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Who Are They?

An inside look at developer personas and how to create them

Why Are They Important to You?

Defining, aligning, and creating messages that meet your needs and entice the developer

How Do You Engage?

Marketing plan elements to meaningfully interact with the developer audience

Developer Personas

Understanding your audience is critical to the success of any campaign. Developer marketing is no exception. As a baseline, you'll want to assume that the developer audience you are targeting is somewhat marketing averse. That's not to say that they don't respond to marketing; simply that they do not typically want to be sold. They want to be given information and allowed to form an opinion.

Additionally, understanding the technology you are promoting is key. You do not have to be a developer yourself, however you do need to understand the landscape. Each programming language and each development platform has its own unique community. Understanding where your product or service fits in - and understanding the differences - is key to connecting with the audience.

With this foundation, you will be ready to begin to create the personas you are trying to reach. By creating personas, you gain an agreement within your organization about who you are trying to reach and how you intend to do it. And while it goes without saying, knowing who you are talking to helps you determine what to say.

Developer Personas

Creating personas should not be done in a silo. Anyone who comes in contact with your audience - sales people, your field reps and evangelists, your customer service folks - should all have input in the creation of the personas.

The exercise is quite simple. You identify the various users and/or purchasers of your product or service and commit to paper his or her DNA. What kind of company do they work for? What is their title? What is their average age? How many year's experience do they have? What is their technical background? What are their challenges? What does their personal life look like?

Of course as human beings we are all unique and every one of our customers won't have the exact same answer. But by creating a persona based on the general shared attributes of the majority of your customers, you will be well on your way to not only better understanding them, but better communicating with them.

While each company will have different specifics around each persona, we've primed the pump with a few examples.

Developer Personas: Developer Manager

Meet Steve.

Steve is a corporate developer who works for a Fortune 500 company like Bank of America, Boeing, BT, or Exxon Mobile.

Title: Software Engineer, Lead Developer, Software Architect

Experience: 15+ years

Age: 35-50 years old

Technical Skills: He is a C# developer who primarily uses Visual Studio as his development environment and deploys his apps to Azure. He has a new-found interest in open source technologies and is experimenting on his own with artificial intelligence.

Challenges: He is tasked with shaping and improving internal applications (both desktop and web) that were built with legacy technology. He has to balance modernizing the applications with the associated costs. He manages a team of developers and is tasked with balancing technical vision and project execution.

Personal: Steve has a Bachelor degree or is perhaps self-educated. He is likely married with young school-aged children. He is career focussed but enjoys spending personal time with his family.

Developer Personas: Independent Consultant

Meet Rachel.

Rachel is a self-employed business owner. Her clients range from small to medium sized businesses with the occasional enterprise customer. She prides herself on being a subject matter expert.

Title: Owner, Consultant, Programmer, Software Architect

Experience: 15+ years

Age: 35-50 years old

Technical Skills: Rachel is a Java expert. She uses Bluemix to create, test, and deploy her applications to SoftLayer, IBM's Cloud provider.

Challenges: As an independent consultant, it is imperative that Rachel stays up-to-date on the latest technologies. She needs to have a broad knowledge of her space in general, but also needs to be able to go deep in her area of expertise. As part of her business, she presents at industry events, is active on online forums, blogs regularly, and runs her local user group. She is active on social media.

Personal: Rachel has an entrepreneurial spirit and is a self-starter. She may have a college degree or perhaps she is self-taught. Often times the line between her personal life and her career are blurred. When she is not working, she is an adventure seeker with a passion for travel and exploration.

Developer Personas: C-Level

Meet Tom.

Tom is an executive who works for a large enterprise like Siemens, GE, or Telefonica.

Title: CIO, CTO, VP

Experience: 20+ years

Age: 45-60 years old

Technical Skills: Tom is a power, business user with a background in technology. He coded at one point in his career, but now focusses on the business implications of the technology.

Challenges: Tom is charged with providing technology strategy, direction, and leadership. He collaborates with his trusted technology executives and relies on their boots on the ground for information about the latest trends. He is concerned about modernizing legacy applications and evaluates the cost to rip and replace versus upgrade.

Personal: Tom has both a four-year degree and an MBA. He has high school or college-age children. He is career-focussed and enjoys travel, trying new foods, and golf.

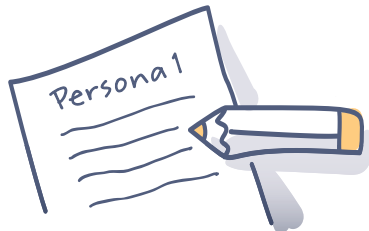


Developer Personas: Why Are They Important?

You've created your personas and know who your audience is, but why do you (or the business stakeholders) care?

The obvious answer is that you have a product or service that will be consumed and/or bought by one or more of the personas.

Beyond that, however, is the fact that as technology advances, developers are increasingly finding themselves with a seat at the table. The business implications of their work have a lasting effect on the bottom line. With that, many developers hold the valuable position of having a strong influence over or even complete control of certain purchasing decisions.



How to Leverage the Personas: Alignment & Messaging

Logic dictates if you know who you are talking to, you have a better chance of saying the right things.

Determining what the “right things” are means finding the sweet spot between your organizational needs and the messages that will resonate well with the intended audience to allow you to reach or exceed your goals.

All too often in tech we are lured by the next big thing; the shiny object. If the shiny object is how your company earns its revenue that’s great. If not, it is imperative for organizations who are courting developers to be knowledgeable about the current technology trends without losing focus on the product or technology that is actually paying the bills.

To strike this balance, you need to create your messaging pillars to ensure everyone in your organization is singing from the same sheet of music and reaching your audience in a language to which they will respond.

Messaging Pillars

We could, quite literally, write an entire book about message development. It stands next to persona creation as one of the core tenets of a successful developer marketing program.

Your messaging pillars ensure the whole company is singing from the same sheet of music. The messages serve not only as a script for all external communication, they also provide focus and direction for the entire organization. As an example, if a project or task can't be tied back to one of the agreed upon pillars, the organization needs to take a long, hard look at why it wants to go down that path.

As with persona development, message creation cannot and should not be done in a silo. You need to encourage input, garner feedback, and have buy-in from stakeholders throughout the entire process.

The next few pages provide a crash course in message and pillar development.

Messaging Pillars

Step 1: Self-Awareness

Understanding how you are currently perceived versus how you want to be perceived is crucial. Running an informal focus group or enlisting the help of a third party to run a brand awareness survey can be a valuable exercise often yielding eye-opening results about who people think you are versus how you want to be perceived.

Step 2: Key Differentiators & the Competition

With your newfound self-awareness, you are ready to move on to the next step. You will need to identify your competitors and honestly identify your strengths and areas for improvement. What makes you different/better than your competitors? What are your key differentiators?

Step 3: Forming Your Pillars

After understanding how you are perceived in the market and identifying your key differentiators, it is now time to start applying that information to begin to build your messages. Identify the areas of your business that drive the most revenue in addition to areas that you believe have the most opportunity. Pick the top three.

Messaging Pillars

Step 3: Forming Your Pillars, *continued*

As an example, let's say you believe (based on research and current product offerings) that you excel or are an up-and-comer in IoT, Cloud, and Artificial Intelligence. All of the messages you create and send out to the world would tie back to one of these themes - to one of these pillars.

Step 4: Creating Your Messages

Each pillar will contain a series of messages. Each message should have a declaration, an explanatory sentence, and a value proposition. While you could have more, an average of three messages per pillar is recommended. Too many more, and the messages themselves run the risk of being watered down. Too few, and you run the risk of becoming lost in the noise.

From a strategic perspective, the pillars and messages within them become your playbook for the year. From a tactical perspective, the messages within each pillar will be used in all of your creatives and all of your outreach. On the following page we will share an example.

Messaging Pillars: Example

For the sake of the example, our company will be a cloud platform provider that offers both device management services and an artificial intelligence toolkit that includes APIs for building cognitive apps, componentized machine learning algorithms for basic functions, and data dashboards. The company is named HG87.

| IoT | Cloud | Artificial Intelligence |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Device Management Simplified More often than not your IoT application is connected to dissimilar devices. The HG87 IoT device management service speaks more than 40 device protocols simplifying development and enabling you to realize your IoT strategy quickly.</p> | <p>Building to Scale The cloud enables real-time scalability based on need. This results in quick turnarounds and eliminates the need for costly hardware. At HG87, we provide a cloud platform designed with you in mind, so you can focus on creating and deploying your IoT applications.</p> | <p>Intuitive Apps Artificially intelligent applications are only as strong as the cognitive components used to create them. With HG87's artificial intelligence APIs, developers can build cognitive applications that can recognize and respond to a user's tone, personality, and emotion.</p> |
| <p>Security IoT provides the opportunity to collect and expose an unprecedented amount of data, making security mission critical. HG87's IoT solutions allow you to monitor your devices securely and encrypt sensitive data.</p> | <p>Affordable Access to High-Speed Data Because of the large data needs of IoT applications, the cloud is the ideal place to deploy your solutions. With wide-reaching cloud capabilities and expertise in IoT application development, HG87 provides affordable access to high-speed data networks.</p> | <p>Math Made Easy Machine learning is a critical component of any AI app or system. But what if you don't have a PhD in ML or even have experience creating algorithms? HG87's AI Toolkit includes tested algorithms and scenarios allowing you to grow the intelligence in your application without having to have a strong background in math.</p> |
| <p>Data Delivered M2M applications accumulate vast amounts of data; more so than traditional batch processing. HG87 enables you to stream data continuously, allowing you to reliably provide for real-time business processes.</p> | <p>Global Data Centers. 24-Hour Support The cloud is only as strong and reliable as the data centers and network cables that connect them. HG87's has more than 30 data centers worldwide, connected by an advanced network, with support available around the clock.</p> | <p>Data Visualization & Analysis The ability to monitor and interpret your data is tantamount to the success of your application. The HG87 AI Toolkit provides you with a dashboard to easily analyze and decipher your data in real-time.</p> |

Reaching the Developer: Pieces of the Puzzle

You've done the heavy lifting. You've laid the foundation for your marketing. You understand marketing's role as it pertains to business objectives and you've set your goals. You've identified your target audience and determined what makes them tick. You've agreed upon your pillars and created your messages.

Now comes the really fun part.

A good marketing plan is like a puzzle. One missing piece and the picture won't be complete. Swap out one piece for another and the picture looks completely different. Have an understanding of what you want that picture to look like - maybe it is heavily focussed on brand awareness or perhaps you want to focus on driving to trial - and your plan will start to fall into place.

The next few pages will address things to consider as you are putting together your plan.



Reaching the Developer: Pieces of the Puzzle Considerations

Budget

It goes without saying, when you are determining what pieces to include in your plan, you have to take into consideration budget. The plan elements you would include with a \$3 million budget will look very different than that of a \$500K budget.

Flexibility

As you are selecting the right plan elements, it's important to note that you should be open to being nimble in your approach. Many times, organizations change their course during a plan year based on what's working. That is OK (great, really). Understanding why you chose the specific tactics in the first place is key.

Metrics

You absolutely need to understand how you are going to be measured. If your leadership has set brand awareness goals versus lead generation targets, the path you take will look very different.

Reaching the Developer: Pieces of the Puzzle Selection

Based on budget and success metrics, you will then need to determine where your focus will lie. Will you be most successful in running an inbound marketing campaign (content marketing - promoting your company through blogs, vlogs, podcasts, video, ebooks, newsletters, whitepapers, SEO, social media, etc.)? Or is outbound the best strategy for you (typically paid advertisements, press releases, telemarketing, direct mail, dedicated eblasts, etc.)?

Ideally, a strong campaign will have components of each as one can certainly help drive the other.

On the next few pages, we will explore some marketing tactics/plan elements that are proven to work well in most developer engagement.



Reaching the Developer: Pieces of the Puzzle

Grassroots | Community | Influencers

Community is an important element of any technical marketing plan. Developers, by nature, are drawn to community. They want to feel like they are part of something. There is also an element of hero worship that goes on in the space. Some developers aspire to be the hero; others simply want to be in the presence of the experts. This makes these kinds of programs invaluable.

The biggest mistake people make when building community programs is they forget they have to be genuine and authentic. The people who are running the programs have to be a part of the community in some way. They don't have to start that way, but they do need to show a genuine interest in the community - not just in its assumed benefit. If developers think they are being used to advance the cause of a company, there will be backlash.

Developer community is found in a variety of forms and fashions. Each platform and language has their own subset. That said, you can find developers at user group meetings, meet-ups, hackathons, CodeCamps, Give Camps, and online.

Reaching the Developer: Pieces of the Puzzle

Events | Experiential Marketing

Events and experiential marketing are a way to truly make the brand come to life. Events could be anything from third-party event participation (as in being a sponsor or exhibitor of someone else's event), event production, hackathons, virtual events, webinars, or contests that include an engagement model. Essentially, anything that allows your customers to experience your brand on a personal level.

Personifying the brand through event and experiential engagement allows the developers to identify with your organization on a personal level and build an affinity for your products.



Reaching the Developer: Pieces of the Puzzle

Digital Display Advertising

Since their online infancy in the 1990s, display advertisements have grown to become one of the most prevalent vehicles for digital and online marketing.

There's no sure-fire formula for guaranteed success with display advertising, however if you follow a few basic guidelines you should see an improvement in the performance of your developer marketing campaigns.

First, assume that most developers will at some level prefer not to see any ads. This means it is crucial that your advertisements be interesting, relevant, and efficient to get the attention of your target audience.

Also, remember that developers will associate your ads with your brand and products even if they don't click on them. This means two things: don't annoy them and don't deceive them.

Reaching the Developer: Pieces of the Puzzle

Digital Display Advertising, *continued*

Promote the benefits of your products. Be truthful. And avoid annoying your audience with interstitials, prestitials, pop-ups, pop-unders, slow-loading ads, or anything else that might be irritating. The viewer will remember your company for the annoyance, not for the great products you have.

Make sure you include a concise call to action and that the landing page your viewer is taken to upon clicking your ad is simple and easy to understand.

And finally, make sure your ads look professionally designed by someone who understands marketing to developers. An amateur looking design won't compel developers to click and could be detrimental to your brand credibility.

Reaching the Developer: Pieces of the Puzzle

Content Marketing

In 1996, Bill Gates wrote an article entitled “Content is King.” He was talking about content on the internet, however the sentiment holds true for marketing as well.

If you can find a way to demonstrate your expertise (and ensure it is seen by your audience) the earned media value can be huge.

There are two things to be aware of when you are creating a content marketing plan. The content must be good and it has to appear in the right place. If one of those is off, you’ve spent a lot of valuable time for nothing.

Content marketing assets could include ebooks, blogs, vlogs, infographics, whitepapers, case studies, articles, and more. Stay away from “brochureware” and focus on technical content for best results with the developer audience.



Reaching the Developer: Pieces of the Puzzle

Social Media

Social Media is a hard one. Everyone feels they need to be doing it, but to do it right takes a huge investment in both time and personnel.

Many consumer brands have entire teams dedicated to this arm of marketing, with war rooms set up to manage social engagement around the clock.

The benefit of Social Media is that it allows you to personify your brand through voice. To that end, you want to make sure that you have people managing your social accounts who can be part of the conversation and not simply a megaphone. As with community programs, the most successful Social Media programs are authentic and genuine. With the right people manning your social accounts, your online voice can grow legs if you let it.



Reaching the Developer: Pieces of the Puzzle

Executive Visibility & Public Relations

Executive visibility and public relations are another beast. They are more involved than writing press releases and putting them out on the wire. It's about building relationships and becoming a subject matter expert in the eyes of the press, and thereby their readers/viewers.

Some of the best PR programs are ones that focus on building the executives they represent as subject matter experts. As they build their celebrity, they become an extension of the corporate brand.

As an example, an on-demand developer training company created a campaign much like what we are talking about. They had their CEO stop talking to the media about just the company and had him talk about online education. He became a columnist for Forbes and was instantly viewed as a subject matter expert. The company was able to leverage his personal brand and they continue to see success today as a result of it.

Reaching the Developer: Pieces of the Puzzle

Lead Generation

A lead is simply a potential customer who has, in some way, shape, or form, expressed interest in your company's products or services.

This interest can be generated and measured in a number of ways, but a common approach is to offer something useful (an ebook, a free trial, etc.) to prospects in exchange for some contact information and the invitation to follow up.

Generating leads is an important practice for any business's growth strategy, but it is especially true for organizations with a dedicated sales force. Why? Because it will be easier and more natural to begin a conversation with a developer who has already shown some interest in your company by engaging with your content or offer. By indentifying "leads" you can focus on the prospects who are more likely to convert to a sale rather than wasting time on those who won't.

Reaching the Developer: Pieces of the Puzzle

Lead Generation, *continued*

Ultimately, the goal of lead generation is to warm prospects up to your business, earn their trust, and nurture them along the path in your sales funnel. To achieve this you need to offer developers something of value. You need quality content that aligns with their interests and naturally attracts their attention. You need a lead magnet.

A lead magnet can be almost anything (webinars, technical papers, ebooks, free trials or downloads, tips, giveaways, etc.).

As long as it provides commensurate value for whatever information the prospect is giving up (usually their email and permission for you to contact them), it can be used as an icebreaker to open the door for your sales team to start a conversation with the prospect.

Reaching the Developer: Pieces of the Puzzle

Email Marketing

It's as old as the Internet itself, yet email remains one of the simplest and most useful tools for communicating with a large audience quickly, effectively, and affordably. Email marketing can be grouped into two basic categories: e-newsletters and e-blasts/dedicated email offers.

Both are essential components of any marketer's toolbox. If you aren't using email as part of your marketing efforts to reach developers, it's time to start!

e-Newsletters

In addition to being informative and entertaining, the real value of e-newsletters for its readers is the ability to cut through the noise of the Internet. There is so much new content created and published each day it's impossible to keep up. A good newsletter sifts through the junk, aggregates the best content, and sends it directly to the inbox of keen readers.



Reaching the Developer: Pieces of the Puzzle

Email Marketing, *continued*

By placing your business, products, and services alongside this curated content, your brand gains credibility and reaches a more receptive audience.

Newsletters come in all shapes, sizes, and topics. No matter how niche your audience or focus, there's likely a newsletter out there that caters to them. If not, build your own!

e-Blasts

Just like e-newsletters, e-Blasts or dedicated email are delivered directly to the inboxes of subscribers. However, instead of presenting the advertiser's message alongside curated content, the entire email is usually devoted to a single advertiser.

Dedicated email is often used to promote things like specific time-sensitive offers, events, product launches, services, or campaigns. It's best for making a big splash, so to speak, and enticing your audience to take action on something NOW.

Summary

Successful developer marketing programs are built on a foundation of understanding your audience, self-awareness of your brand, alignment with both technology interests and business goals, and core programs that will bring your brand to life in a genuine and authentic way.

Developers want to be able to make informed decisions about a product or service. They do not want to be annoyed and they do not want to be deceived. While they are somewhat leary of traditional marketing, they respond well to messages that cater to their interests and needs. Once they have connected with a brand, they are very loyal.



About the Authors & Designer



Sara Faatz, Developer Media

With more than 20 years experience leading corporate developer marketing and community building for multi-million-dollar international organizations, Sara has a proven track record of conceptualizing and orchestrating campaigns that evolve brand and positively impact the company's image and revenue. Over the years, she has run marketing departments, built community programs from the ground up, created partner programs, and acted as a brand ambassador and spokesperson, bringing brands to life.

Lisa Sidlow, Developer Media

Lisa's passion is helping her clients market to developers. With more than 20 years experience in the developer space and access to millions of developers within the Developer Media community of sites, Lisa is well equipped to assist marketers and tech companies market their products in the most effective, efficient, and economical way.

Scott Russell, Scott Russell Design

Scott has worked for over a decade in international educational publishing as a designer, illustrator, image specialist, and production manager. He currently oversees operations at Rampant Goat Press. He enjoys long walks on the beach and late-night mariache serenades. He also loves mustard.



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