

An Introduction to Inbound Marketing for Developer Programs

Catchy INSIGHTS

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Introduction

Inbound marketing is a technique used to attract developers to explore your platform, go through the onboarding process and emerge on the other side as engaged members who become fans and who promote your products and services to others.

Traditional inbound marketing relies heavily on understanding your target audience and delivering compelling content at the right time. Inbound marketing for developer programs is no different. In fact, given developer ambivalence and sometimes even hostility towards traditional marketing, the need to get these three elements right, (who, what, when) is accentuated when considering developer programs.



YOUR DEFINED
TARGET
DEVELOPERS



THE RIGHT
CONTENT
OR MESSAGE
FOR THEM



CORRECT
TIMING OF
THE MESSAGE
OR CONTENT
DELIVERY

What is a developer?

First it's worth considering what we mean by 'developers' because this is crucial when identifying your audience. Accurate estimates are hard to find, but consensus in the industry is that there are more than 20 million active developers worldwide and 'developer' has come to be a catch-all word for virtually anyone involved in the production of software, meaning the number of potential targets for your program is likely much higher than that.

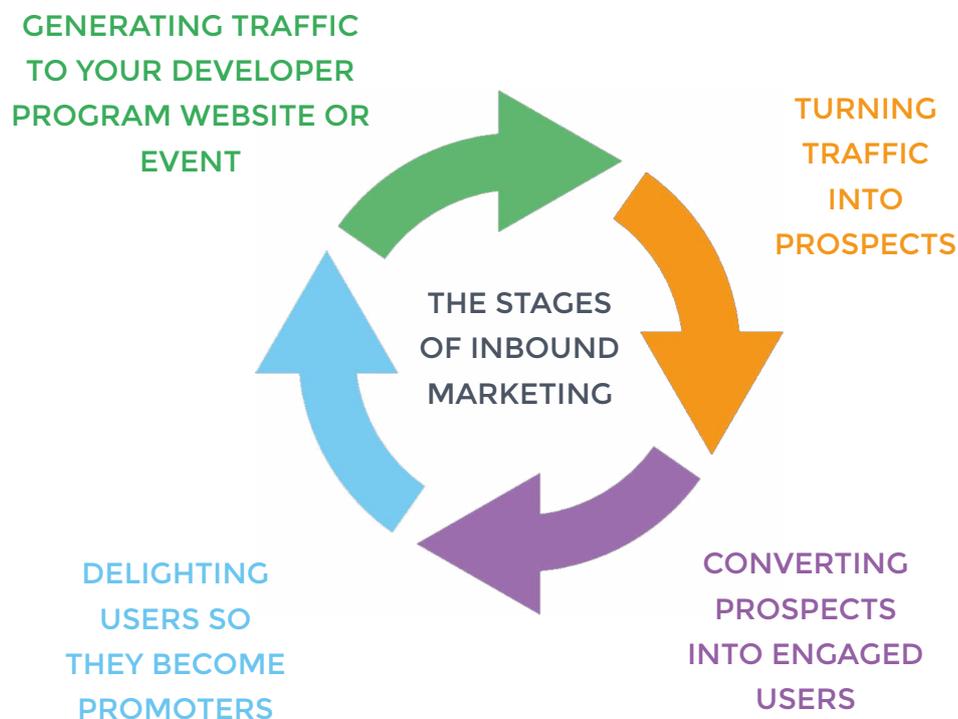
Your target developer may fit the classic stereotype of a young to middle-aged man working independently on what he hopes will be the next big mobile app in his garage or basement, but at most that is a very small portion of your actual audience. Today, a developer means anyone from this mobile app hobbyist to the C-level enterprise IT decision maker looking to deploy company-wide cloud infrastructure for the first time, and in between those two ends of the spectrum, there are ISVs, IoT and mobile start ups, desktop and PC development shops and lots more.

Understanding your target developer audience is the first step in inbound marketing. However developer segmentation, either of your target audience or those already in your funnel, is too large a subject to cover here so we'll move on, assuming you've already done this or are planning to do so.



The Stages of Inbound Marketing

There are four essential stages of a successful inbound marketing strategy for developer programs:



Measurement and analysis of the results from the tactics you employ in each of the four stages above is crucial to program success, more on this point later.

The Journey



TRAFFIC

Visitors to your website or attendees at your events; or attendees at third party developer focused events where you have a presence.



PROSPECTS

Registered developers on your program who have yet to start actively using your products or services. May also apply to developers opting in to email communication through your website or at events.



USERS

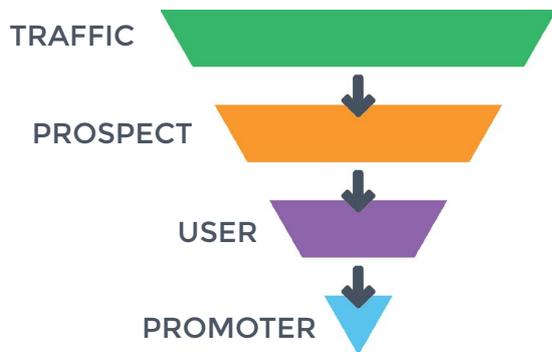
Developers actively deploying your products or services whether internally in enterprise solutions or embedded in their own market products and services.



PROMOTERS

Developers who pro-actively and without compensation recommend or advocate the use of your products or services for a specific solution.

The Journey



Each of the four funnel stages requires compelling messaging and content (**the 'what'**) aimed at the right audience (**the 'who'**) delivered at the right time (**the 'when'**) in order for the developer to move on to the next stage.

Where possible, use a synchronized closed-loop approach. This will enable you to track developers through the process from initial contact to **'prospect'** and ultimately **'promoter'**. This is not always possible in the developer space but do set and measure some indicative KPI, such as average time from first contact to registration and average time of registration to first use. These will help you better understand the journey your developers take and give you action areas for additional attention to shorten the funnel.

However, like many sales funnels, the developer journey through your program is unlikely to always be linear. We know, for example that a hands-on developer will want to try then learn, whereas IT decision makers tend to learn then try.

Developers are likely to enter your sales funnel at any point, so it's essential that:

- ✓ You know where a developer is on your journey
- ✓ You know what type of developer you're talking to
- ✓ You communicate appropriate messages and content at the right time

Tools of the Trade

There are many tools and tactics available for building an inbound marketing program for developers. These techniques can be deployed at any stage of the journey from traffic to promoter, but some will sit naturally at one end of the process or the other.

Technique	Stage
SEO/PPC	Traffic
Opted-in email	Prospects
Sponsored 3rd party events	All
Whitepapers	All
Community support	Users/promoters
Blogging	All
Speakerships at 3rd party events	All
Earned social media	Traffic
Other content (video, ebooks etc.)	All
Own branded events	Prospects/users/ promoters
Reward programs	Users/promoters

Who Does This Well?

Although they may not refer to it as 'inbound marketing', several companies have applied the strategy to growing their third party developer programs:



Chip giant Qualcomm has created a loyalty/reward program to move their existing developers through the funnel from user to promoter. The early stage program, called Kudos, rewards developers with a small incentive and big recognition for actions they have already taken rather than the more common 'do this, get that' promotional approach of other programs.



Communications company Twilio has a team of developer evangelists who participate in or initiate approximately 500 events per year to help promote the work of the company.



Microsoft/Nokia held a series of "DVLUP Day" events in five cities across the U.S. they featured more than 40 hours of coding by 780+ attendees, creating nearly 400 new apps published to the Windows Phone Store. In fact, 50% of attendees published an app as a direct result of attending one of these events. Learning based content was the key pillar of the events which were aimed at new to platform developers. They were led by developer evangelists who provided hands-on demonstrations and tutorials throughout the day.

Who Does This Well?

twitter

The Twitter developer team is undertaking a #HelloWorld tour to meet with developers, (Feb-May 2016) learning about what they are building and to share insights about things that they have been working on. Stops on the tour include major U.S. cities, and Mobile World Congress in Barcelona. It is also worth noting that Twitter makes active use of their developer blog with regular contributions from their developer relations team as well as developer advocates.



But don't expect overnight success. Colorado-based email marketing company SendGrid grew its developer community team from one MBA grad working solo, to a team of 14 specialized developer evangelists and community managers over a period of five years. Today, the team focuses on developer education, start-up outreach and events, as well as working to improve the developer experience at SendGrid. The team has members based in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Denver, New York, London, and Sao Paulo.

mozilla

The Mozilla Developer Network celebrated its 10 year anniversary in 2015. As they noted at the time, "MDN has more than four million users and over 1,000 volunteer editors per month creating and translating documentation, sample code, tutorials and other learning resources for all open web technologies." Possibly the ultimate example of a developer community built on techniques now called inbound marketing.

So What About Outbound?

So, if inbound marketing is so great, is there any place for outbound? In a word, yes. We strongly advocate combining your sustained inbound program with tactical use of some outbound marketing techniques. Instances where outbound alongside Inbound may prove effective include the launch of a brand new product or service, demand generation for a new event or surveying developers for feedback and opinion.

Outbound marketing to developers is notoriously sensitive. However we have found, when used at the right time for the right purpose and especially when combined with inbound techniques, that the following outbound techniques are effective:

PAID SOCIAL MEDIA



ONLINE SURVEYS THROUGH TARGETED EMAIL



TELEPHONE OUTREACH (ESPECIALLY WHEN AGREED VIA EMAIL BEFOREHAND)



BOOTHS AT DEVELOPER FOCUSED EVENTS



Measurement, Analysis and ROI

The ongoing and consistent measurement of the results of all inbound marketing activities is crucial to the success of building your developer program. This will enable you to quickly identify what works and what doesn't. Where appropriate you should A/B test different approaches to an audience and hone your tactics further based on the results.

Of equal importance is your ability to demonstrate internally the ROI of your developer program. Again this is too big a subject to cover in detail at this time, but a few key points associated with metrics and ROI include:

- ✓ Always associate your developer program with wider company objectives. Your CEO is unlikely to care how many Twitter follows your developer program has.
- ✓ Inbound marketing is built on a repeatable process. So measure and test what works. Whatever works best, do more of that.
- ✓ When reporting internally, try to bring your developer program and your developers to life. Tell stories your leadership can relate to, rather than just presenting charts and numbers (but don't forget to include those, too).
- ✓ Use the developer journey stages, even if you have different names for them, to illustrate the success the program is having.

Parting Thoughts

Suffice to say, there is no silver bullet when it comes to successful inbound marketing for developer programs and it's definitely not a quick fix for an ailing program. The best programs that we have seen are built up over time, and the transition from prospects to active promoters of your product or platform are the result of active engagement along with compelling content that keeps them coming back for more.

Ready to take your developer program to the next level? Contact Catchy to set up a conversation about how you can grow your developer program with effective inbound marketing.

About Catchy

Catchy is a specialist developer program management and developer marketing agency. We help our clients design, build, grow and manage their third party developer programs. Catchy has offices in Europe and the US and over 6 years of experience in developer program management and marketing.

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Some inspiration and terminology from the inbound marketing platform provider Hubspot www.hubspot.com

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