

Meet the Developers

Marketing Insights from Software Developers



Second Edition

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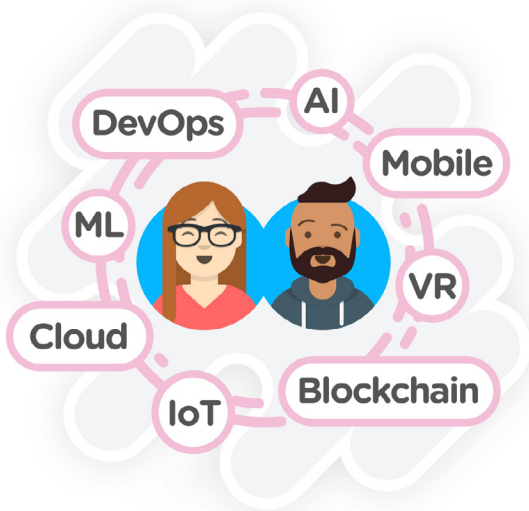
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Meet the Developers



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Introduction

Why Meet the Developers?

Much of marketing is data-focused, and rightfully so. Trends collected from aggregate behaviors and opinions are extremely useful for determining which channels to use, what times of day to use them, and the type of content many developers like to see. However, meeting your individual audience member carries a weight and impact that statistics can bury. If you need to arm yourself with details to create useful developer personas, look no further than the “Meet the Developer” series. Our [first edition](#) included a wide range of developers. In our second edition, we offer a few more snapshots of developers who have interesting side projects.

About the “Meet the Developer” Interviews

We selected developers who are contributing to their developer communities and asked them to divulge a bit about themselves and how advertising makes them feel about the brands and products they encounter. Many responses were gathered online, but several were provided in person where possible. We sought to personalize some of the answers to questions we regularly receive about advertising to developers.

Meet: Marissa du Bois



If you want developers like Marissa to buy your product and trust your brand, you need to be open and honest in your presentation.

Marissa views advertising as a way to learn more about products that may pique her creative interests. Please take a moment to learn more about Marissa, her passion for creativity, and what draws her to an ad or a product placed in her developer community, [CodeProject](#).

Tell us about yourself, your professional accomplishments, and what you do for a living.

I live in Portland, Oregon with my husband. I'm an award-winning contributor to CodeProject.com for my article about [True North with a Raspberry Pi and a LEGO EV3 Panoramic Camera](#). I'm also an award-winning LEGO maker. I've built several LEGO electronic devices, 2 digital point-and-shoot cameras, a LEGO All-In-One PC, a LEGO Digital Timer, and a LEGO digital picture frame. I've also contributed LEGO props to an award-winning series of [LEGO Boost Bot commercials](#).

In my day job, I'm a developer relations engineer for GPUs and CPUs for a major hardware vendor. I enable AAA video games for the latest hardware and contribute white papers and technical presentations to the game developer community.

(You can learn more about Marissa and connect via [LinkedIn](#).)

Why do you participate in the CodeProject community?

I'm a self-taught software engineer. CodeProject was a huge influence in my early learning when I started in the industry. CodeProject gave me a broad perspective on development methodology, algorithms, and languages. I've occasionally written articles for CodeProject as a way to give back to the community that helped me when I was young.

What is the newest tech you are using, learning, excited about, or curious about?

As a graphics engineer, I focus a lot on DirectX12 technology. Recently, a new technology was released to mainstream graphics, called Variable Rate Shading. I'm a big proponent of its use as a performance optimization tool and something that can give game developers an additional artistic flourish in their games. Real-time ray tracing is a new technology that has just started to enter the market, and I think it has huge potential for achieving photo-realism in games.

Where do you go for information about developer tools?

Honestly, I'm a bit old-school when it comes to tools. I prefer working with Microsoft Visual Studio and Windows SDK performance tools like Windows Performance Analyzer. I'll occasionally browse YouTube tutorials, but I also tend to enjoy visiting booths at trade-shows that can show me new tools in person. I seldom incorporate new tooling unless absolutely

necessary. I tend to follow the KISS philosophy when it comes to tools, in that too many tools can be counterproductive.

What ads attract you?

I like advertisements that demonstrate a product, library, or tool. These could be videos, code samples, or simple diagrams. I also tend to look out for advertisements that feature technical competitions. I don't like flashy advertisements. If the product is sound, it should be able to stand on its merits and attract attention through the quality of the ads, versus bombarding me with flashy animations or sounds.

Do you click on the ad or search the product/advertiser you see in the ad in a separate browser instance?

It's rare that I click ads directly. If the ad gives a compelling pitch, I would most likely do a web search to find more information. I'm a bit leery of clicking ads directly on most sites because of the explosion of misleading advertising that has spread throughout the internet.

How do you feel when you visit content or another site you are interested in, that was advertised to you, only to find that you have to give a phone number to get what was offered?

Usually a phone number is fine. However, I honestly wish the US had rules like [the] GDPR in the EU. I am glad that most websites that serve international markets tend to apply their GDPR rules for everyone, but you never can be too sure what someone is doing with their back-end. I don't tend to think a phone number is a huge security risk, and it's easy enough to block if I start getting spam calls.

Same scenario as above—except providing your credit card info?

If it's a product or service from a reputable vendor also using a reputable credit card processor, I would purchase products online. However, I dislike giving a credit card number to start a free trial, as I tend to forget what I signed up for and eventually get charged. This has led me to avoid free trials that require credit cards to sign up.

At what point do you navigate away when you visit content you want, but encounter a lot of requests for personal information? Email? Name? Phone number? Credit card? What is your limit?

If I'm ready to use the product, I will fill out the form. I must admit, being confronted with sign-up forms before really understanding the product or service being advertised causes me to navigate away quickly. I usually want to see an overview of the product, followed by more in-depth product information, reviews, and comparisons before I am ready to commit to filling out an online form.

If this happens, how do you feel about that brand or product?

It doesn't completely put me off. If I think the product is compelling enough, I would do additional research and return to them later once I am satisfied by the product/brand details.

Have you ever found a technology and purchased it based on an ad run in your developer community? Why or why not?

Yes, I have, actually. I'm a huge Raspberry Pi and Arduino fan, and I have bought components based on online advertising. As an electronics maker, I definitely love being exposed to cool new technology products this way. There is such a

broad market in the tech industry that sometimes you need advertising to help you find the big new thing that may not have pinged your radar through the media or word of mouth.

Is there anything that we didn't ask about regarding the developer advertising and marketing experience that you'd like to add?

Targeting developers is tough. The market is saturated with products, tools, libraries, components, languages, and so much more. A lot of ads really need to compete for attention in the tiny little boxes on most websites. I'm not sure how you can reduce the fragmentation. Targeted advertising sometimes works, but I also think it may limit consumers to certain techno-bubbles, which can make it hard to find adjacent products that might pique someone's interest or creativity in a new way.

Meet: Michael Washington



Michael visits Alvin Ashcraft's blog regularly to keep abreast of the rapid changes in his industry. He appreciates how Alvin curates his list of what is going on instead of relying on some kind of algorithm. If you want Michael to buy your product and trust your brand, you need to establish trust by making your content available.

We had the great pleasure of speaking with Michael about himself and what draws him to an ad or a product placed in his developer community.

Tell us about yourself.

I am a 49-year-old programmer. Former Microsoft MVP, now in [MVP Reconnect](#).

[My resume](#). I am a web developer (C#/.Net Core/Angular). I live in Pasadena, California and work for the Los Angeles County Office of Education as an Application Architect.

Why is Alvin's important to you?

I use it every day to keep up with what is going on in the industry. A LOT is going on. His blog provides one place with

a curated list of what is really going on. (It MUST be human curated, otherwise you would just see a bunch of stuff where people simply “gamed the system” to get their links to appear.) He also covers a lot from mobile to web to podcasts. No other source comes close.

What is the newest tech you are using, learning, excited about, curious about, and why?

Artificial Intelligence/machine Learning. My hope is to make business applications that can converse with humans and understand speech and images.

Where do you go for info about developer tools?

Most of my tools are Microsoft, so I get my information from Microsoft Docs online. The posts on Alvin’s blog have some information on tools, but most of the articles I read are using the tools I use already.

What ads for developer tools and services attract you?

Anything that promises information on something that I am interested in. For example, if there was an ad that said, “Try our AI toolkit,” I would click on it.

If you are interested in a product or service because of an ad, do you click on the ad or search the product/advertiser you see in the ad on a separate browser instance?

I click on the ad.

How do you feel when you visit content or another site you are interested in based on advertising, only to find that you have to give a phone number to get what is offered?

The ONLY time I will provide it is if there is no other options—meaning if there was a competitor that would give me what I need without locking me in, I would go with the competitor.

Same as above—except when you are asked for a credit card?

Requiring a credit card is unheard of. I can even get an Azure account without a credit card.

What makes you bounce? Meaning—At what point do you navigate away when you visit content or a tool trial that you want, but you encounter a lot of requests for personal information? Email? Name? Phone number? Credit card? Other?

I expect ALL information to be provided without requiring anything from me—UNLESS I am about to download a free trial. Then, you can have my name and email.

Once you've been asked for a lot of personal information in order to take advantage of an offer, how do you feel about that brand or product?

I know I cannot afford it. The only time I provided a ton of info was at work when we needed a SAML component (\$3,500) or a Lead Tools component.

Have you ever found a technology and purchased it based on an ad run in your developer community? Why or why not?

We bought Redgate at work and LEADTOOLS. They are high-profile in tech mags.

Meet: Oana “Quality Ad, Quality Product” Mancu



When you have a skeptical technical audience, you can feel like you are messaging to deaf ears. However, developers like [Oana Mancu](#) have sympathy, even empathy, for companies trying to provide a product—especially if you deliver an entertaining, high-quality ad, a high-functioning product website, and are willing to listen to her feedback.

Tell us about yourself. Where did you grow up, where do you live now, what do you do?

I grew up in and still live in Bucharest, Romania. I went to the University of Bucharest for my bachelor's degree in computer science and a master's degree in applied mathematics.

During my studies, I volunteered my time as a math tutor for foster kids, and I worked with kids in the hospital. I've had several internships, including with Unicredit Business Solutions, where I worked on an internal web application that generates reports about eligible loans, improving my Java and DB skills. I also completed an internship with Orange, a telecommunications company (ITE Department, Orange

France and South Africa). During this period of time, I worked along with a mentor using a Java-based tool, sharpening my skills in J2EE, JSF, Jonas, SQL, DB2, JPA, CSS, HTML, database design, and database development — being involved in all stages of the project, from designing the tool to development and implementation.

Currently, I do the programming for my family's business, and I also work as a freelancer. I mostly work in C# and ASP.NET. Now that I have finished my studies, I continue to explore the wonderful world of IT by not just doing a job, but by also being open to new challenges and opportunities like the AI TensorFlow challenge.

In my free time, I like to travel.

Why do you participate in the CodeProject community?

The developer community helped make me the programmer I am today, so I like to give back. For this reason, I like to participate in CodeProject. Besides CodeProject, I participate in the Mathematics Stack Exchange, partly because of the subject, and partly because it's mainly answering questions. Answering a single question is not as hard as writing a whole article. ;-)

What is the newest tech you are using, learning, excited about, or curious about?

I'm excited about 5G communication and machine learning. I love machine learning because it combines math and programming — two things I really like.

Where do you go for information about developer tools?

To learn about developer tools, I read job descriptions for developers. If you see new technologies appear, you should

start learning about them. I also look for online courses and tutorials and articles. If I have to choose between two products, I will choose something with the best courses, tutorials and articles available. If I'm choosing something to write about, I choose the opposite — something that doesn't have much already written about it.

What ads attract you?

Developer ads that attract me get my attention in some way. For example, it could be a promotion of products that fit a need, or for something I know nothing about. I also enjoy video ads, but I don't like them to scare me if they start with the sound. I don't like pop-up ads on top of what I am trying to read. I like it if they are part of the page. It's great if they are funny and have a story to tell — like mini-movies with a script, music, and editing. I always appreciate good work. And usually, I trust a company more that puts money into great ads.

Why?

Because it shows the company put work into it — they are serious. If the company did a good job with the ad, I tend to think their product's quality is also good. But if they produce a poor-quality ad, then I think their product is poor.

The quality of the product landing page or website is very important. But if I click on an ad, if I go to the product website, I judge by the website. Partly I judge how it looks, but mainly how it works, because I'm a developer and the site should be made by a developer. If the site is not good, then it means you have poor developers.

Do you click on the ad or search the product/advertiser you see in the ad on a separate browser instance?

I click on the ad. First of all, it's quicker. If I'm interested, then I search the internet for more information. I also click, because I know that the company put the ad there. I think it would be mean to not let the company know that they didn't put it there in vain.

How do you feel when you visit content or another site you are interested in, that was advertised to you, only to find that you have to give a phone number to get what was offered?

I would search for what I want in another place, unless I see the reason behind having to give my number. For example, if I bought the product, it makes sense. But if I don't see the reason, I'm not going to give my phone number. Unless they want the phone number for two-step verification — that's OK. But not for sales.

Same as above—except what about your credit card info?

I never give my credit card information without checking the company first. If I trust the company, I'm OK with giving that information to verify that I'm not just signing up for tons of free trials with different email addresses, though.

At what point do you navigate away when you visit content you want, but encounter a lot of requests for personal information? Email? Name? Phone number? Credit card? Other?

If I really want the tutorial and good content and I have read about it being good, I'm OK with giving most of my information. But if I am at this point, I have researched already

that this product is something that I want. Although I still don't want to give my phone number unless there is a sensible purpose.

Once this happens, how do you feel about that brand or product?

This doesn't affect how I feel about the product, but this is their marketing strategy. If I get frustrated by their process, I let the company know how I feel. They often don't even know what is frustrating or what they are doing wrong. And the company is usually happy to hear feedback because they don't know. And the fact that I contacted them means that I'm a serious customer. So sometimes they change things. But most people don't do this — they just go away.

You have more empathy than most developers for the tool developer's perspective.

I have a different perspective because my parents run a family business. I know how hard it is to run a business, so I have some empathy for businesses.

Have you ever found a technology and purchased it based on an ad run in your developer community? Why or why not?

I used a lot of Microsoft products while I was in school, and I tend to choose free open-source options. If I need to pay for something, I will buy something I already know. But I am open to trying something new if it has good tutorials on the internet. I think it was a good strategy for Microsoft to give students free access to their tools. Also, companies make it much easier to help you get to know how to use their tools as a student. Now, if I need a tool, I want to use the tool I already know.

Meet: Mark Downie



Mark follows Scott Hanselman's blog. In addition to following Scott's blog, he has contributed as an interviewee on Scott's podcast, *Hanselminutes*. Funnily enough, it was Mark's own blog, *poppastrang.com*, that indirectly motivated him to first reach out to Scott.

I had the great pleasure of speaking with Mark about himself and what draws him to an ad or a product placed in his developer community.

Tell us about yourself.

I'm Mark Downie, a lead software engineer for a financial services company in Columbus, Ohio. I spent 20 years as a developer. I have worked in many industries, including medical and financial, primarily concerned with the asp.net stack, and the web as both a medium for interacting a site and issuing commands, or creating APIs.

Why is Scott Hanselman and Hanselminutes important to you?

Scott and I—we've never actually met. I had heard of him, because he travels a ton and gives a ton of great talks. He's

one of the first bloggers I've followed who is still around.

I started to notice him because whenever I was asking really complicated problems on a topic, his blog would come up. I found that to be true for my peers, too.

I run my own blog, Poppastring.com. It's a platform to talk about technology and software, and the various ways it can transform the lives of everyday people.

The blogging engine I use is one Scott had developed open source. With the advent of social networks, I thought it would be good to modify this. So, I reached out to him with my ideas, and he encouraged me. After I had worked on improving it for a while, he asked if we could talk about it on his podcast. Now, I'm more connected to him on the interwebs [sic] through this project and other things. We seem to be virtually crossing paths a lot.

What is the newest tech you are using, learning, excited about, curious about, and why?

Definitely .NET Core. [There's] a lot of energy around it. Until this point, I've been Windows with just a few forays into Linux and other stacks, but this has given me the ability to start working with other platforms and harness the experience of what I've done. It's exciting. I'm also interested in Azure as a cloud infrastructure—and, of course, cloud in general.

Where do you go for info about developer tools?

I'm a bit of an unusual case, I think, because I still have RSS feeds that are constantly pinging me. I use Feedly to bring things in from MSDN (Microsoft Developer's Network). I've got a lot of information coming from a variety of sources and platforms by using RSS feeds.

The other place I go is to the people I follow on Twitter. I've now kind of tailored my Twitter feed to include just the people in the industry who can help me. Oh, and podcasts. I've been listening to Hanselminutes since Episode 1. It is great, very consistent. I listen to other podcasts, though those can be inconsistent, but the ones that have a regular cadence are good.

What ads for developer tools and services attract you?

It has to be context-specific. The ones that I'm drawn to have to be related to the place where I am looking. If I'm presented with an ad that is unrelated to the place where I am looking, I will never look at it. To me context is everything.

If you are interested in a product or service because of an ad, do you click on the ad or search the product/advertiser you see in the ad on a separate browser instance?

Do I click or search? It depends on how the ad looks. If I don't recognize the product or company, then yes, I will start a new instance. I may not trust them if I don't recognize the company name. If I recognize it, I am less cautious, and I will start clicking around.

How do you feel when you visit content or another site you are interested in based on advertising, only to find that you have to give a phone number to get what is offered?

That's a tough ask for me. Let's say I even trust the advertiser—I still won't do it. I may give my email or my social handle. I don't hand out my phone number.

Same as above—except when you are asked for a credit card?

Give a credit card? Straight from an ad, I wouldn't hand over a credit card number. I would need to have a relationship or need to know that [they] definitely have the product I need, OK, but that's based on a relationship where I trust the vendor.

What makes you bounce? Or at what point do you navigate away when you visit content or a tool trial that you want, but you encounter a lot of requests for personal information? Email? Name? Phone number? Credit card? Other?

I get frustrated with address info. Filling out address info is not usually something I'll bother doing.

Once you've been asked for a lot of personal information in order to take advantage of an offer, how do you feel about that brand or product?

I'm expecting that, so the question becomes, "Can I fulfill this anywhere else?" If the answer is no, I'll put up with it.

Have you ever found a technology and purchased it based on an ad run in your developer community? Why or why not?

Yeah, I have. I'm rarely clicking and buying. I'll click, check, reach out to my social network. Then I will make a decision about buying. And the less friction I have (like not having to give them a credit card to buy (I prefer PayPal), I'm even more likely to interact with them.

Meet: Julia Nash



It's easy to put developers in a box. And, while trends are supported by the anecdotes we are generating in this eBook, the delight is in the details. So is the insight. Developers like Julia Nash crave an uninterrupted visual experience. Maybe it's because she came to love programming through gaming and game development.

Julia doesn't mind native advertising. In fact, she prefers it. If she trusts the publisher and the information is valuable, she'd rather have a uniform visual experience and discover the content is sponsored once she's clicked on it—not before.

Tell us about yourself. Where are you from, what do you do (role), where do you work (if you can say), and what attracted you to a career as a developer?

I grew up in Dallas, Texas, and I still live here. I like Dallas. I have visited lots of places for my job, but I still really like it here. I love the thunderstorms.

I've worked for IBM for about 4 years. Until recently, I was an AI Solutions Engineer. My current job is a suite of roles. I am an acting Offering Manager within the Cognitive Applications

sector. Our sector works on developer outreach, and the website our content is published on is called IBM Developer, formerly known as Developerworks. The offerings that I manage are IBM Cloud Private, IBM Edge Computing, and IBM Multicloud Manager for developer advocacy.

I also watch over Security since I have a passion for it. I am the Lead in Digital Syndication for IBM Developer and the Project Manager of the IBM Developer Mobile App, which you can find for free on the App Store and Google Play. But formally, my title at IBM is defined as “Software Developer.”

Even with the many hats I wear, I still find time to develop after work. My beginning in programming was with the Adventure Game Studio engine. I made a slackbot that crawls events across the world for my product. Then I made an application for tracking my syndication efforts using Cassandra for storage, but it wasn’t GDPR compliant so it was never placed live. I recently put together a Kubernetes trivia game from a mass of codepens strung together that is on IBM Coder. I am currently focused on building an RPG game in Gamemaker Studio.

There are a lot of areas I’m passionate about, including edge computing and security. I get to do them all. It’s a fun job. I like the marketing side as well—especially the guerrilla marketing aspect—and making things friendly to developers.

What developer communities do you participate in and why?

StackOverflow (SO) because of things like spaCy NLP, or dumb mishaps with responsive design, or figuring out issues I’ve encountered in development. SO is a saving grace for time

spent troubleshooting, for sure. Also Dev.to (it's just fresh), Codepen, Smashing Magazine, Feedly—I love all of these websites on the regular. I use to be on Medium reading a lot, but the changes in the paywall made me stop visiting the website.

I love Udemy. I know a lot of developers have backlashed against Udemy, but I know a ton of developers who have benefited from Udemy, too. I have over 200 courses on that platform. I like the variety of time length on the courseware and the volume of courses offered. I am a huge, huge fan of CodeAcademy, which has taught me a ton. I have a Premium account on there. I also have an account on C9 IDE and use Plunker regularly when I just want to try something out real quick.

I like [IRC](#)—channels there like freenode. I also like to go to [CodeProject](#) for info.

What is the newest tech you are using, learning, and/or excited/curious about?

Edge computing. Anything to reduce dizziness and that sinking feeling in the stomach when playing an immersive VR game gets a check mark from me. Also, anyone who has played The Sims or Elder Scrolls as a PC gamer knows about the terrors of latency and slow frame refresh rates, and will appreciate the benefits. C# with Gamemaker Studio 2 engine as well.

I have played Earthbound (Mother 2) most summers of my life and have a huge passion for homebrew games and 2D design. Actually, I just bought a custom Gameboy Advance with AGS 101 brighter screen mod and a built-in brightness adjuster for playing the Mother 3 fan-translation game. I am making a game in Gamemaker about a girl named Aqua that I built by

the pixel. I'm experimenting with Adobe Illustrator as well as doing small Unity projects.

Where do you go for info about developer tools?

That's Google Search to GitHub, basically. I have 100+ stars in GitHub. I like searching GitHub and landing on a project that looks interesting and reading its README. I also use Udemy courseware introducing the tools to simplify a process, Makerspace meetups on web development or machine learning, and my development mentors at my company.

I've done a lot of Capture-the-Flag exercises for security, and Google dorking is one of the first things you learn to do intelligently. Usually, I wind up in GitHub. I stay pretty loyal to my tools. I use Plunker for my browser IDE. If I want to experiment with a new program or setting up, I go to my cloud IDE, C9. If I'm doing actual development, I'll stay local and go with Sublime. I haven't transitioned to Atom. I just really like Sublime. I'm pretty loyal, unless I'm using a different operating system—then I might go to PyCharm or something.

What type of ads related to tools for your work attract your attention? Why?

I like text ads that don't have "Sponsored" by the text or that even remotely tell me they are ads. I don't like disclosure. I would rather the website look clean and beautiful than have little notes to me with opacity at 0.4 [saying] "Sponsored by" or "Sponsored Ad." I can and will preview that web address I'm being sent to and see where it goes.

I have a finite amount of things I can look at while working or outside of work every day in a few precious hours of time. I do not want to look at text telling me there is something there,

leading me somewhere else online when I know it's a link. I can lead myself and check the web address by myself if I want to visit that link.

I like ads that I don't feel like I need to run through VirusTotal before clicking when I look at the URL in preview as well. If it's an image ad, it needs to catch my eye, be futuristic or modern in design, or be colorful or fun.

I don't want the webpage I'm viewing to not look pretty! I don't want something that says "ad." Native advertising that fits in is my jam. I like it more if there is no disclosure. I click on it, and I figure it out. If it helped me, I don't care if it was an ad. I guess it reflects more of a front end design perspective, which is where my heart is.

Do you click on the ad or search the product/advertiser and view it on a separate browser instance instead?

I'm happy to click on the link. It has to do with how it looks. There are websites with questionable content where the dev community knows there might be viruses, so you might have to run it through VirusTotal. Different websites are known for not having great security. If I find content there, I'll check every single link.

But sites like CodeProject, they have high standards. In CodeProject, I'll click on the link because I know they care about their community. It's all about knowing who the publisher is and how the community views that publisher. I know if it's safe or unsafe to click.

How do you feel when you visit content or another site you are interested in, that was advertised to you, only to find that you have to give a phone number to get what was offered?

I think it's a scam. I don't examine if it was a scam or not, I just move on.

I've [given out a phone number], and the person on the line who's calling me, I feel like it's embarrassing for that employee. It's almost like I'm on the phone comforting them, because my first question is, "Why are you calling me?" Then they start stumbling, and then I find I'm comforting them. I think it makes it embarrassing for that company and that person calling me. I feel empathetic for the person on the other line.

I'll just ask them how their day is going, then say I'm not interested. I do think about why their company is making them do that. There's not even a relationship, and they are making their employees reach out to someone without giving them something constructive to work with.

Same as above—except when you are asked to give your credit card info?

I qualify the content and intention of why I am interested in the first place with the ad. How many hops are we talking about? If it happens in one click and opens an ad and asks for my credit card? [In that case,] any person is going to think twice about giving their credit card information. For APIs, I'll think about it pretty deeply. If there's a free tier, and then you're being charged—it has a pinch.

At what point do you navigate away when you visit content you want, but encounter a lot of requests for personal information? Email? Name? Phone number? Credit card? Other?

It's usually when it's the credit card and I qualify that I don't want it that badly. Sometimes I have even put pen to paper and done a pros and cons list.

Once this happens, how do you feel about that brand or product?

I feel disappointed or sad about the changing state of the internet. I appreciate open source technology and my websites that I know that have open source content. [I feel] apathetically indignant or affronted. It's like "Here you go, oh, I'm sorry, I'm taking it away." A lot of Medium's content has started doing that. I just stopped going there.

Have you ever found a technology and purchased it based on an ad run in your developer community? Why or why not?

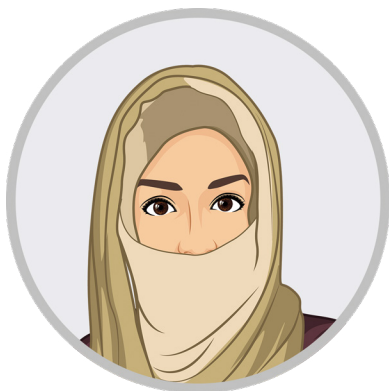
No, because normally purchases have been through corporate. But, if I'm onboarding a new tool, it's being presented to me by an instructor. That's how I got C9 actually. It was a development tool presented to me.

As ads go, whenever I see "Sponsored ad" I just roll my eyes. I haven't paid for the services from an ad. But if the tool is introduced in a course, then yeah, I'll get it if the instructor advises it. Essentially, based on a recommendation from another developer—that's when I purchase a tool.

Is there anything you'd like to say that I haven't asked?

I think companies are trying to be friendly to developers, but that gets lost in their business goals. But, I think things are changing about companies' attitudes toward developers, because developers are being seen more and more as decision makers. So the trend is that marketing and advertising is becoming more friendly to developers. Or, at least, that's what I hope.

Meet: Mehreen Tahir



We caught up with Mehreen Tahir, a software engineer from Pakistan who enjoys cooking and baking in her spare time. Her specialties, analytics and machine learning, reflect her interest in intelligent systems. Like many developers, she generally avoids ads, but trusts those in her developer community, [CodeProject](#). Here's what she had to say about herself and her experiences with advertising targeting developers.

First of all, how are you doing during the trying times of the pandemic?

Initially it was very hard for me. I was supposed to play in an inter-university squash tournament for my university when we went under lockdown, and the tournament was cancelled. I had to move back home from university, and none of it was pleasant. But eventually I adapted to the new routine, started working full time along with my studies, and now I can say that I've made my peace with the situation.

Tell us about yourself—where are you located, what is your job/role, what is your area of expertise, what are your hobbies/interests?

I grew up in Rabwah, Pakistan. It's a small but lovely city. I've lived at [sic] a few other places like Lahore, Pakistan and Virginia, USA, but I guess most of us are more attached to our hometowns.

I've been more into academics, mostly; crazy about grades and the dean's list, and I graduated at the top of my class. One of the best experiences was my exchange semester at ODU where I also had the opportunity to work in cyber security and cloud computing domains.

Most recently, I've been working as a Software Engineer. I've always been drawn to intelligent systems. Start off with raw data, all the way to using it for smart decision-making and you'll have my undivided attention. Analytics and Machine Learning will always be my pet areas in the field.

Aside from a hectic routine these days, I like to cook & bake whenever I find time. So if you ever want to have yummy cupcakes or brownies, just ping me. ;)

P.S. You will have to make coffee for me as well :D

Has COVID-19 caused you to use new or different ways to locate information about products? And if so, what are those new tools?

With COVID-19, the world is going more digital, but I don't think things have changed much for us developers. I used to locate information about products and services online even before COVID, so it's the same old, same old for me.

Why do you participate in your developer community?

I started participating in developer communities around 2 years back, and have been hooked ever since. I've always been passionate about sharing my knowledge and expertise with others. There's also the feeling you get when you wake up to a text/email [from someone] appreciating your work, or see a story about how it [my expertise] helped someone — it's indescribable. That indeed is a proud moment, and it doesn't hurt to be in the spotlight, right?

What's the newest tech you are using, learning, excited about, curious about?

Edge analytics. There's been a lot of work done in the domain of analytics and machine learning, but usually it requires a huge amount of computational resources, whereas we deal with resource constraint devices in our daily lives, mostly. Bringing machine learning to Edge devices will be a challenge, but so is the demand of the time. I'm planning on working with Edge analytics using serverless architecture, and might continue the project for my PhD as well.

Where do you go for info about developer tools?

Google search is always a yes! I mean, that's the first thing you learn as a developer, how to Google intelligently. GitHub has also been a great source of information lately. Usually when I come across some new developer tool, I like to go to GitHub and search for some interesting projects. Other than that, YouTube is a great free platform to learn about pretty much anything. No matter the topic or experience level, there will always be some guy talking about the tool or technology stack to help you through it. Udemy, Code Academy and LinkedIn Learning are amazing platforms to learn new tech stuff as well. Other than that, I read articles on Code Project and Medium.

I like to stay local when doing actual development. Anaconda comes in pretty handy when working with Machine Learning stuff. For other sorts of projects, I usually go with Visual Studio Code.

What ads attract you?

Ads are the most annoying thing on Earth. I mean, when I'm surfing the Web looking for something, I don't need an ad popping up asking me to subscribe or trying to redirect me to some other website. Static ads are still bearable, but I always have my ad blocker on and I just leave the site if asked to turn the ad blocker off.

If you listen to podcasts related to your work, how often and how many?

Lately I've had a pretty hectic routine working as a full-time Software Engineer while pursuing my master's, so I don't usually get time to listen to podcasts. It's usually just once or twice a month.

How do you feel about sponsored content if it is featured on podcasts?

From a marketer's perspective, sponsored podcasts allow you to gain awareness from listeners without having to put time and effort into creating your own content from scratch, which is good.

Do you click on the ad or search the product/advertiser you see in the ad on a separate browser instance?

That highly depends on how the ad is presented and the kind of product/service being advertised. From developer communities like [CodeProject](#), you know you can trust the

link, so yes, I might click on it, but in other communities, my hesitation would automatically double, since there's a higher chance for a spam link.

How do you feel when you visit content or another site you are interested in, that was advertised to you, only to find that you have to give a phone number to get what was offered?

Why do you even need my phone number? I wouldn't have cared a few years back, but then I started receiving so many advertising messages — so now, please keep your services. I'm not giving away my phone number. I like my phone silent better.

Same as above — except about your credit card info?

100x worse. My credit card info is even more precious to me than my phone number.

At what point do you navigate away when you visit content you want, but encounter a lot of requests for personal information? Email? Name? Phone number? Credit card? Other?

Sometimes right away if I don't want it that badly. But usually at credit card info.

Once this happens, how do you feel about that brand or product?

I feel like asking for too much personal information only makes the brand or product lose customers. Because once I move away, I'm usually never coming back unless it's a do-or-die situation.

In what situation are you more likely to try a new product and why (e.g., Seeing an engaging ad, having someone you follow and trust mention it on social media, hearing about the product at a conference, a combination, or something else)?

If I hear about the product at a conference or if the situation calls for it. I'm usually trying out new things because of my diverse interests, so if something intrigues me, I'm definitely trying it out.

Have you ever found a technology and purchased it based on an ad run in your developer community? Why or why not?

I've purchased and worked with a few technologies for my office work, but nothing for my personal use so far. You're mostly provided with technologies to work with either in a work setting or in academics, so I've never felt the need to.

What We Learned

There are as many stories as there are developers. However, there are a few key things you can take with you.

First and foremost is that developers love their developer communities. They are motivated to give back to a forum that helps them. Devs love to see companies support their community. Showing up in a developer-to-developer community is a huge statement that you value what they value.

Developers don't always click on banners, but they will open a new browser instance and search for your product, especially if it is a banner ad that supports their developer community. They don't like pop-up ads. Once they land on your site, the key is to provide them with the information they need, and this is where having deeply technical content written by developer practitioners just like them works in your favor.

Developers are motivated to purchase by content quality and relevance—especially content that walks them through how to improve their development experience or final product. Offer content that tells a compelling technical story like product documentation, code level blog posts, and white papers.

Deliver content that gives and doesn't take. Generosity is rewarded. Use paywalls judiciously—and if you ask for too much information up front, you risk being ignored. Build trust by being open and generous with your content. Then, developers will consume and act on your content.

About DeveloperMedia

DeveloperMedia's mission is to be part of both the advertising and software development communities, acting as a bridge between advertisers, brand marketers, and developers. We strive to help companies deliver the most effective and influential messages to software developers to connect software and hardware vendors with developers to foster a positive, informative and respectful conversation.

We offer an accomplished group of creative and technical minds, focused on building excellence in technical marketing, creativity, and technology to ultimately deliver excellence in the ad experience.

We offer developer-focused advertising and marketing solutions with multiple campaign elements, such as display banners, newsletter insertion placement, email blasts, content marketing, community thought leadership engagement, social amplification, and lead generation.

Talk to us to learn how you can engage with millions of developers.

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