



FOREMAN

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Why We Moved to a Forum

Discussions on Community Tooling

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Agenda

- What makes a community
- What tooling should we use to support that
- What tools might be right for **your** community?

Are you using the right tools now?



Who am I anyway?

- Joined the Foreman community 7 years ago
- Volunteer contributor
- Core developer
- Community lead

- Help out in numerous other communities

- But mainly...
 - I've been in communities all my life
 - So have you 😊



Community^(noun, often attributive)

1c: “a body of persons of common and especially professional interests scattered through a larger society”

// “The scientific community”

// “The academic community”

➤ Merriam-Webster



Communities are Everywhere

- Families & Friends
- Work colleagues
- Sports
- Hobbies
- Locality (e.g. village councils)

- Exist online & offline
 - Online communities are strange beasts...



Communication

- Communities are nothing without it
- Most communities form in-person
- Communication is more than words
 - Tone / Attitude
 - Gestures
 - Facial expressions
 - Cultural expectations
 - ...
- Online communication loses a lot of this
 - It's our job to figure out how to mitigate



**“Building effective communication channels ...
[involves] avoiding *communication fetishism*
and *keeping all your eyeballs in one place*”**

- **Jono Bacon – The Art of Community**

<http://www.artofcommunityonline.org/>



Channel fragmentation is BAD

- Many choices for communication
 - IRC
 - Mailing Lists
 - Forums
 - Social Media
 - Answer sites (StackOverflow etc)
 - Discord
 - ...



One tool per job

- Pick one tool per **type of communication**
- Types
 - Real time
 - Pro: socialising, partnering, ad-hoc thinking
 - Con: inclusivity, history, decision making
 - Asynchronous
 - Pro: inclusivity, history, decision making
 - Con: slow, formal
 - In-person events (even more exclusive than chat)
 - Video calls (somewhat exclusive, hard to log)

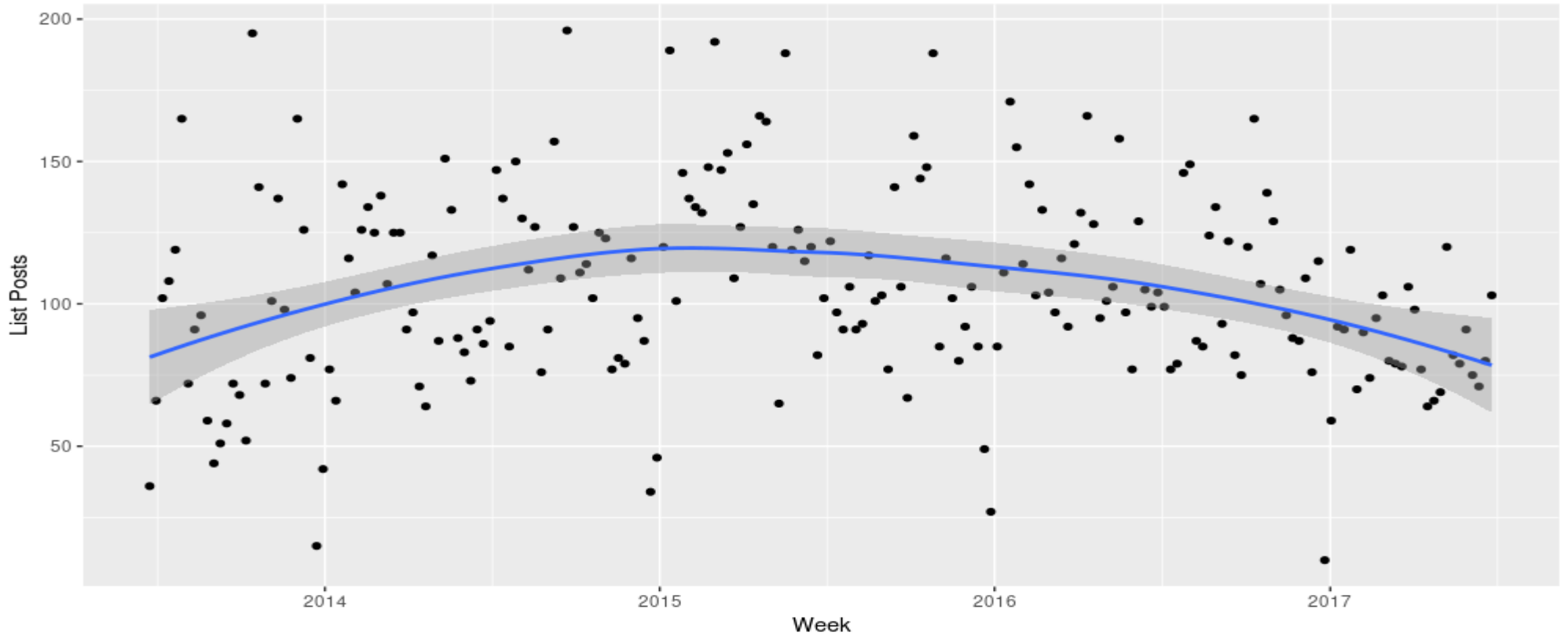


Case Study

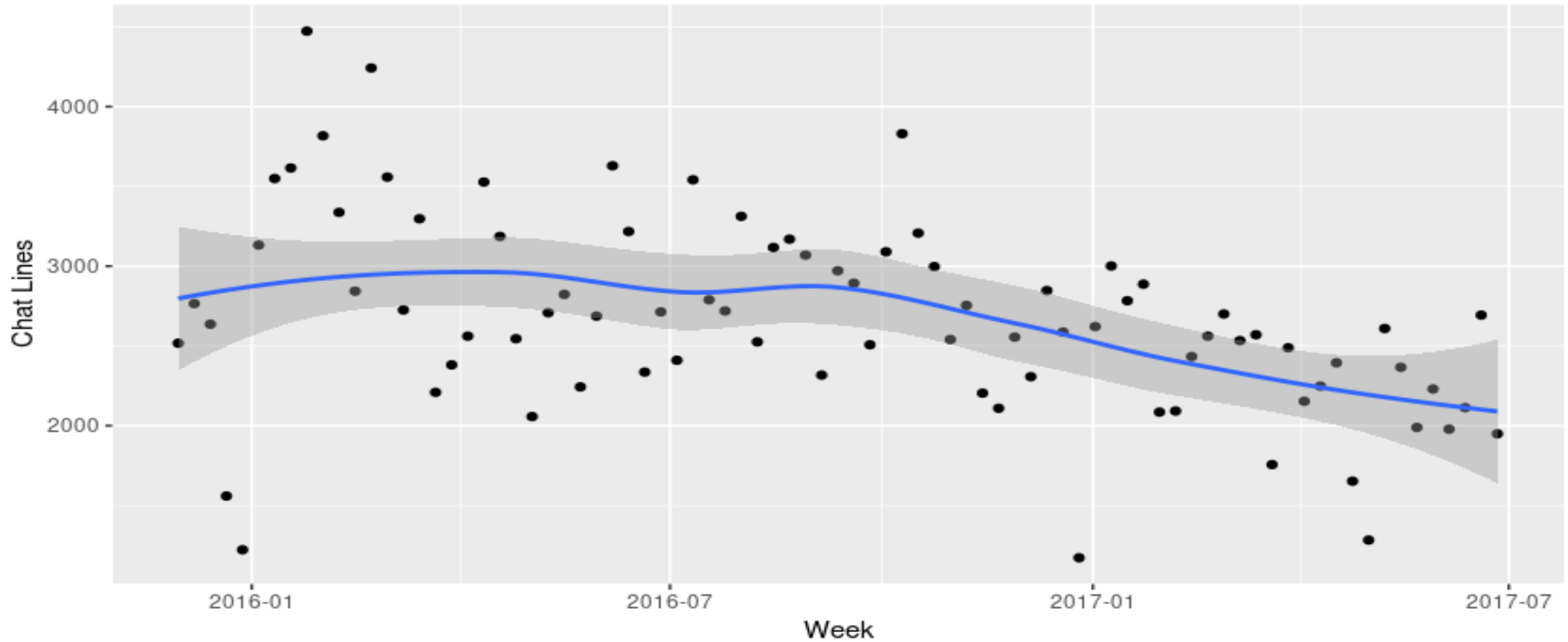
TheForeman Community August 2017



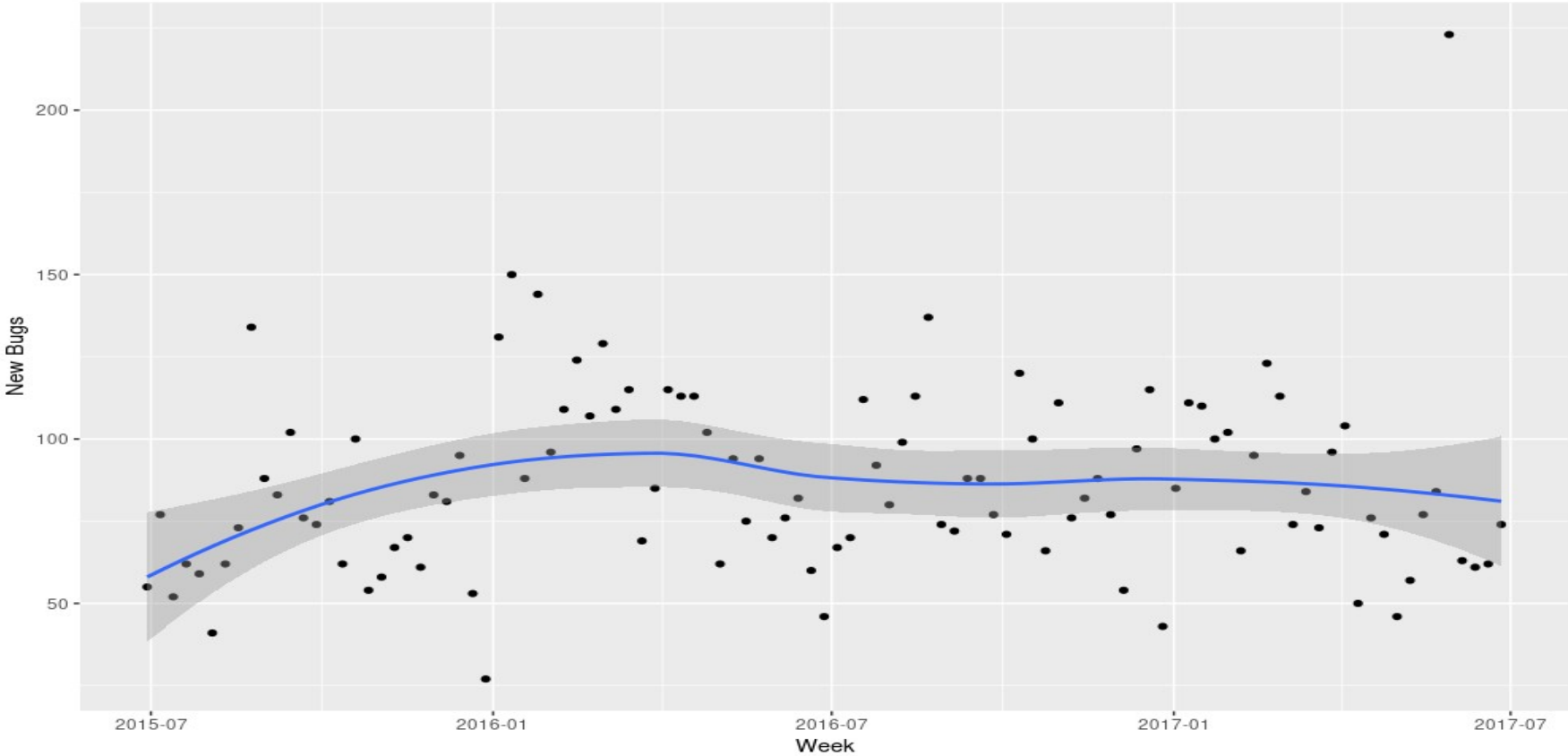
Total Mailing List Posts / Week



IRC Lines of Text / Week



New Bugs / Week



Oh dear...
Now what?



Discourse



<https://blog.discourse.org/2017/05/discourse-for-developer-communities/>



Why a forum?

For users

- Better help with problems
 - Search / suggestions
 - Tagging
 - Solved / unsolved (plugins)
- Not a firehose of email
 - Subscribe to specific categories / tags
 - Still get email when mentioned
 - Push notifications
 - Digests



Why a forum?

For developers

- All of the above
- Self-service groups & group notifies
- Rich discussion support
 - Markdown
 - Polls
 - **Wiki posts** (& Checklists plugin)
 - Discoverability of discussions
- Foreman specific: UI tooling to attract UI devs



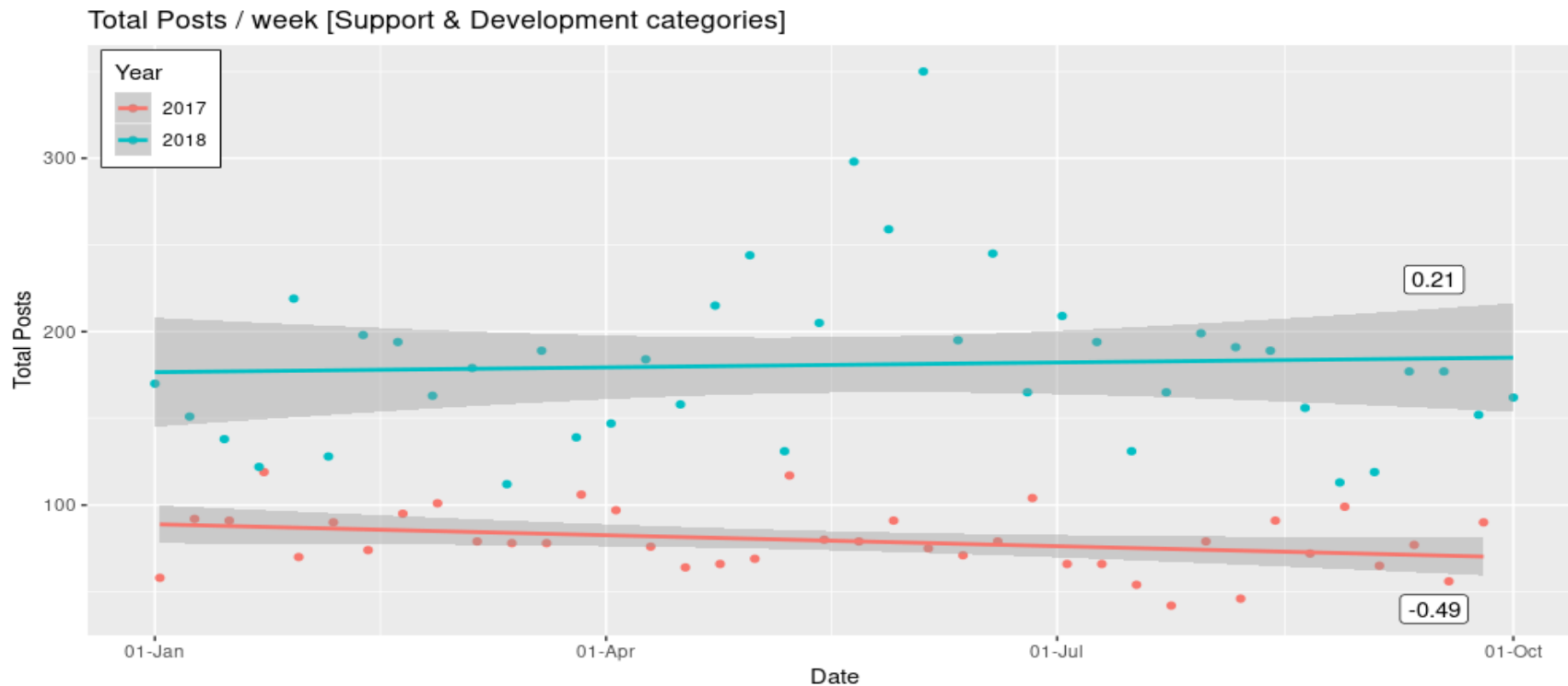
Why a forum?

For the community team

- All of the above
- Content handling / promotion
 - RSS feeds
 - Blog integration (comments)
- Moderation & cleanup tools
 - Very good tooling around spam
- Automated member promotions
- Events management (plugin)
- Social interaction “proxies”



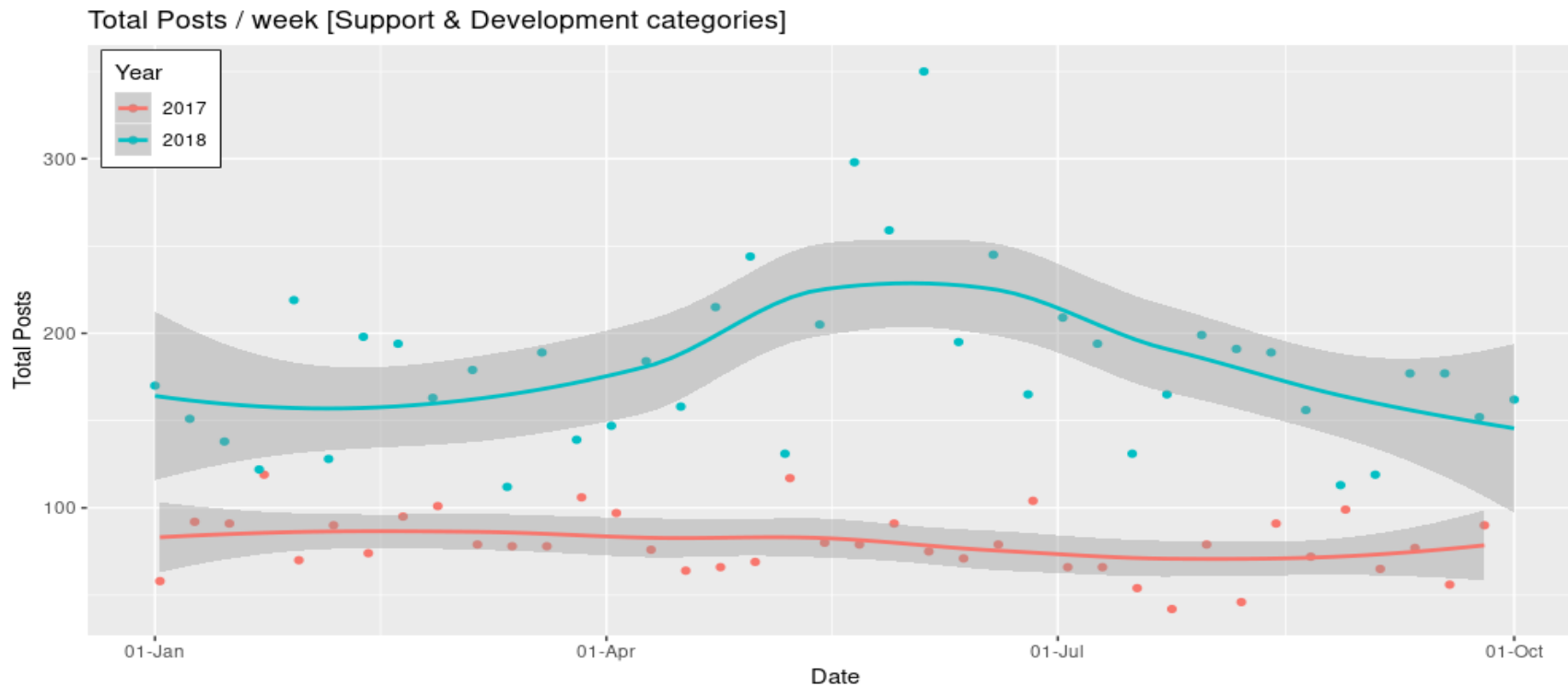
Did it work?



Yes!



Did it work?



Yes!



Migration Plan

- 4 week study / discussion
- T-4 weeks - announcement
- T-3 weeks – moderation teams
- T-2 weeks - Documentation
- T-1 week – Final checks
- Migration
- Mailing list switched to read-only





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Thanks!

Questions?

<https://community.theforeman.org>

Key Take-aways

Communication is critical

Think about what tools you need

One tool per type!