Marketing to Developers

Proven strategies for gaining trust in a hard-to-reach market.

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Software developers make up a valuable market segment for many technology companies, but they can be hard to reach.

Words used to describe the developer market include skeptical, distrustful, and wary. These traits can make traditional sales and marketing tactics ineffective.

In this ebook, we at DZone will share our insights from nearly twenty years of marketing to the software developer community. We'll discuss common mistakes we've seen in campaigns geared toward developers, from glossing over technical details to using too much marketing jargon.

And of course, we'll share our tried and true tips for marketing successfully to developers, along with some suggestions for implementation.

We hope you find this ebook helpful and informative. Happy reading!

- The DZone Team

CHAPTER 2

Software Developers: A Growing Market

Right now, there are approximately 21 million developers in the world...By 2020, there will be 25 million.[1]

Software engineering is one of the fastest-growing professions worldwide. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the job market for software development will grow by 17% from 2014 to 2024 - that's much faster than the overall average job growth rate of 7%.[2]

REASONS FOR GROWTH

More and more aspects of our lives depend on software. From the software on your laptop to the software running the electrical grid, code underlies nearly everything. Thus, demand for those who can develop, design, and implement software has increased. Good code has become the basis for good business, and companies are now competing for the best coding talent.

And of course, marketers are taking notice of developers as well.

THE DEVELOPER WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION

The average developer sits below the decision-making level in the corporate hierarchy; however, that doesn't mean that they have no say when it comes to company purchasing decisions. Since software is key to a business's success, developers often exert significant influence within their organization. They are also the ones who will implement a solution, so their buy-in is critical.

Marketers often talk about targeting "decision makers," but often look over the "decision breakers," a group into which developers fall squarely. In most enterprises where decisions are made by groups of people, it only takes one voice of dissent to torpedo a deal.

A WORD ON TERMINOLOGY...

The word "developer" has many connotations, but for the purposes of this publication, we mean a person who creates software code. We'll be using the term synonymously with "dev," "programmer," and "software professional."
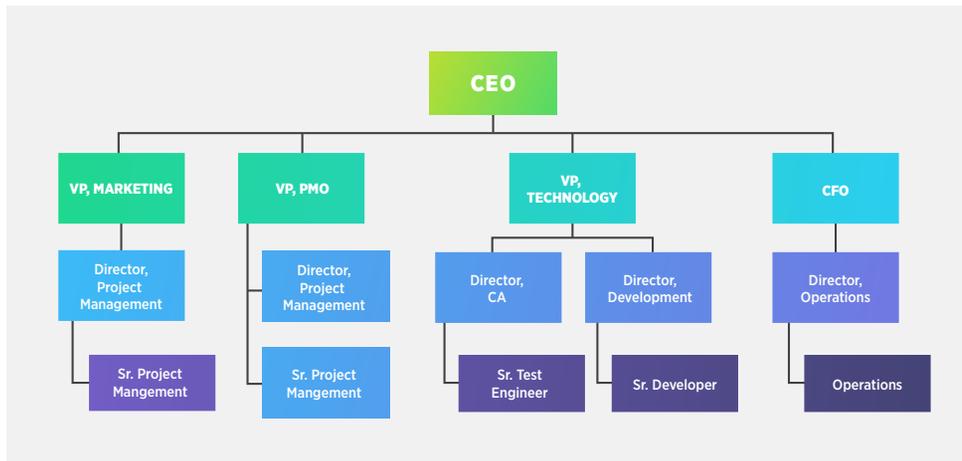
[1] Evans Data   [2] Bureau of Labor Statistics

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WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR MARKETERS?

Developers are a large, growing, and influential market – of course you'd want to tap into their influence! Reaching this market, however, presents a unique challenge. By nature, developers are skeptical of sales tactics, distrustful of advertisements, and consistently pressed for time. They're also highly-educated problem solvers who see right through empty promises and marketing jargon.

And that's why we've created this ebook: to help marketers like you successfully inform software developers of your products and gain their business, along with their trust.

CHAPTER 3

Key Traits of Software Developers

Who are software developers, and what do they want? Marketers need to know...

While developers are a diverse group, we can draw some demographic and psychographic conclusions about them as a whole.

DEVELOPER DEMOGRAPHICS

Since developers are such a desired market, there's been significant research into the basics of who they are. Key findings include the following.

- The industry is heavily male-dominated – 94% of developers are male[3]

- Developers are fairly young. The average age is 29.6 years, and the average number of years of professional experience is 6.5 [4]

- Developers are highly-educated. 40.7% of respondents to our DZone surveys have a BA or BS, 34.5% have a Master's degree, and 4.4% hold a PhD

- Software development is global, with the largest concentrations in Asia (34%), Europe (30%), and North America (25%) [5]

- Despite the growing popularity of mobile apps, the majority of developers in DZone's audience (60.9%) work primarily on web applications

- Developers are high earners, with an average annual income of $100,690 in the United States [6]

- Developer income levels vary by segment and industry. The highest paying industry? Cloud. The lowest? Wordpress. [7]

- While most developers create software as part of a paid job, a significant percentage are "hobbyists." On DZone.com, that percentage is 34.8%

[3] Hubspot
[4] Stack Overflow
[5] Hubspot
[6] Bureau of Labor Statistics
[7] Stack Overflow

THE AVERAGE DEVELOPER
Gender: Male
Age: 29.6
Years of Experience: 6.5
Employment Status: Employed full-time
Education Level: Bachelor's Degree
Income: $100,690

20% INDEPENDENT	COLLABORATIVE 80%
20% ABSTRACT	LOW LEVEL 60%
76% FRONTIER	CONSERVATIVE 24%
84% GENERALIST	SPECIALIST 16%
44% IDEALIST	PRAGMATIST 56%

Personality breakdown of DZone developers

CHAPTER 3

Key Traits of Software Developers

VALUES & LIFESTYLE

One of the major values shared by developers is a commitment to learning. 47% of developers consider themselves "self-improvers"8, and 70.1% cite "learning new technologies" as important to them9.

Developers also value sharing their knowledge and expertise. In the past three years, more than 3,700 individual developers have contributed articles to DZone.com, and almost 10,000 have shared links. A survey of DZone.com's MVBs, or "Most Valuable Bloggers," revealed 64.7% of them joined the program in order to share their knowledge and expertise.

DEVELOPER PERSONALITIES

We've mentioned that software developers have some unique personality traits. In order to understand our own developer audience at bit more thoroughly, we surveyed our community of software professionals.
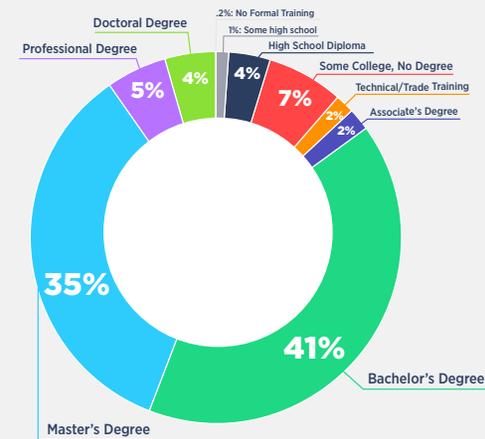
We found that developers tend to be collaborative, preferring to work in groups rather than alone. They also typically prefer newer, more cutting-edge tech solutions to established, mature software. Only 16% of developers identify as "specialists", while 84% are "Jacks-of-all-trades."

PAIN POINTS

Understanding what developers dislike can be as important as knowing what they love. The software creation process is a challenging one, with changing deadlines, varied responsibilities, and multiple project layers. Trained to solve problems and expected to manage complex issues, developers face a number of obstacles and difficulties.

Many challenges developers face stem from technological and code issues. For example, Stack Overflow,

What is the highest level of education you've completed?

What do you like to do in your spare time?

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another popular developer site, surveyed developers and found they cited "inefficient development processes" (30.3%), "fragile code base" (29.6%), and "outdated technologies" (24.8%) as major workplace problems. [10]

Developers are also not immune to the typical challenges faced by corporate employees of all types. Changing deadlines, unrealistic expectations, poor communication between departments, and unclear requirements can create roadblocks in the software development cycle.

OUTSIDE THE OFFICE

When not at work, developers engage in a number of hobbies and activities. The most common, at least among DZone's audience, are reading, spending time with family, coding for fun, music, and learning.

FINAL TAKEAWAYS

Knowing your audience is the first step to creating any effective marketing campaign, and it's even more important when targeting the difficult software developer segment. By understanding developers' key values and major problems, you can present your solutions and services in a compelling and authentic way.

What project are you working on right now?

What specific books, websites, communities, coursework, hackathons, etc. do you currently use to learn about software development?

DID YOU KNOW...

- Developers are an interesting bunch, particularly those on DZone.com! Here are some fun facts about this demographic that we've uncovered through our community surveys.

- They have a lot of dev experience – on average, 10.6 years!

- They're very entrepreneurial. 32.6% want to start a company, and 24.5% have already done so.

- They're not lone wolves! 46% prefer to work on in-person teams

- Their most-used programming languages at work include SQL, Java, and HTML/CSS

- 18.4% attend local tech meetups on a monthly basis

- 18.8% work at companies with more than 10,000 employees

- Their favorite tech topics include Java, Web Development, and Performance

CHAPTER 4

Marketing to Developers: 4 Common Pitfalls

In the previous section, we described some of the reasons marketing to devs can be difficult. Now we'll talk about what *not* to do…

For the past two decades, DZone has helped marketers in the technology sector reach the developer market. In that time, we've identified some marketing activities that developers just don't accept. These tactics can even harm your company's reputation, as developers are influential within their organizations and often have personal networks with other software professionals.

Keep these activities out of your developer marketing plan, and you'll already be ahead of the curve in selling your products to this segment.

1. MARKETING A PRODUCT INSTEAD OF A SOLUTION

Developers are trained to solve problems; in fact, a major job requirement for software development is the ability to spot issues and figure out how to fix them.

Positioning a product as an effective solution to a real problem, and accompanying your sales pitch with strategies and tactics for deploying that solution (with examples, when possible) is much more likely to capture a developer's attention than simply extolling the general virtues of your product, or offering a laundry list of features.

Plus, marketing your product as a proven tactical solution can help your company stand out from the crowd. Your product likely has competitors, or even free open-source alternatives. What specifically makes your approach different or more effective?

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Developers are busy; if you can show that your product and approach can save them time and give them better results, you'll be on the right track.

2. SKIPPING THE TECHNICAL STUFF

Developers like data. Use it to your advantage. Any unique insight or evidence you can provide using data will go a long way with winning over a developer. Also, don't shy away from the nitty-gritty technical details of how your product can be used. Developers are more than capable of understanding highly technical content, and speaking to them at their level will help you earn their trust.

Including code in your marketing materials is also a good idea, but be cautious – developers are hypersensitive to oversimplification. They'll also notice any mistakes, so make sure that code is bulletproof!

3. USING TRADITIONAL SALES TACTICS

Selling to developers is the surest way to get them to ignore your message. If a developer is on a quest for specific knowledge, anything that isn't relevant or helpful quickly becomes noise. This includes generic, uninformative, or overly promotional sales messages.

To avoid getting phased out, try to understand what the developer may be looking for and satisfy their search with useful information. Content marketing tends to be a great medium for achieving this goal; traditional advertising and hard-sell tactics, less so.

Be helpful, not pushy.

Transforming the Raw Data and Writing to Couchbase

To use Apache Spark in a Java application, a few dependencies must be included. We need to include Spark Core, Spark SQL, Spark CSV, and the Couchbase Spark Connector. Since we're using Maven, all can be included via the Maven **pom.xml** file. To include Spark Core, include the following dependency in your Maven file:

```
1
2  <dependency>
3      <groupId>org.apache.spark</groupId>
4      <artifactId>spark-core_2.10</artifactId>
5      <version>1.6.1</version>
6  </dependency>
```

Since the raw data will be in the form of CSV, we can use the convenience package for Spark called Spark CSV. The Maven dependency for Spark CSV can be added like this:

```
1
2  <dependency>
3      <groupId>com.databricks</groupId>
4      <artifactId>spark-csv_2.10</artifactId>
5      <version>1.4.0</version>
6  </dependency>
```

An example of code in a piece of content marketing entitled "Load CSV Data into Couchbase using Apache Spark." The author, Nic Raboy, is a DZone MVB and an employee of Couchbase.

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4. USING FLUFF, JARGON, AND/OR CLICKBAIT

If you are going to put a marketing message in front of a developer, it must be ironclad! Fluff and jargon won't fool him or her. Developers are trained to evaluate, so superlative statements and unsubstantiated claims will not persuade a developer to buy your product (or even be interested).

If you plan on reaching developers through content marketing, such as blog posts or ebooks, beware of "clickbait" titles ("You Won't Believe What Software Engineers Are Saying About X", for instance). Developers see right through tactics like that, and are unlikely to respond favorably.

Tell them what to expect, then deliver it. If you plan on reaching developers through content marketing, such as blog posts or ebooks, beware of "clickbait" titles ("You Won't Believe What Software Engineers Are Saying About X", for instance). Developers see right through tactics like that, and are unlikely to respond favorably.

TL; DR

Don't try to pull the wool over a developer's eyes. This is a market that appreciates honesty, transparency, and usefulness. Developers enjoy solving problems, so make sure you present your product as a solution to a specific issue or challenge.

An example of a great solution-based marketing campaign. Cloudbees offered specific research to its customers and clearly communicated the benefits of utilizing their findings.

CHAPTER 5

Marketing to Developers: 5 Tips for Success

We've marketed to the dev audience for twenty years. We know what works!

While reaching developers is challenging, it's definitely not impossible. Gaining a developer's trust is paramount, and you can do that by positioning your product in an authentic, engaging manner. We recommend the following activities as stepping stones toward success in marketing to developers, especially those on DZone.com.

1. LEVERAGE INTERNAL SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS

We've found this to be the most important tactic for software marketing success. Marketing to devs starts with building trust, and you do that by proving you have the expertise to help them solve their problems. You may not have development expertise as a marketer, but likely someone in your company does. Lean on the subject matter experts (SMEs) in your organization to give you that "insiders" voice.

Not sure who to ask for technical content? The organizations that are most successful marketing to developers have their own development teams regularly create content for other developers. Titles of good potential SMEs include Architect, Lead Developer, and Senior Software Engineer. Work with your own tech or IT department to identify the best SMEs for the particular content you'd like to use in your marketing materials.

Which marketing formats are most suited to Subject Matter Experts? In our experience, articles and blog posts (particularly tutorials), white papers, ebooks and webinars are best for sharing the knowledge of SMEs in an accessible way.

2. KEEP IT SIMPLE

Make your developer-focused marketing materials as clear as possible. Keep content concise and easily skimmable. If

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something is particularly important, highlight it with a different font or color. If you'd like a developer to take a specific action, make the CTA easy to find and make it stand out. Use your brand to your advantage by creating easily recognizable ads that reflect your particular style.

3. FOCUS ON ENGAGEMENT

Rather than relying heavily on traditional sales tactics like cold calling, pitching, and canned demos, base your marketing activities on engagement-focused goals. Share content, educate your potential users, and offer open lines of communication and feedback.

Interact with your target clients on social media, highlight their content and success stories, and answer any questions they may have quickly and accurately. Do so authentically, without being overly promotional of your own company or product.

4. BECOME AN INFLUENCER

Where do the developers you want to target hang out? Is it online forums, developer communities like DZone, Meetups, conferences, LinkedIn groups, or some combination?

Once you've identified where you want to target developers, you can become a thought leader and influencer in that space. By "you," we don't necessarily mean you personally. Likely it will be an SME from your company (and someone without a marketing title) who becomes the influencer. However, your marketing team can still provide guidance, materials, and suggestions for success.

Couchbase saw an impressive response to this email promoting a webinar that featured two SMEs: the CEO of Altoros and the Senior Product Marketing Manager at Couchbase

CHAPTER 5

Marketing to Developers: 5 Tips for Success

5. GIVE OUT FREE STUFF!

This is a tried-and-true strategy for a variety of target markets, but is especially successful among developers. Offering free content, free access, and free trials is an easy way to get a developer interested in your product or service. If your product includes a "freemium" version, introduce that option early in the marketing process.

"Free stuff" doesn't have to be limited to products and content. It can also include free food, free gifts, and even giveaway drawings. Do some research into your target market's favorite freebies and build up a supply to use as giveaways.

TL; DR

Developers respond well to marketers they find trustworthy. How do you build this reputation? By becoming an influencer, focusing on engagement, and leveraging company SMEs. Oh, and by offering free stuff.

This visually stunning banner ad from TargetProcess grabs the reader's attention and has a clear call-to-action in the middle. The colors and clean design appeals to readers and mesh with the brand aesthetic. This is one of our best performing banner ads, with a click-through rate more than twice the site average.
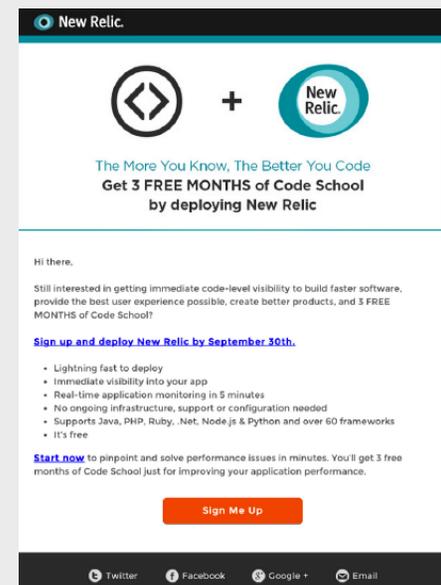
As we've mentioned, developers love to learn. This email campaign from New Relic received twice as many opens as the average DZone email by offering free code school in exchange for deploying their product.

Conclusion

The valuable developer market is at your fingertips. With some forethought and smart campaign planning, you can reach your goals.

We encourage you to use the tips, tricks, and suggestions in this ebook in your own marketing campaigns. If you or someone else in your organization has any questions about the information in this ebook, about DZone.com, or about marketing to developers in general, please feel free to contact us. You'll find our contact information on the last page of this publication. We're always ready and willing to help fellow tech professionals get the word out about their products.

Thanks again for reading this ebook, and best of luck with your upcoming marketing campaigns. We wish you every success!

Best regards,

The DZone Team

Further Reading

A Developer's View on Marketing Buzzwords

Duncan Brown, DZone MVB - DZone.com

If Your Marketers Aren't Geeks, Get New Marketers

Jeanne Roué-Taylor - DZone.com

Stack Overflow Developer Survey Results 2016

Stackoverflow.com

Product Marketing for High Technology Companies

Michael McGrath

Lessons from Twilio: Content Marketing to Developers

Danielle Morrill - Heavybit.com

The Science of Content Marketing for Developers

Tyler Jewell - Heavybit.com

The Content Marketing Handbook

Rohin Dhar - Priceonomics

About DZone

With over 1 million members, DZone.com is one of the web's largest communities and publishers of technical content for software professionals. Developers from all over the world come to DZone for the latest and best content to hone their skills and advance their careers.

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