs to do local analysis.”

Tip 8

Stick to your principles

...the “customer” is not always right ;)

An aerial photograph of a rugged mountain range, likely the Himalayas, with a white airplane wing and tail fin visible in the foreground on the right side. The sky is a clear, pale blue. The text "But first you have to have some principles" is overlaid in the center of the image.

But first you have to have some principles

Elizabeth K. Joseph | @pleia2

Developing principles

Have clear software choices

Do you only use open source?

Other tooling restraints?

Cost considerations?

Provide clear support instructions to set boundaries

We're able to support you in these ways...

Define what you're willing to compromise on

Threshold in which you'll consider a rework

Trust your high-level view

You know a lot about the project, use that

In Conclusion

- Provide a simple way for contributors to contact project owners
- Acknowledge every piece of feedback
- Stay calm
- Communicate potential changes and ask for feedback
- Check in with teams
- Document your processes
- Read between the lines
- Stick to your principles

Questions?

lyz@princessleia.com

Elizabeth K. Joseph | @pleia2