

BEYOND LEAD GENERATION

# A Primer on Developer Marketing

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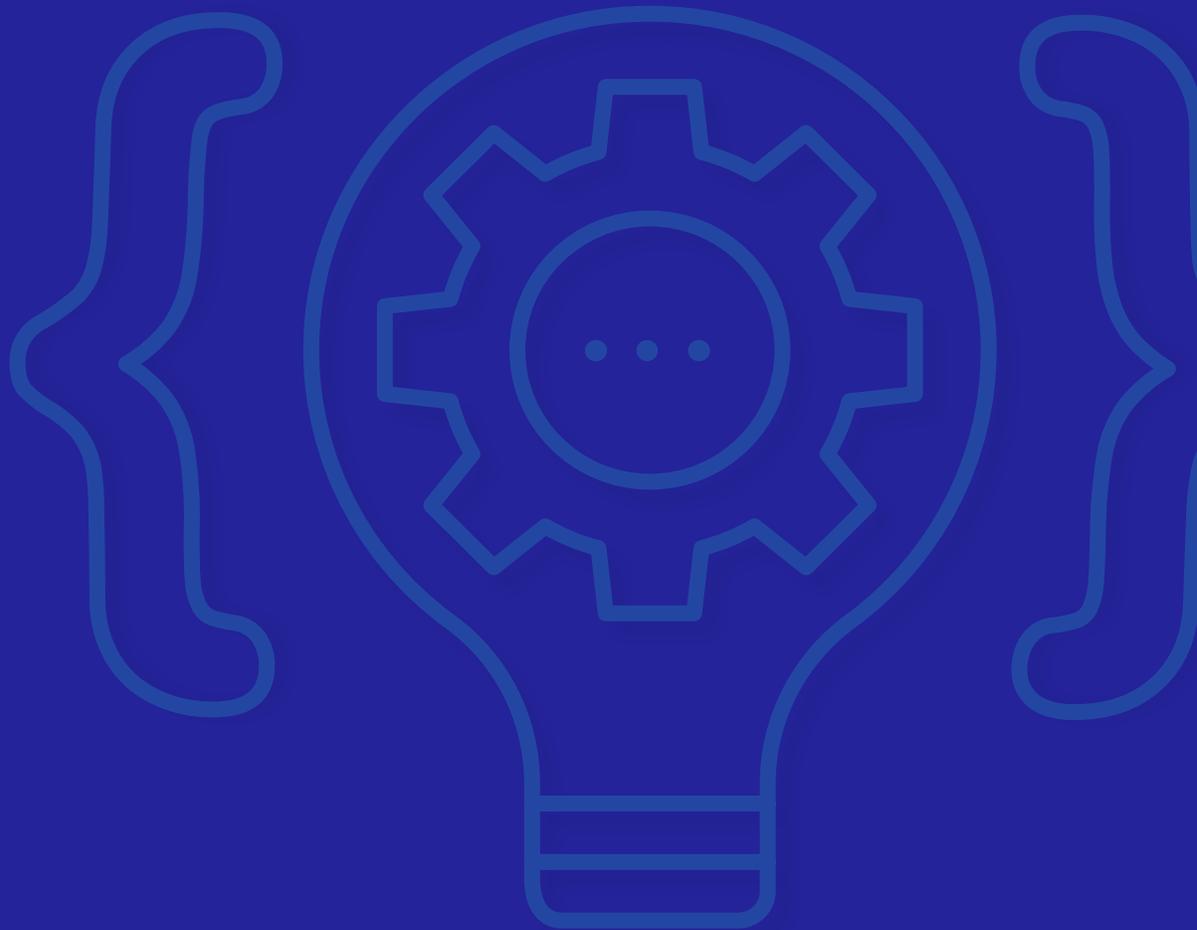
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As recently as 2012, venture capitalist Semil Shah described [business-to-developer \(B2D\) sales as a new market](#). He added that, “All kinds of developers, wielding their own newfound brand of market power, are eager to pay for tools and services that help them save time, automate tasks, and provide savings that could be enjoyed by their companies and/or customers.” Soon after, companies began experimenting with different strategies to attract new “leads.” In some cases, [they adopted B2B go-to-market strategies](#) to engage with developers.

We’ve learned about developer marketing since then. While most [lead generation best practices](#) can be applied to a variety of audiences, developers tend to be more wary of them. The good news is that [60% of respondents to our 2018 Developer Survey](#) said that they are OK with the concept of advertising. The challenge for advertisers is that only 5% said that they’re swayed by tactics such as free offers in ads.

Does this mean that advertising to developers requires you to throw out your tried-and-true marketing playbook? Not quite. This guide will walk you through a few subtle changes that can turn your traditional lead generation strategy into a powerful, two-way relationship with your target developer audience.

# Rethinking the Lead Generation Playbook

The basic concepts behind HubSpot's guide on lead generation are fairly simple to understand. At first glance, it's hard to see why these tactics wouldn't work with developer audiences. In fact, some of the most successful developer marketing campaigns leverage the mechanics that drive this lead generation guide.

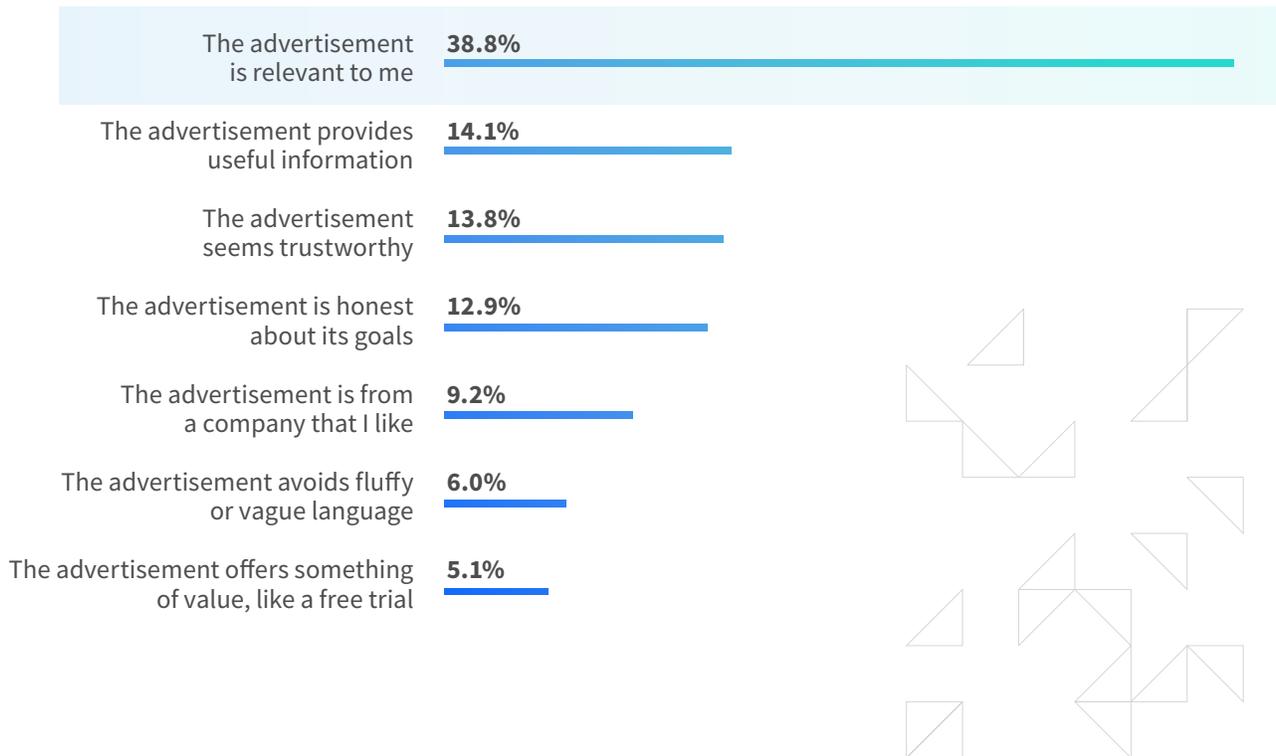
In this section of the guide, we'll take a look at how some of the most common advertising assets can be tweaked to generate developer leads, as well as some of the mistakes you should avoid.

## ✓ Ad Copy

Recently, we ran a very quick Google search for "best examples of online ads." Many of the examples we found featured ad copy that was either imaginative, snappy, or even sarcastic in tone. Experts also frequently suggested that [clever headlines are critical](#) to an ad campaign's success.

Based on what we learned in our 2018 Developer Survey, this is not the case when you advertise to developers. As you can see in the chart below, respondents were outspoken about making the advertisement relevant to them.

### Ad Priorities for Developers



However, this does not mean that display ads shouldn't be part of your lead generation strategy. While 55% of B2B marketers say that a deal takes [longer than 3 months to close](#), thoughtfully crafted banner ads have proven to increase trust in a brand, educate developers, and ultimately support the path to conversion.

Ian Barber, Editor of Dev Prod, says that there are [two keys to writing effective ad copy for developers](#). "The text of the ads is generally to the point, and the placement unoffensive," Barber adds. "You see similar behavior on Reddit and Stack Overflow: companies buying display to enhance brand recognition, and show alignment with the programming community in question."



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- Ian Barber, Editor of Dev Prod

Barber's suggestion for writing ad copy for developers is similar to the formula we suggested in a previous guide. When in doubt, **get straight to the point** and communicate a clear **problem statement**. Additionally, take note of the amount of text in your ads. WordStream found that the most effective banner ads are written at [around a 9th grade reading level](#).

Below you'll find an example of how you might edit ad copy that is very broad and narrow the focus.

#### BAD EXAMPLE

"Want to build better Android apps? Our platform enables you to launch them in mere minutes!"

#### GOOD EXAMPLE

"Looking to improve the load time of video content in your Android app? Try our app for free today."

## ✓ Landing Pages

Landing pages are an essential part of any lead generation program, but few marketers agree on the characteristics of a successful landing page. For instance, Formstack once found that the highest-converting landing pages have [a whopping 11 fields](#). On the other hand, Wordstream's research suggests that conversion rates [drop off significantly after 7 fields](#).

The benefits to a detailed landing page form are obvious. Each time someone completes the form, your sales and marketing team would acquire an incredible amount of information about that person. The challenge in developer marketing is that programmers don't see the value in stepping away from code to complete most landing page forms.

We showed the following landing page examples to Aurelien Gasser, a Developer here at Stack Overflow. Then, we asked him a simple question: which one of these would you be more likely to complete?

EXAMPLE 1	EXAMPLE 2
<b>Get a free trial today!</b>	<b>Get a free trial today!</b>
Name:	Name:
Email:	Email:
Job Title:	Job Title:
Phone Number:	
Company:	
Number of Employees:	

Gasser was quick to select Example 2. "Because it only requires a little bit of information, I'm more likely to complete it with my actual information," he explained. "But if something I wanted to download was behind a longer form like Example 1, I'd fill in fake information. In fact, I have a separate email account for those instances."

Developers typically end up on a landing page when they're searching for a solution to a coding challenge in real-time. With that in mind, we often suggest that a developer's email address should be the only required piece of information. Although this likely makes the sales process a little more difficult, developers are more receptive to brands that are actively engaged in the programming community and offer valuable tools—even in marketing materials.

## ✓ Content

The phrase "content is king" frequently appears in articles, keynote speeches, and guides like this one. Its roots can be traced back to a [1996 essay](#) by Bill Gates in which he wrote, "Computer software is a form of content—an extremely important one, and the one that for Microsoft will remain by far the most important."

This statement resonates with developers today. What does this mean for your technical content marketing strategy and how you use it to generate leads? There are two content marketing considerations we'll take a much closer look at: content length and content promotion.

## Content Length

Polly Alluf, VP of Marketing at Rookout, recently shared some of the [developer marketing lessons she learned](#) with The Next Web. One of her suggestions for her colleagues was to be long and to the point.



Developers appreciate long-form posts that top 1500 words, as long as they help resolve challenging issues and save them time in the long run. Sure, their time is precious, but if you incorporate usable scripts, many will stick with the post and read all the fine print.

- Polly Alluf, VP of Marketing at Rookout

Much like the debate over landing page fields, marketers typically don't agree on the ideal length of a blog post or whitepaper. But when it comes to technical content, think less about maximum word counts and be intentional about creating quality content. Not only will this approach lead you to create more valuable assets for your target audience, but [long-form content tends to rank better in organic search](#) results because it has more substance.

## Content Promotion

Earlier we looked at an example of a landing page that directed developers to sign up for a free trial. In a traditional B2B lead generation strategy, content such as whitepapers and ebooks are also gated by a landing page.

But when you're marketing to developers, should content (specifically, product-related documentation) also be gated by a landing form, even if it just requires an email address? According to Tom Wentworth, the answer is a resounding no.



Eventually we liberated all of our great documentation and you know what? All the developers who converted via our documentation forms ended up converting somewhere else on our site – webinars, product trials, etc – if they were really interested. None of our metrics went down.

- Tom Wentworth, CMO at RapidMiner

Wentworth's lesson highlights one of the keys to lead generation in developer marketing. Because developers tend to be so aware of modern marketing tactics, it's important understand how a typical lead generation strategy might harm your brand. Gating technical content might increase the number of "leads" you generate, but it could also make developers less likely to engage with your offering in the future.

# Building a Community Instead of a CRM

We've spent quite a bit of time rethinking traditional lead generation strategies for developers. We've also explored some of the "why" behind these tweaks to your marketing playbook. But there's still one major reason why it's worth creating specific "lead generation" campaigns for technical audiences: the developer community is passionate and when your marketing resonates with them, its members often do a lot of the hard work for you.

Mike Stowe, Director of Community at Tigera, highlighted a few brands that are facing [increased competition for developers' attention](#) after years of being the best (and often only) example of their offerings. "The simple truth is that providing a great service and being 'present' are not enough to build a strong developer relations program," Stowe argues. "The new model of developer relations can't rely on a 'company out' model. It has to be a 'community in' model."

Developers have made it abundantly clear that advertisers can (and should) engage directly with the community. But where do you begin? Let's discuss a few ways that you can increase brand awareness by monitoring discussions about your company on Stack Overflow.

## ✓ Supporting Your Marketing Goals on Stack Overflow

There are three key tactics that we've seen enable advertisers to engage with developers and increase the number of "leads" in their pipelines:

- Following and monitoring your topic tags on Stack Overflow
- Recruiting your developers to answer relevant questions
- Creating a clear line of support for developers on the site

### Following and Monitoring Your Tags on Stack Overflow

There are over 1500 pages of tags on Stack Overflow (over 54,000 individual topic tags). Many brands even have product-specific topic tags on the site.

The screenshot shows the Stack Overflow interface for the 'javascript' tag. At the top, it says 'Public questions tagged [javascript]' with an 'Ask Question' button. Below this is a brief description of JavaScript and a 'Learn more...' link. There are buttons for 'Watch Tag', 'Ignore Tag', and 'Improve tag info'. The page shows 1,777,831 questions with filters for 'Newest', 'Active', and 'More'. Two questions are visible: 'How to style price color on webshop sale price' by Pete (21 votes, 5 answers) and 'How to select object value once is available?' by Markus Hayner (643 votes, 13 answers).

Take advantage of this and scan and subscribe to your product's topic tags, or any topic tags related to the programming languages that you've used to build your offering. The conversations that developers are having on the site will give you a clearer idea of what your target audience is struggling with at work and what types of content they're looking for.

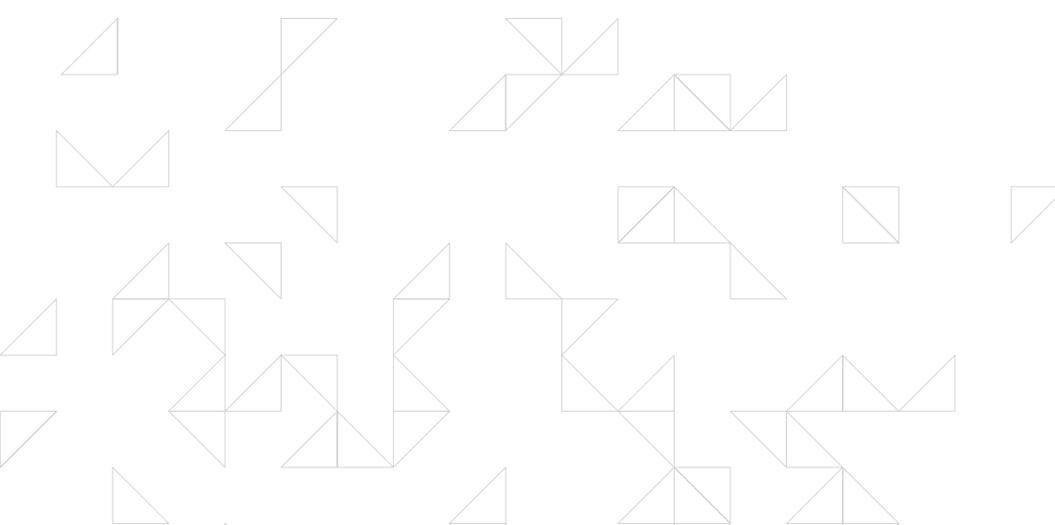
## Recruiting Your Developers to Answer Relevant Questions

As you scan your products' topic tags, you might notice that some information is outdated. You could come across a relevant article that isn't tagged correctly. Or you might even find that a developer's question has gone unanswered for an extended period. In either case, ask one of your current developers to respond without promoting your brand. Their peers on Stack Overflow will see that they're not being told to buy something, but that you are making an effort to add value to the discussion.

## Creating a Clear Line of Support for Developers on the Site

For many companies, Stack Overflow helps support their product. But it shouldn't be the only line of support. Giving developers clear guidelines on where to ask which types of questions not only creates goodwill in the community, but it also improves your brand's reputation.

TYPE OF QUESTION	WHERE TO ASK
How do I?	Stack Overflow (tell them what tags to use — your product and language at minimum)
Why did I get this error?	Stack Overflow
I got this error and I'm sure it's a bug	File an issue on your company's website
I have an idea/request	File an issue on your company's website
Why do you?	Your own developer forum or community site
When will you?	Your own developer forum or community site



# Conclusion

It's no secret that developers are a particularly challenging audience for advertisers. They understand the technologies that power the ads they see and are wary of many of the most popular marketing tactics. But if done correctly, banner ads have proven to be an critical piece of any successful developer-marketing strategy. The tweaks that we discussed in this guide can help you generate more leads in the short-term, while improving your brand's reputation in the developer community over the long haul.

