

Building and Scaling Developer Marketing

How to effectively reach and convert developer audiences

Developer marketing presents unique challenges and opportunities in today's tech landscape. This guide offers strategies and insights for effectively reaching and converting developer audiences through authentic, value-driven approaches.

About the Authors

Manuel and Karl are the owners of Draft.dev, a Content Creation Agency for Technical Companies. We help Marketing and Developer Relations teams in tech businesses **drive awareness, capture leads, and build trust**.



In the last 15 years, Manuel has helped small and large businesses build lead engines based on content marketing that generated millions of unique visitors per year, driving thousands of marketing-qualified leads every month, helping generate millions of dollars and 1,000s of customers.



Ever since he started a 50-person campus news blog in college, Karl has been obsessed with writing content. After spending 8 years as an engineering leader at venture-funded tech startups in Chicago, he went on to start Draft.dev, helping companies reach software developers through content marketing.

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Understanding Developer Marketing

The perception that developers resist marketing isn't entirely accurate. Developers—like most savvy buyers—resist aggressive, ineffective marketing tactics, but with hundreds of thousands of software developers out there, generalizations rarely apply and would be naive.

The Developer Landscape Has Changed

Developers have gained significant purchasing influence and recognition within organizations of all sizes. Because skilled developers represent valuable talent that's difficult to recruit and retain, companies understand the importance of investing in tools that enhance their productivity and job satisfaction. Simultaneously, the developer tools ecosystem has expanded dramatically in recent years. Whereas a decade ago developers primarily worked with basic IDEs and physical servers, today's landscape features countless higher-level abstractions and subscription-based services. Today's developers purchase specialized tools for code testing, team collaboration, deployment management, and database operations.

The Key Challenge: Making Your Developer Marketing Strategy Stand Out

While companies have improved their developer outreach capabilities and the developer audience continues to grow, marketers must still differentiate their messaging in this specialized space.

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The foundation of effective developer marketing lies in genuineness and audience comprehension. **Authenticity and understanding who you are engaging with is key.**

This requires spending meaningful time with developers—whether online or in-person—to understand their thought processes and communication styles regarding purchased services.

Software developers often are well-connected. Though they may appear reserved behind monitors and headphones, they engage actively in forums and other communities. This means viral distribution and peer recommendations via word-of-mouth play as crucial a role in developer marketing as in any other field.

Effective Tactics For Marketing to Software Developers

To reach developers, you need to educate, help, and generally understand their challenges. Based on these principles, here are the **most impactful developer marketing strategies** to implement:

1. Event Marketing

While the format of meetups and conferences has evolved substantially recently, in-person events remain among the most visible developer marketing channels. Several approaches exist:

- **Speaking at events:** This provides a starting point, but avoid excessive promotion as conference organizers discourage overtly sales-focused presentations.

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- **Sponsoring events:** This increases developer exposure, though some attendees may approach sponsored messaging with skepticism.
- **Attending events:** This offers limited reach but facilitates valuable one-on-one developer conversations.
- **Running your own events:** This represents the highest cost option, but provides complete control over messaging, design, and execution. Major organizations like Amazon utilize multiple approaches including speaking engagements, sponsorships, and proprietary events, though this comprehensive event strategy exceeds the resources of most early-stage companies.

2. Written Content

Developer-focused content marketing encompasses several formats:

- **Documentation:** Critical for sophisticated products, though rarely leveraged as a marketing channel.
- **[Tutorials and guides:](#)** Demonstrate practical product applications and complement documentation resources.
- **Awareness-driving content:** Written to increase the top of your funnel, often published on external partner sites like Dev.to, HackerNoon, and DZone.
- **[Blog posts:](#)** Allow you to engage readers and increase newsletter sign-ups. All developer content must deliver genuine value through education or problem-solving; superficial content won't resonate with technical audiences. The most successful developer content comes from technical authors. Most organizations adopt one of these approaches:

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- Get their in-house engineers to write
- Hire full-time developer advocates
- Start a community writing program
- Hire freelance writers or work with [specialized technical content agencies](#)

DigitalOcean exemplifies excellence in written content strategy, having published thousands of developer-authored tutorials supported by dedicated editorial teams. While this content production approach requires investment and you might think the returns are only being delivered gradually over time, if you can play the long game, there's tremendous value in it. Just think about a well performing “evergreen blog post” bringing in as much consistent, guaranteed website traffic in month 4 as it does in month 40 of its lifetime.

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3. Video Content

Global video streaming consumption continues rising, including within developer communities. While most existing technical video content targets entry-level concepts and newer developers, substantial opportunities exist for marketing teams to create content addressing advanced topics and specialized niches.

Quality [developer video content](#) typically requires greater production and distribution investment than written materials, but this format's popularity continues growing as an enduring marketing asset that compounds in value over time.

4. Community-driven Marketing

Communities play a central role in developer marketing. Platforms like Stack Overflow, Discourse forums, Slack channels, and local meetups enable your user community to discuss and reinforce their support for your product.

The primary challenge with community-based developer marketing lies in requiring a substantial or particularly dedicated user base for effectiveness. It rarely functions as an initial go-to-market strategy.

The advantage of community marketing lies in its cost-efficiency, as it essentially empowers existing customers to advocate on your behalf. Community members can also create content and deliver presentations supporting your product, integrating smoothly with other marketing initiatives.

Microsoft has made significant investments in community marketing through programs like the Microsoft MVP award, recognizing engineers who create

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content and speak about Microsoft technologies to inspire similar activities from other enthusiasts.

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5. Social Media

Developers maintain active presences on social platforms including X (formerly Twitter), Hacker News, Reddit, and LinkedIn. Both paid and organic social strategies can work, though ad-blocking technologies may reduce paid campaign effectiveness with technical audiences.

Building organic followings requires time investment, though participation in prominent discussions on platforms like Hacker News and Reddit can accelerate this process (with sensitivity to these communities' heightened awareness of marketing activities).

6. Open-source Marketing

Even if your company doesn't employ open source as its fundamental business model, open source can function effectively as a marketing instrument. Possible approaches include:

- Release adapters as open-source packages to allow users to help spot bugs and maintain client-side code
- Release open-source side projects to generate interest in your primary paid project

While this creates additional maintenance responsibilities for you, open-source marketing builds credibility within developer communities.

Automattic represents a successful implementation of this approach, offering the core WordPress.org platform as an open-source solution while generating

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revenue via Wordpress.com from users seeking managed hosting and maintenance services.

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Tips for Marketing to Software Developers

1. **Be authentic and genuinely helpful.** Developers are smart, and they know when they're being sold to.
2. **Spend time with them online or offline.** The best marketers know their audience extremely well, and the only way to do that is to mingle with them.
3. **Learn the language of software development.** Even if you can't write code, learn key terminology: APIs, backend, frontend, database, HTTP, test, etc.
4. Go deep in your content rather than skimming the surface. **Experienced** developers appreciate technical depth, which is hard to find online.
5. **Freemium and trial offers work well with a bottoms-up approach.** Get developers using your tool on small side projects so they feel confident bringing it to work.

Scaling Developer Content

As described above, when done well, [technical content](#) helps you build trust, reach new customers, mitigate support requests, and augment your sales process.

Knowing this, you might wonder what the optimal content production volume and frequency might be, and whether increased content creation correlates directly with traffic and conversion growth.

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The Correlation Between Content Volume and Traffic

Here's what several successful developer-focused companies have achieved:

Company	Content Volume	Monthly Visitors
Strapi	1-2 posts per week	150,000
Redpanda	3-4 posts per week	100,000*
ContainIQ (sold in 2023)	3-5 posts per week	200,000
Earthly.dev	3-5 posts per week	230,000
LambdaTest	5 posts per week	>1,000,000*
Twilio	10-15 posts per week	>3,700,000*
DigitalOcean	10-20 posts per week	>5,000,000*

**Estimates based on previously published data, Ahrefs, and/or SimilarWeb.*

Publication frequency represents just one traffic generation factor. All these organizations have consistently published high-quality content for minimum two-year periods, with Twilio and DigitalOcean maintaining these efforts for over five years. If you're interested in how Earthly.dev achieved these visitor numbers, learn more in our case study about [how Earthly increased its monthly blog visitors by 346%](#) and ramped up its content production with Draft.dev

Raw visitor metrics don't encompass all business objectives. Content attracting 1,000 monthly visitors without conversions delivers less value than content bringing 100 visitors with 25% conversion rates.

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Notably, companies experiencing success with developer content typically increase their investment in this strategy as they grow.

When Should You Scale Developer Content?

Consider these three factors when determining appropriate content production volume:

1. Your Goals and Timeline

Your content volume needs depend on your specific objectives and timeline:

- If you want your content to position your brand as a "thought leader" and have a long timeline, publishing one or two pieces per month from your executive team may suffice.
- If you want to rank #1 on Google for competitive industry terms and to generate 100,000+ pageviews within 12 months, you'll need to publish 3-5 high-quality pieces weekly.

Nate Matherson, former CEO of ContainIQ (acquired in 2023), published 225 pieces of content in just 14 months, resulting in over 200,000 monthly visitors.

Content efforts compound over time. Early on, you'll put in much more work than you see in results, but with consistency and strategy, you'll see exponential growth. This creates a significant competitive advantage that can't be replicated overnight.

"It took us about three months to get to 10k visitors per month, about six months to get to 50k visitors per month, and about 12 months to get to 150k visitors per month." – **Nate Matherson, CEO of ContainIQ (acquired, 2023) and Positional**

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2. Your Product and Customer

Content requirements vary based on product characteristics, customer profiles, and purchasing cycles:

- If you're an early-stage startup selling a high-ticket product to C-level executives at large companies, you might need just a few pieces of content to support your sales efforts.
- If you're pursuing a bottoms-up strategy targeting practitioners or implementing product-led growth, you'll need substantial content that ranks well in search engines, gets shared on social media, and serves as a valuable resource for users (i.e. product tutorials and documentation).

3. Your Budget and Team Strengths

Practical constraints based on financial resources and team capabilities influence content production capacity. Technical content typically costs 2-3 times more than standard marketing content.

Organizational processes also impact output potential. **If executive approval is required for each content piece, this will likely heavily restrict output.**

Will You Run Out of Topics to Create?

A frequent concern involves exhausting relevant content topic ideas. However, valuable opportunities to create helpful content for your audiences always exist, which explains why leading developer-focused brands typically increase publication frequency as they scale.

Consider these content categories:

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1. **Keyword-focused content** capturing all relevant terms in your niche, then expanding to related areas
2. **Product-focused content** explaining how it works, why you built it, how customers use it
3. **Opinion-driven content** to differentiate your brand and define your voice
4. **Customer-focused content** including case studies, testimonials, industry news
5. **Different media formats** including [video](#), [audio \(podcasts\)](#), and [social media](#)
6. **[Syndication partnerships](#)** cross-publishing on Dev.to, Medium, or paid collaborations
7. **Content updates** as tutorials get outdated, best practices change, and new competitors emerge

"We have to refresh content nearly every week, to ensure that past content is still relevant. This is especially true for tutorials, where we have to ensure the latest updates in tech or feature changes are incorporated." – **Mudit Sigh, Director of Marketing at LambdaTest**

When committing to content as a growth strategy, prepare for consistent, multi-year investment. The outcomes can be remarkable – representing one of the most predictable long-term marketing channels – but require sustained commitment.

Conclusion

Effective developer marketing requires a multifaceted approach built on three foundational principles: **authenticity, comprehensive audience understanding, and consistent delivery of high-value content**. The developer landscape has fundamentally changed, with technical professionals wielding increased

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purchasing influence and a proliferation of specialized tools designed specifically for their needs.

To succeed in this competitive space, organizations should implement a strategic mix of marketing tactics tailored to developer preferences. Event marketing provides direct engagement opportunities through speaking engagements, sponsorships, or proprietary events. Written content—particularly when created by technical experts—builds credibility through documentation, tutorials, and thought leadership. Video content addresses the growing demand for visual learning experiences, while community-driven initiatives transform users into advocates.

Social media engagement on developer-frequented platforms creates ongoing conversation opportunities, and open-source initiatives demonstrate commitment to collaborative innovation. Throughout all these approaches, maintaining genuine helpfulness, technical accuracy, and depth of insight remains paramount.

Scaling developer content presents both challenges and opportunities. The data demonstrates a clear correlation between consistent, high-quality content production and substantial traffic growth over time, though organizations must align production volume with specific business objectives, customer profiles, and operational capabilities. The compounding nature of content marketing creates significant competitive advantages for early adopters willing to maintain disciplined investment over extended periods.

By focusing on creating genuinely valuable resources, engaging authentically with developer communities, and strategically scaling content production, organizations can build powerful marketing engines that differentiate their offerings in the increasingly competitive developer tools landscape.

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Ready to elevate your developer marketing strategy? At Draft.dev, we specialize in creating high-quality technical content that resonates with developer audiences and drives measurable growth for technical companies.

Our team of expert technical writers, experienced editors, and marketing strategists understands the unique challenges of reaching and converting developer audiences. Whether you're looking to launch a new content initiative, scale your existing developer marketing program, or refine your technical content strategy, we can help.

Visit [Draft.dev](https://draft.dev) today to learn how our specialized technical content agency can help you build authority, generate qualified leads, and establish trust with developer audiences. [Book a Discovery Call with us](#) to discuss how we can craft a customized content strategy that aligns with your specific business goals and technical audience needs.

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