Maintaining free software without selling out

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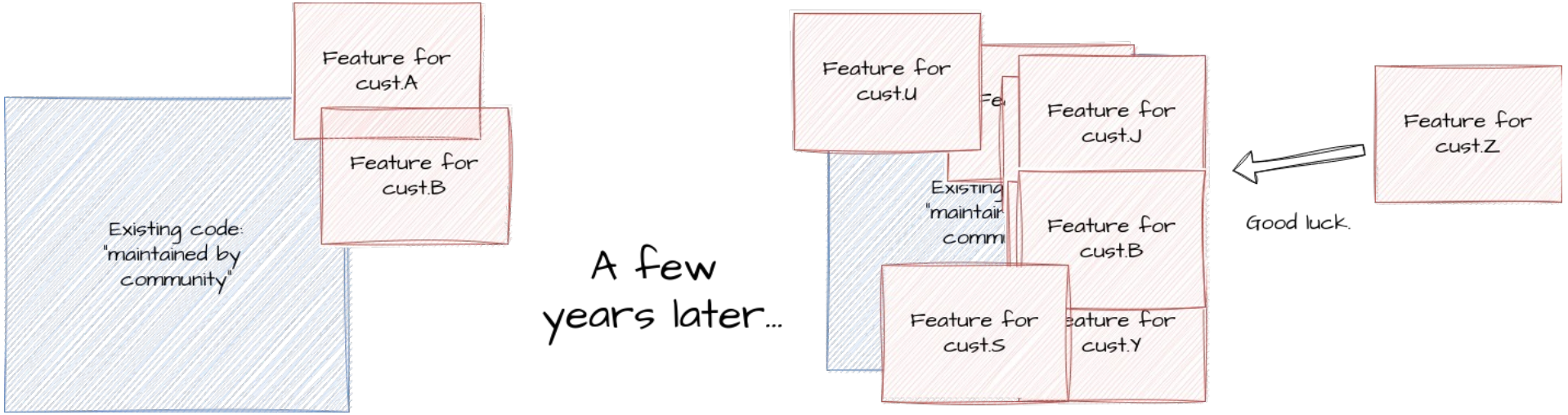
My ethics

- Free software is the better way to do software
- But to realize its potential it needs to be
  - **Useful**: features
  - **Adaptable**: flexibility
  - **Easy**: to use, and get started with

My business model

- LemonLDAP::NG developer
  - ~ a highly configurable login form running on a dedicated server
  - Funding mostly comes from support contracts
- Customers pay for:
  - Bug fix => always upstreamed
  - Features => usually upstreamed
  - Consulting, training, documentation => nothing to upstream, or is there?

If development matched the money flow



Consequences if we worked like this

- Too specialized
  - Oracle support but no SQLite support
- Adding features becomes hard
  - Spaghetti code, technical debt
- Hard to install
  - Too many requirements (external DB, Redis, Elasticsearch),
- Only corporate users with support contracts can use our software
  - We have sold out!

Solution : grasping for opportunities

The guiding principle

- Every customer request must be an opportunity to make the software better for everyone
- I try to do things for everyone, *then* for the customer
  - Remember : customers change their mind

New features

Every feature has a generic component

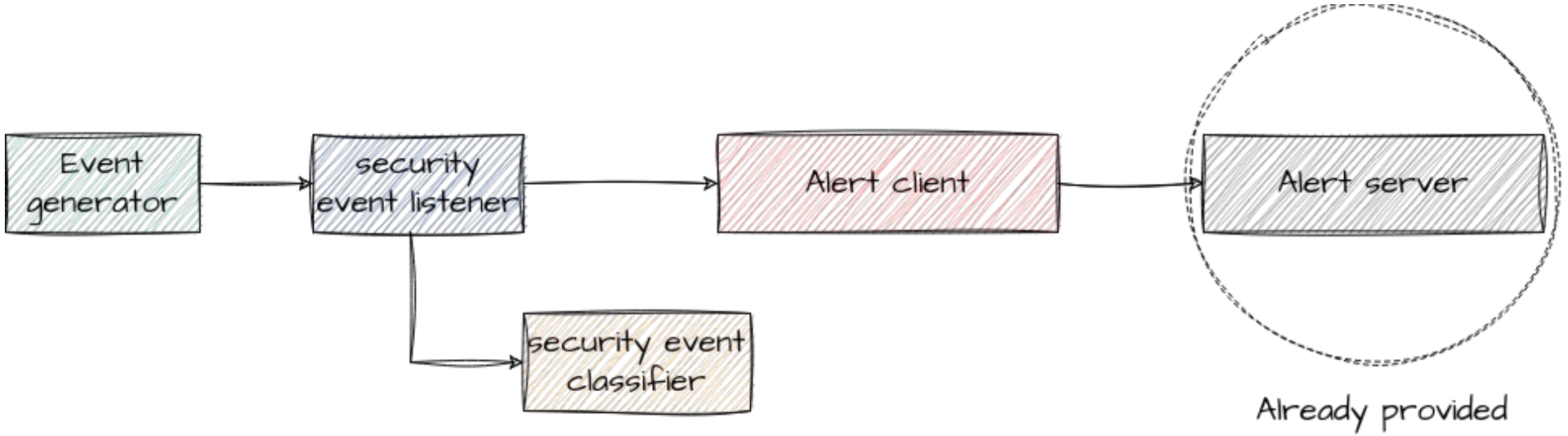
Anatomy of a new (enterprise) feature:
sending suspicious events
to a in-house alert server

Generic:
React to events
Gather event context

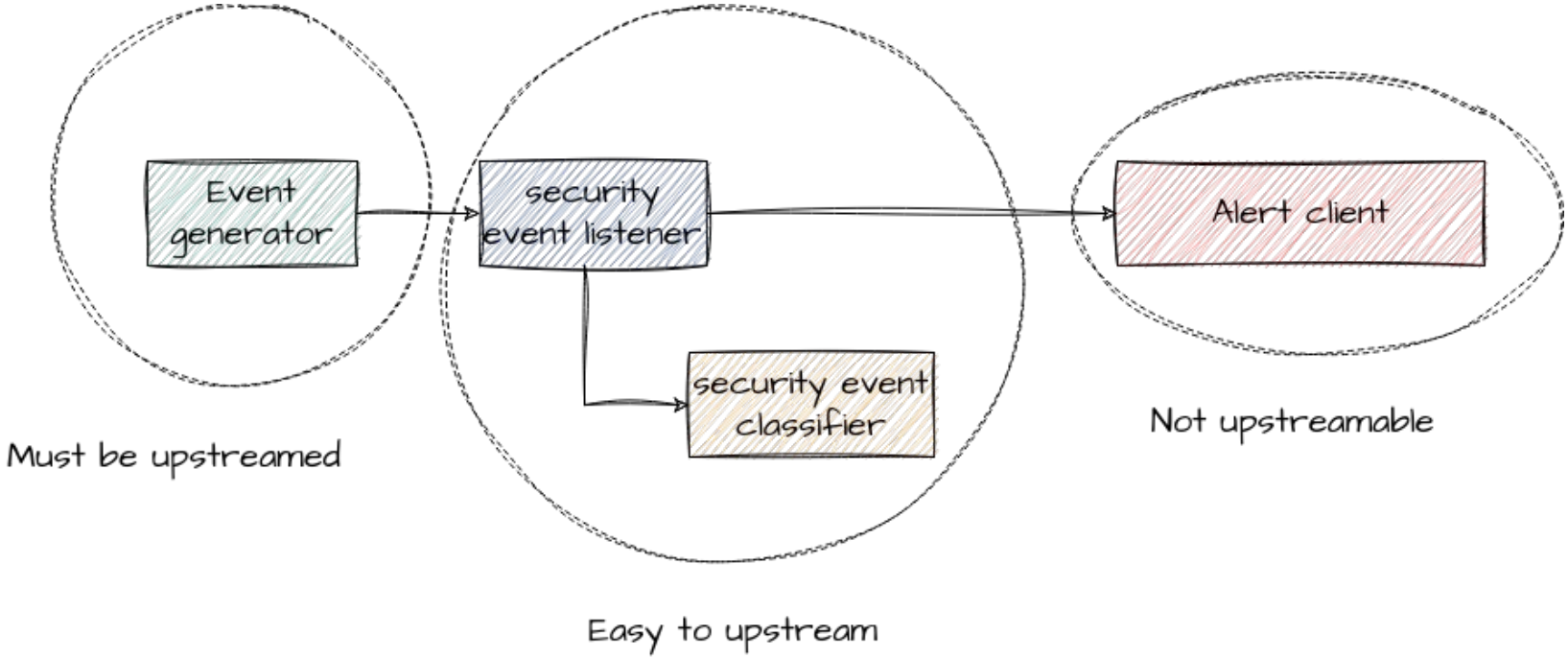
Specific:
Alert client
Configuration
Business rules

Grey area:
Classify events
Format events as JSON

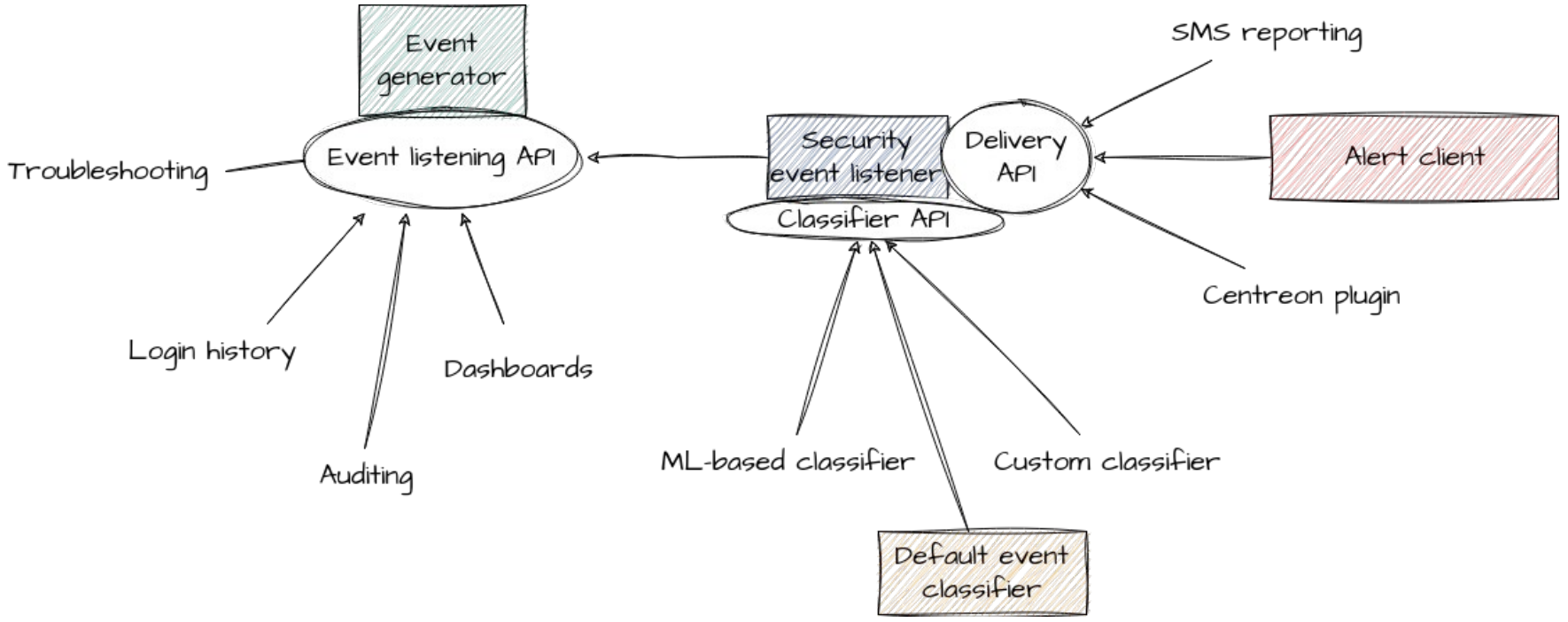
Components


Event generator
security event listener
Alert client
Alert server
security event classifier
Already provided

Maintenance lifecycle



Opportunities for extension



More opportunities

Unit tests are always good

- When fixing a bug
  - Prevent bug from reappearing
  - Catch related bugs
  - Increase coverage / enables refactoring
- When adding new features
  - Prevent bugs from happening

Dependencies: less is more

- Managing deps < removing deps
  - Simplifies installation / maintenance
  - Improves security
  - Improves OS compatibility

Using time wisely

- Writing huge docs < simplify the install process
  - Docs are outdated on day one
  - Use distribution packages (RPM, deb)
- Level 2 support < improve default behavior
  - Saves time for everyone, not just new users

Conclusion

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- Investing time wisely makes a big difference
  - Spending more now to spend less later
  - Customers prefer when the prices go down
- Today's freeloaders are tomorrow's sponsors
  - Only pleasing current customers is sawing off our own branch

Thanks for listening

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