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The Relationship Between Education and Developer Marketing

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The Relationship Between Education and Developer Marketing

Before you can begin to think about increasing product adoption or building a strong community, your developer marketing efforts need to be centered around one principle rule — your traditional marketing and sales strategies won't work with developers.

More than the typical technological whiz, developers have a keen eye for marketing fluff and superfluous jargon. If you throw industry buzzwords and imprecise product lingo in front of them, they'll quickly look elsewhere for legitimate help. In some instances, developers understand the problem better than your own marketing team, so saying assumptive benefit statements (about your product) risks coming off as tone deaf or naive.

If traditional marketing strategies won't work, what will?

While developers don't want you to market or sell products to them in the traditional sense, they are eager to learn more about your products. Through an altruistic and educational approach to product marketing, one that genuinely tries to improve the developer's technical understanding of the product or software, organizations are more likely to increase developer adoption. In fact, 81% of developers participate in developer communities to discover new technologies and techniques, while 73% of them want software vendors to provide how-to articles and tutorials, which speaks to their desire to search for new products and how they want to learn about those products.

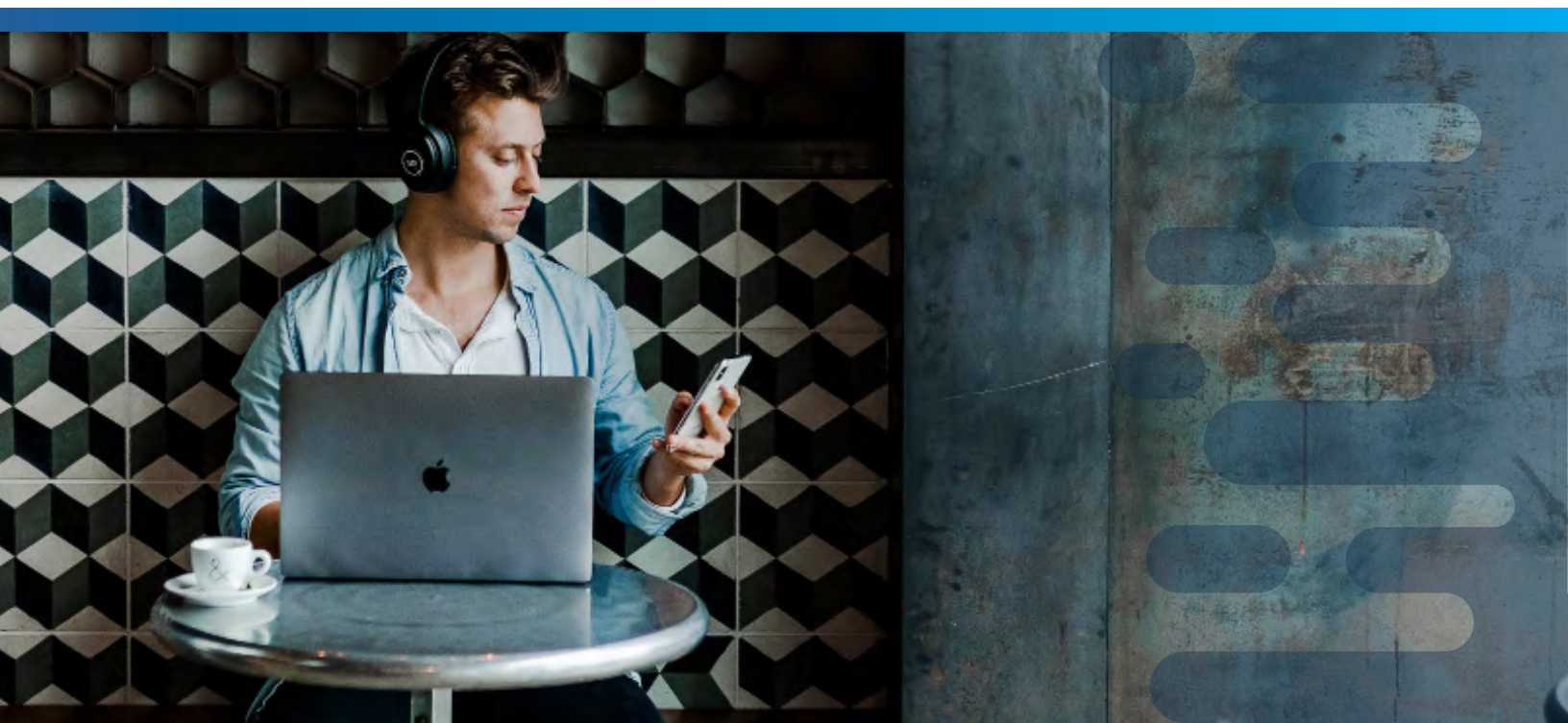**81% developers**

DISCOVER
new technologies
and techniques in
dev communities

73% developers

WANT
how-to articles
and tutorials

So when marketing to developers, your organization should strike an educational and informative tone. Similar to a coach, your material should focus on improving the individual developer by providing them with learning content and resources that will help them be better developers.

With that, let's jump into what successful developer education looks like and how software companies are providing better learning experiences that ultimately boost developer adoption, success, and usage.

First, Let's Set the Scene

If you've seen our Annual State of Developer Marketing Infographic, you're likely aware of the 'why' behind developer marketing. If you haven't, it's important that we quickly start by recapping the importance of developer marketing and its potential benefits before discussing how to execute on it.

What is developer marketing?

The Basics of Developer Marketing

[Developer marketing](#) isn't just marketing geared towards developers. It's the collection of principles, strategies, and tactics that companies use to increase their product's awareness, adoption, and advocacy across various technical audiences. When executed properly, it shows developers what your product can do. The desired outcome is that the developer solves a problem they are working on, hopefully with the help of your product.
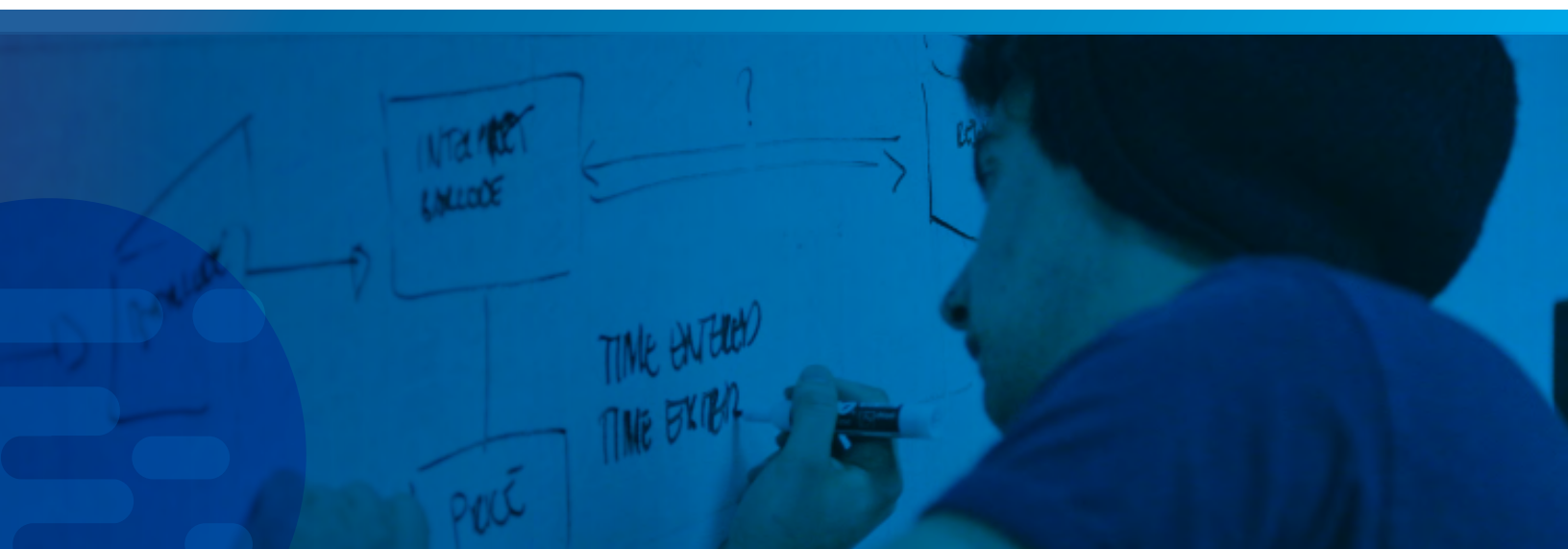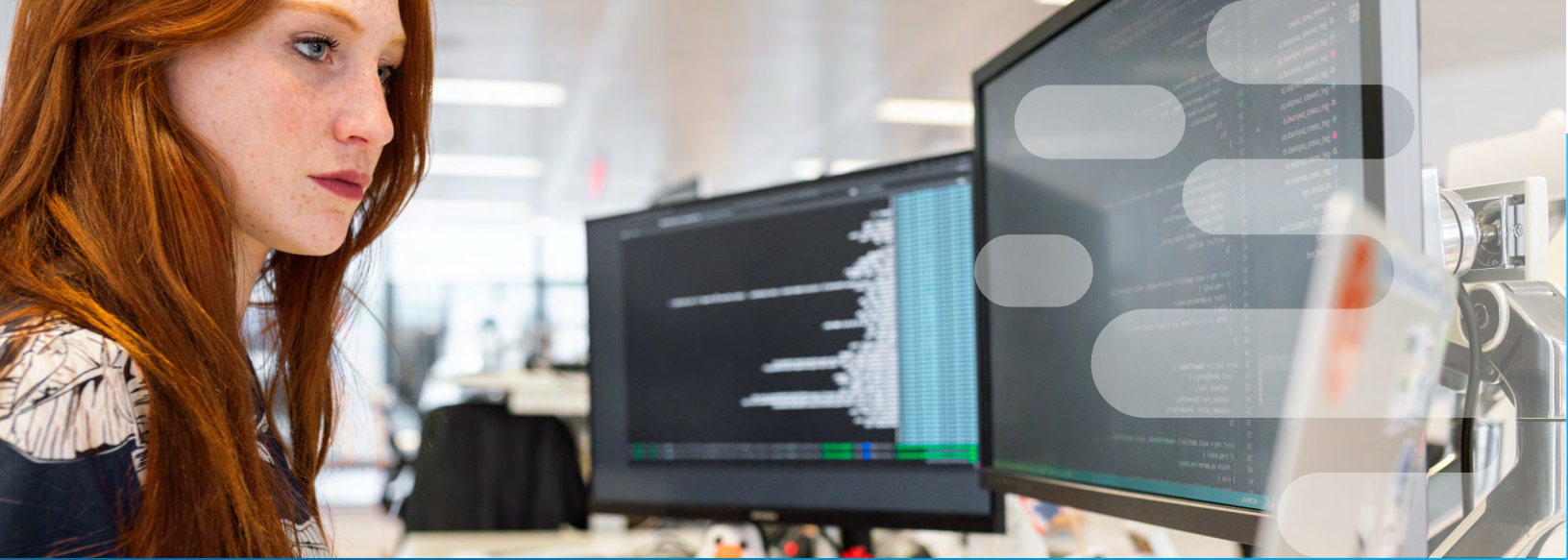
The Rising Influence
& Population of Developers

There are a lot of developers out there, and the population will only grow in the coming years. Today, there are an estimated 26.9 million software developers worldwide, with that number expected to grow to 45 million by 2030. On top of that, developers are becoming more involved in influencing purchasing decisions at their companies, making them a critical audience to resonate with. Stack Overflow reported that 57% of developers and technologists say they have a great deal of influence over technology purchases within their organization. On top of that, there are now over 1,000 developer-led companies distributing 1,286 product lines that collectively generate $49 billion in ARR, up 22% from 2020.

57%
developers

have strong influence over technology purchases

$49B
ARR

Developer-led companies generate $49 billion in annual recurring revenue (ARR)

Growth Expectation

| Software developers today	26.9M
Software developers by 2030	45M

The Opportunity That Exists

While it's clear that developers hold a lot of sway over purchasing decisions and the number of developers is steadily on the rise, developer marketing still isn't commonplace in most organizations. Only **43% of companies** have developer marketing teams and **55% of developer marketing or developer relations teams** have less than ten people on them. For software companies, this means developer marketing is still a valid way to differentiate your company's marketing efforts vs. your competitors.
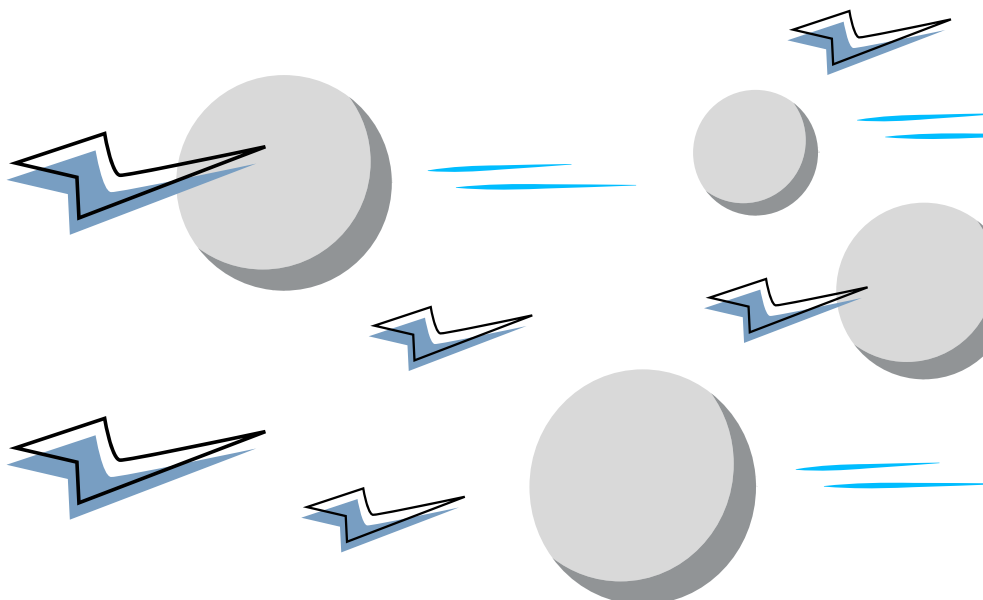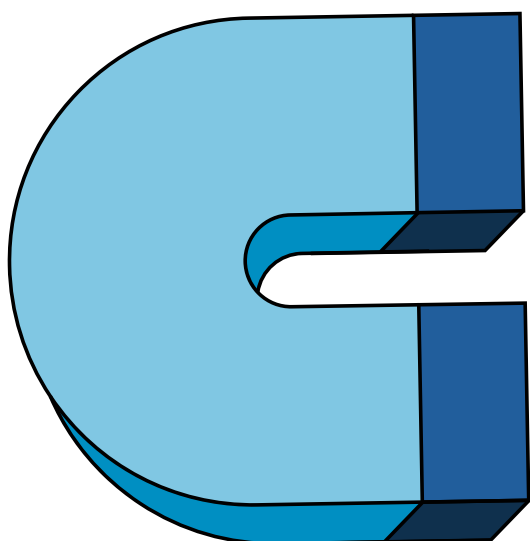
The Success That Developer-First Companies Have Achieved

Many software companies have demonstrated that embracing developer marketing as an effective means of increasing product adoption and usage is a worthwhile endeavor. Below are a few stories of developer-first companies and their successes.

Success Story #1

[Atlassian sold $320 million of software in 2015](#) using a product-led and developer-first marketing model (as opposed to the high-touch, high-cost traditional sales model).

Success Story #2

Stripe, Synk and MongoDB (with a combined ~$400 billion in market vaue) are companies that have succeeded with developers as their core audience ([Source](#)). Other successful developer-first companies include Twilio, Datadog, Elastic, [Chef Software](#), [Redis](#), [Kong HQ](#), [Dremio](#), GitHub, JFrog, PagerDuty, Cloudflare, and Stripe.

Developer Marketing Successes

Success Story #3

After embracing a developer-first marketing approach, Redis University grew to 5,500+ registered learners and 8,500+ course enrollments in the first 12 months after launch.

> What we have done is we've created a high-quality education program, but in reality, what this is is a sophisticated marketing program. While the altruistic thing is to give the best education, and we are truly committed to doing that, what we get is all of this information that we wouldn't have normally got through other means.
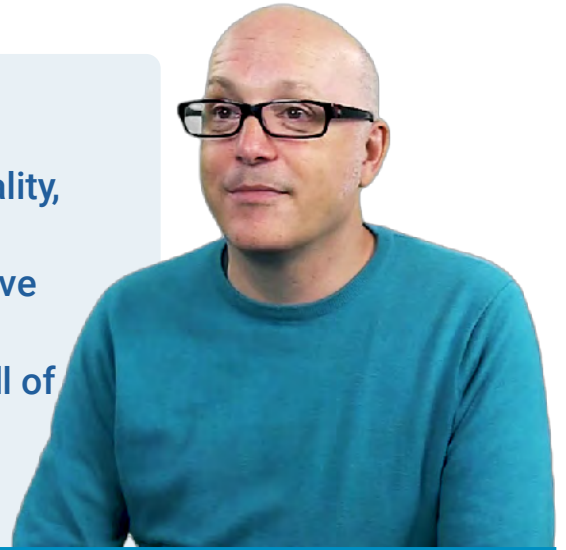
**Alvin Richards, Chief Learning Officer, Redis**

The Developer's "BS Meter" 🚫

The successes mentioned above, however, weren't achieved overnight nor were they achieved by overselling a product's functionality and features.

As more developer-first products are created, more marketing is being spent to try to capture this persona's buying power. As this happens, the "BS Meter" will ultimately go up. And for some developers, the "BS Meter" is already maxed-out as they sift through the sea of overhyped software solutions that don't actually help to solve their problems. So if your organization wants to keep its BS score low and position itself as a trusted product within the developer community, then take an education-first approach to attracting and engaging developers.

With that in mind, let's consider what type of educational content that fosters an effective developer learning experience. Again, educating developers on your product has to be done before you start trying to schedule demo requests into their calendars.

Educational Product Experiences

Overhyped Marketing

BS Meter
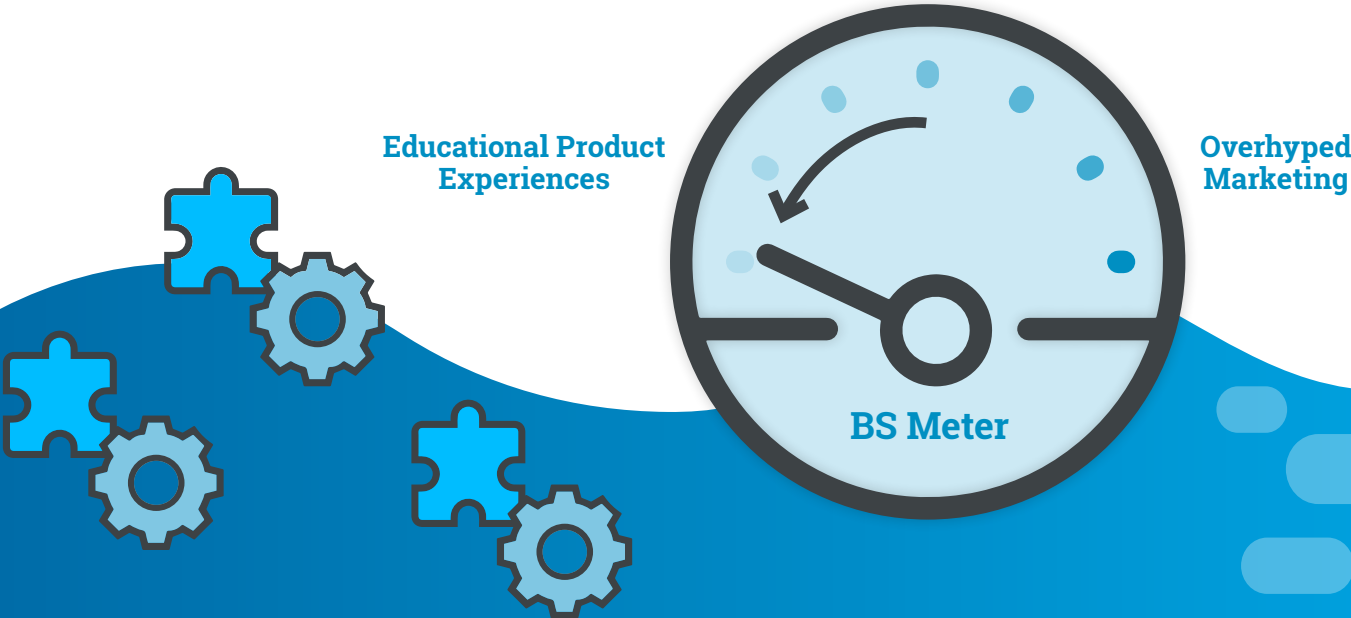
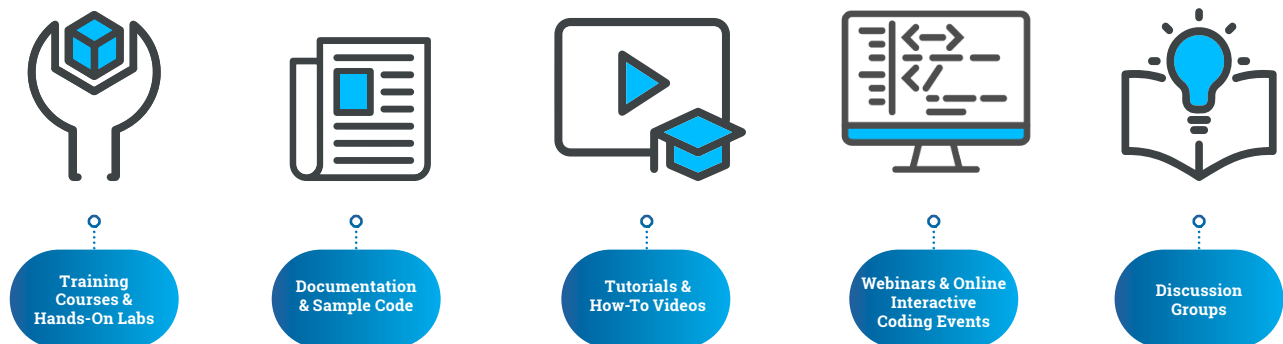# The Different Types of Educational Content for Developers

For software companies, it's easy enough to accept the benefits of a developer-first marketing approach, but actually executing on it is another story. Ultimately, your marketing efforts should center around the idea of educating developers, not selling products. Making developers' lives easier through insightful product knowledge and hands-on product sandboxes is what will earn their trust.

Adversely, overpromising on your product's capabilities won't just turn developers away. It may also lead them to share their negative feedback with colleagues and friends. So the concept of educating developers isn't just a marketing strategy, it should also be reflected in your tone and how you communicate product information to developers (i.e. share both the good and the bad).

Seventy-three percent (73%) of developers want software vendors to provide how-to articles, tutorials, APIs, SDKs, and a self-help knowledge base. With that in mind, these educational resources serve as the building blocks of an effective developer marketing program. But you also have additional options, like hands-on sandbox environments. Developers use sandbox environments to get real-life experience with your product, which is a key element that influences whether or not they will adopt your product and ultimately if they will purchase it.

Ultimately, your educational content needs to be organized in such a way that it highlights your product's value to developers. You're trying to resonate with a task-oriented and busy group of individuals, so make sure your educational content is frictionless and delivers value quickly.

Let's look more closely at the types of educational content you should consider when building your developer marketing program.

Training Courses & Hands-On Labs   **Documentation & Sample Code**   **Tutorials & How-To Videos**   **Webinars & Online Interactive Coding Events**   **Discussion Groups**

Training Courses & Hands-On Labs

Instructional videos and thorough documentation can only accomplish so much for developers. First-person experience with your product, however, will give them the best look at how your product actually works and whether or not it will help them solve the problem they are working on. For this reason, sandbox environments are a must-have for your developer marketing program.

Providing sandbox environments to developers will enable them to experience your product in action, improving the likelihood that they will understand how to use it and experience its benefits. Playing around with your product will also give them a better sense of how they can use it in a real-world coding project.

Supplementing your educational content with a sandbox environment allows developers to learn *and use your product simultaneously*, which improves knowledge retention and product adoption. And to ensure that your educational content and product sandboxes resonate with developers, design them towards the coding projects developers are working on, or to address the main questions your developer community has regarding your product.
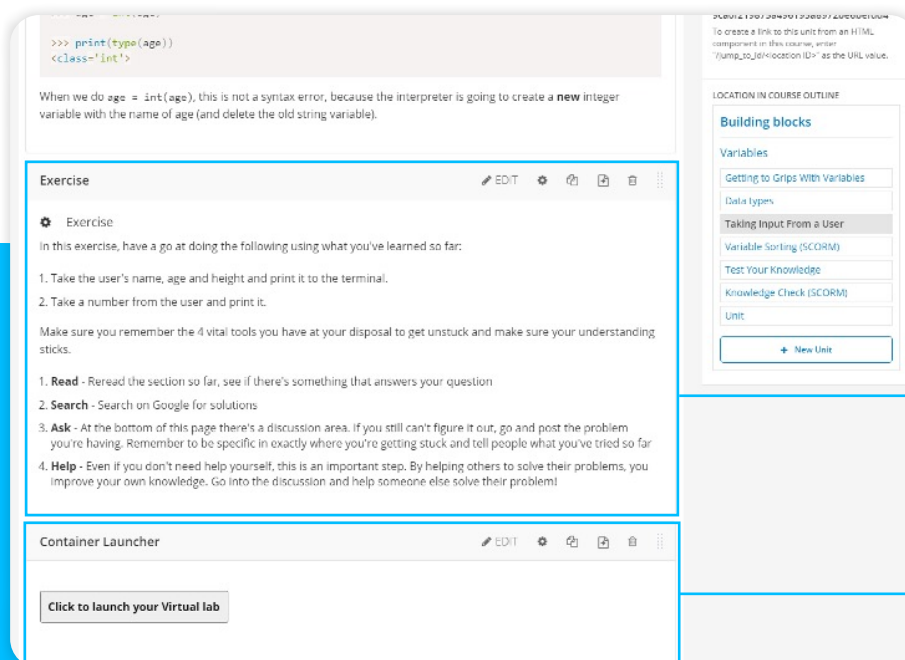
Educational content is given to the learner to provide context and learning principles about the product.

After reading the content above, the learner launches the product for hands-on learning.

Documentation & Sample Code

Developer documentation for your product is table stakes in today's world, but it's still an important resource that your organization needs to provide because developers need a "single source of truth" when learning about your product and how it works.

Documentation enables them to learn how to use your product and *why* it was built a certain way. Over time, good documentation will take work off of your customer support team because developers can refer to documentation (instead of contacting your customer support team) whenever they have technical questions about your product.

While documentation is a staple in the developer education toolkit, it isn't going to be as effective as putting clear and relevant code samples in front of developers. Sample code is another critical piece in your developer documentation, and for some developers, it's the content they truly care about. It enables them to deeply understand your product, gives them an "under the hood" view of your software, and allows them to comprehend your product's technical intricacies. Sample code can also act as the starting point from which bigger coding projects will evolve from, so make sure you include plenty of it in your product documentation and developer education content.

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Documentation

Redirection

🔖 Bookmark this page

Piping is a form of redirection, but there are other forms of redirection as well. You can redirect input from a file instead of the console or redirect output to go to a file instead of the console.

Use > to redirect output to a file:

Sample Code

```
$ echo "foo" > foobar.txt

$ ls

foobar.txt  my_script.sh
```

This creates a file called "foobar.txt" with "foo" as the contents.

Use >> to append output to a file:

```
$ echo "bar" >> foobar.txt
```

Tutorials & How-To Videos

[Forty-three (43%) percent of developers](#) turn to tutorial videos when faced with an obstacle, making them a viable educational tool that your organization should be producing. As with all of your developer marketing content, your how-to videos should be succinct, to the point, and low on the "BS Meter."

Developers are all about maximizing time and efficiency, so your video content shouldn't beat around the bush. But at the same time, your videos need to cover the product in enough detail for developers to actually walk away having learned something valuable about your product. As a general rule, aim for videos that are 5 and 30 minutes long. You'll also want to include supporting text content and sample code with your tutorial videos.

Another tip to keep in mind: [some developers prefer live tutorials](#) as opposed to instructional videos, so consider hosting live events (virtual or in-person) to highlight your tutorial content. This will create a more personalized, meaningful experience for developers, which will increase the likelihood of them adopting your product.
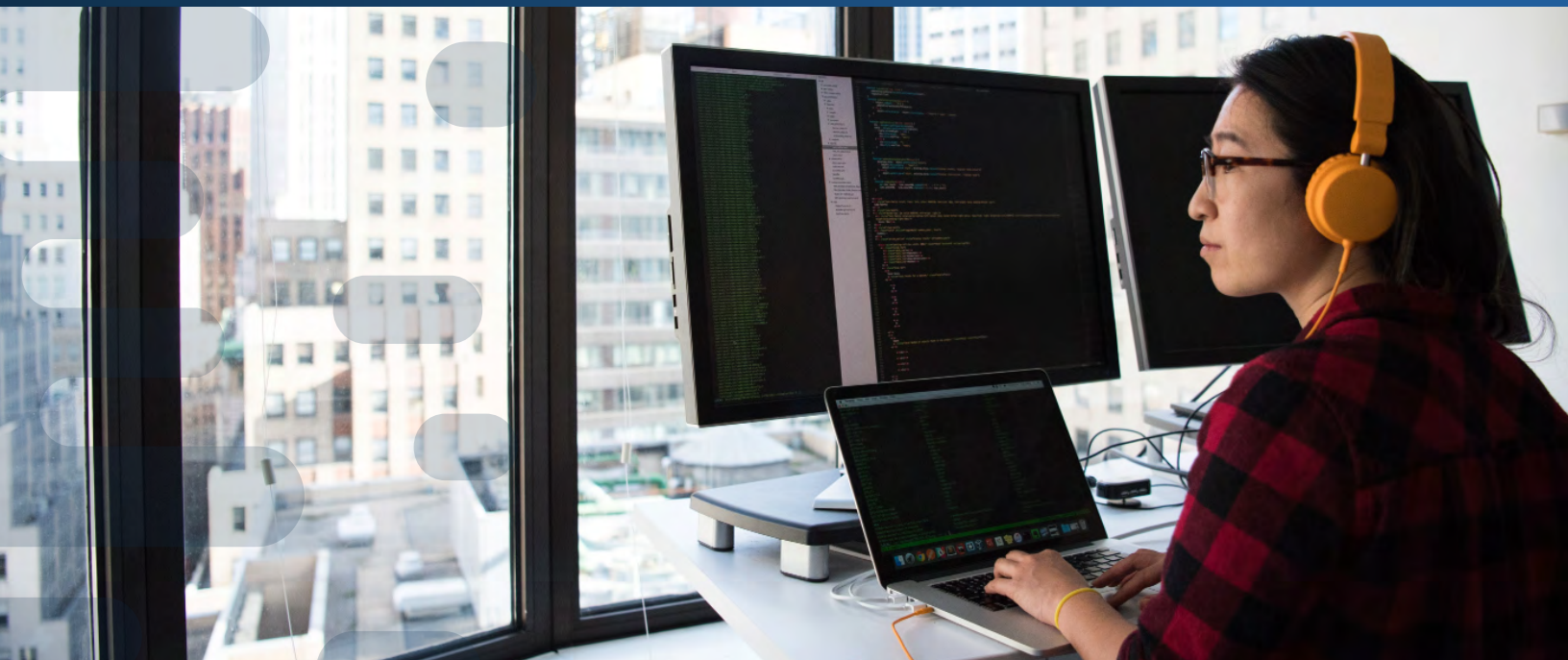
Webinars & Online Interactive Coding Events

When thinking about learning in general, people tend to forget about 50% to 80% of what they've learned after just one day. That number increases to roughly 98% within a month of learning. Needless to say, getting your product to stick with developers isn't easy, but hosting interactive webinars and coding events can improve your organization's ability to resonate with them and allows you to see first-hand the type of projects developers are building with your product.

Think broadly about how events can help you connect with your target audience. Flipkart's Girls Wanna Code event, for example, targeted women engineers who wanted to break into the world of coding. The event saw over 5,000 applicants register, which resulted in more impressions and engagements with Flipkart from other developers.

Encouraging audience participation in your webinars and coding events, which may be difficult with a technical audience, is another way to increase engagement and ensure that developers don't become distracted during the event. By adding a section in your webinar that allows for two-way communication with developers (versus you simply speaking to them the entire time), developers will be more likely to retain the presented information, give them an opportunity to ask you specific product questions, and also help to reveal some of the coding projects your developer community is working on.
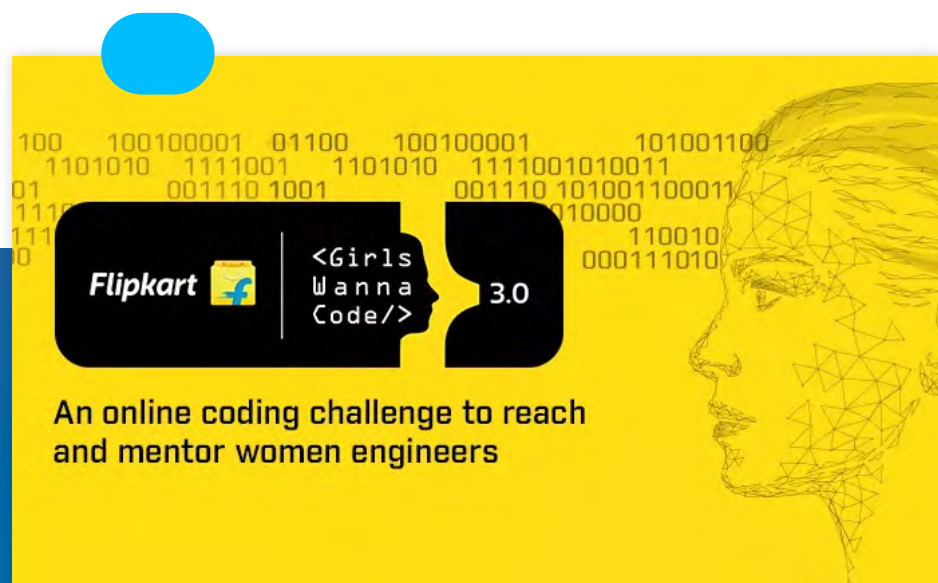
Learn more about Flipkart's Girls Wanna Code event here.

Discussion Groups

Peer-to-peer discussion groups are additional resources you can put in front of developers. Developers naturally turn to other developers to inform their decisions about which products are worth trying — and which ones they should stay away from. This is evidenced by [Stack Overflow's 2021 Developer Survey](#), which found that 46% of developers will call a coworker or friend when they get stuck in their work.

Discussion forums are also an effective way to generate developer awareness for your product. Discussion forums are a hotbed for detailed – and sometimes very technical – conversations between developers. During these discussions, hundreds (if not thousands) of long-tail keywords will be mentioned. These keywords are indexed by search engines, which results in broader awareness for your company and its products.

However you decide to educate your developer audience, make sure that the content you put out there is honest, transparent, and to the point. Genuinely working to teach developers about your product — which means highlighting both its strengths and its weaknesses — will help build a sense of authenticity around your brand that developers will appreciate.

46%
developers

**WILL CALL
a coworker or
friend when they
get stuck in their
work**

Start Building Educational Experiences for Your Developers

Establishing trust and credibility with prospective developers won't happen overnight. It takes time for them to see your product as a value-adding tool, and for them to see your developer portal as a reliable source of information and resources that can help them with their projects.

Starting to build out educational content that focuses on the individual developer's best interests is the first step towards creating impactful learning journeys that result in increased product adoption, usage, and satisfaction.

To get a sense of how an effective developer marketing program works to deliver results, check out Appsembler's case studies with Redis and Chef Software.

1

Redis Case Study
Source

redislabs — HOME OF REDIS

Redis Labs is the home of open source Redis, the world's fastest in-memory database platform and the "Most Loved Database" by developers.

appsembler — CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

Challenges

- Redis Labs wanted to expand their reach, **acquire new users** and educate users on their open source software.
- Provide users with an easy way to complete **hands-on, software exercises** during online training.
- **Make hands-on training at live events easier,** and remove the learner setup and configuration process.

Solution

- **Scalable Platform:** Migration to one platform, built with new user acquisition in mind, to train new and existing Redis users.
- **Instant lab environments:** Virtual labs lets learners easily complete real, hands-on exercises via a web browser without setup or configuration.
- **Lead generation:** A branded Redis University site to attract and educate potential users.

Results

- Grew to **5500+ registered learners and 8500+ course enrollments** in the first 12 months after launching.
- **Offers courses focused on new user acquisition,** including *Introduction to Redis Data Structures.*
- Successful in-person training workshops, where **users can use Redis' software within seconds.**

*"With Appsembler Virtual Labs we can ... **give our users quick wins very early.** They just launch the browser, log in, and instantly they're using Redis."*

Kyle Davis | Former Head of Developer Advocacy | Redis Labs

2

Chef Software Case Study

[Source](#)

And if you're looking for more information to strengthen your developer marketing initiatives, below is a list of helpful guides that will improve your understanding of what compelling developer education looks like in the real-world.

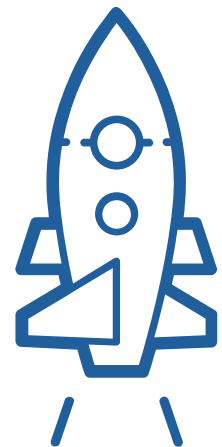○ **Redis Case Study**

○ **Chef Software Case Study**

○ **What is Developer Marketing?**

○ **The 5 Benefits of Developer Marketing**

○ **The Developer-Focused Go-To-Market Playbook**

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Build it with education.

Speak to Appsembler

Start a conversation with Appsembler and discuss examples of modern, developer marketing initiatives. We'll provide a walkthrough of each initiative and talk about specific results experienced by leading developer marketing and product marketing teams.

Contact Us