A Metia Report

Developer Study

2015

metia

Say hello to developers: your toughest audience ever.

Developers are a vital audience for a growing number of software vendors, and increasingly for brands and business that want to use developer communities to reinvent and repackage their services.

We explored developer opinions of software vendors, and the products and services offered to their community. We surveyed individual developers, interviewed industry experts, reviewed developer programs, and analyzed best practices in the field.

Above all else, developers like great technology. If the technology falls short, no amount of marketing, PR, or sales effort will make up for it.

What makes developers different?

- They distrust marketing. Overt marketing practices may hurt the developer relationship rather than help it.
- Being a developer is more than a day job. Developers are always learning, exploring, and creating. They are proud of their knowledge and ambitious about skill development.
- Developers can be your loudest critic or your strongest advocate.
- They are influential in shaping, and often making, significant budget decisions.

Five recommendations

1 Your proposition, tools, and supporting services must be available online, free of charge, and via a self-service model. Invest in technical services and infrastructure, and focus resources on the aspects of your service that developers value.

2 Limit marketing spin. Delete superlatives. Remove hyperbole. Let the technology speak for itself.

3 Demonstrate your commitment to developers with a developer-focused website on a 'developer' sub-domain http://developer.brandname.com. The site should allow them to buy technical wares online. Include a developer-focused blog that is available outside of a firewall.

4 Offer free access and support, and host forums/Q&A/knowledgebase on OpenStack, Disqus, or a similar platform. Among the 'freebies,' you should include:
- SDK, tools, and sandbox or local dev environment
- Email/online support for all
- Online training, broken into installments for developers to self-serve
- Code

5 Provide quality technical documentation that is actionable, useful, and contextually correct. White papers, code breakdown, and user/install guides should be available online and search-optimized.

> Provide the ability to 'see how it works' straight away. Developers like to learn and see results quickly.

Meet the developer
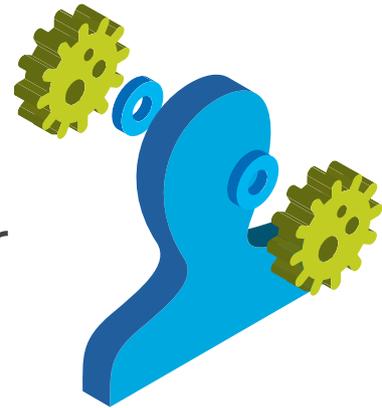
We surveyed 100 developers in a variety of roles and businesses. Here's what they told us:
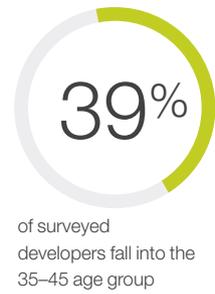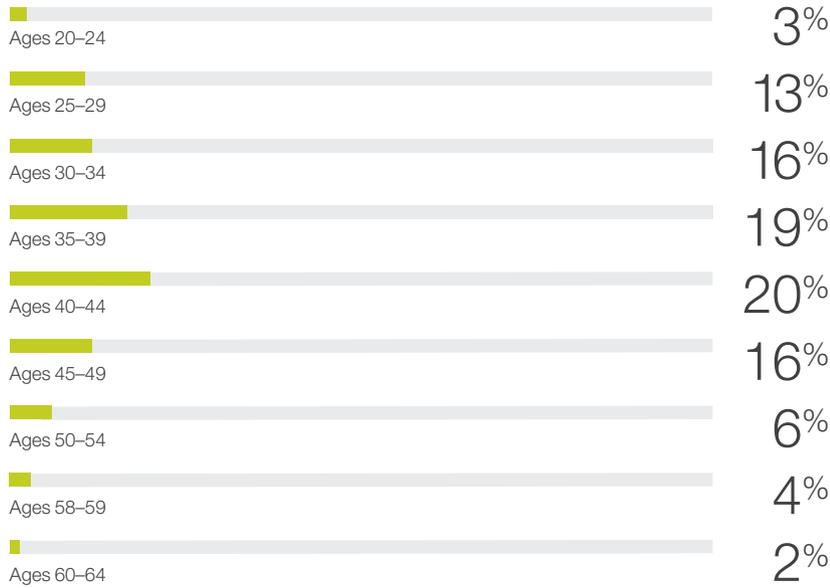
More than coders

Writing code is far from developers' only responsibility. Their core workload includes researching, designing, implementing, testing, and supporting software. They may also take part in design, programming, or software project management.

They are responsible for many tasks

- Programming and implementing code.
- Participation in software product definition, including business case or gap analysis.
- Specification.
- Requirements analysis software design.
- Investigating, selecting, and using third-party tools and services.
- Development and refinement of proofs of concept and prototypes.
- Feasibility and cost-benefit analysis, including the choice of application architecture and framework.
- Authoring documentation for users and implementation partners.
- Testing, including defining/supporting acceptance testing and gathering feedback from per-release testers.
- Participation in software-release and post-release activities, including support, product launch evangelism, and competitive analysis for subsequent product build/release cycles.
- Maintenance and support.

Percentage of developers by age group

Age group	Percentage
Ages 20–24	3%
Ages 25–29	13%
Ages 30–34	16%
Ages 35–39	19%
Ages 40–44	20%
Ages 45–49	16%
Ages 50–54	6%
Ages 58–59	4%
Ages 60–64	2%

39% of surveyed developers fall into the 35–45 age group

How old are they?

There is a healthy and buoyant 'newcomers' group, age 25–34, entering the developer community; and a rapid drop in the number of those in software development older than 50 - possibly because of movement into non-developer managerial roles.

> Social media is nice, but it's the technology that stands out above all else
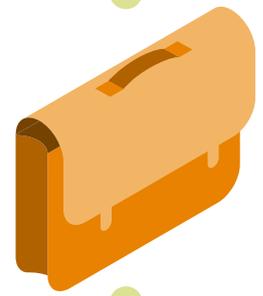
Social forums, not social media

Developers use social media, but not for professional purposes. They prefer self-help and self-solve, and discuss technology in open forums. There are three main channels—LinkedIn, YouTube, and Stack Overflow—that are used daily or weekly. Developers like them because they facilitate learning and are easy to search—whether for articles, videos, or people.

Social media channels based on weekly usage by developers

- **75%** LinkedIn
- **59%** YouTube
- **46%** Stack Overflow
- **46%** Facebook

30%	
0%	

Vimeo, Pinterest, Twitter, GitHub, Instagram, Slashdot, G+, Reddit, Vine, Hacker News, About.me

Their professional life

Developers spend their time on a variety of tasks, and interface with several departments.

Mostly men

Of those surveyed, only 12% were women. This may present an opportunity to brands that want to target women developers, as they are often overlooked.

What is their employment status?

Developers are not the nomads they once were. More than 74% are at the same firm or have moved just once in the last five years.

Developers have a unique culture, kept separate from managers, or 'suits.'
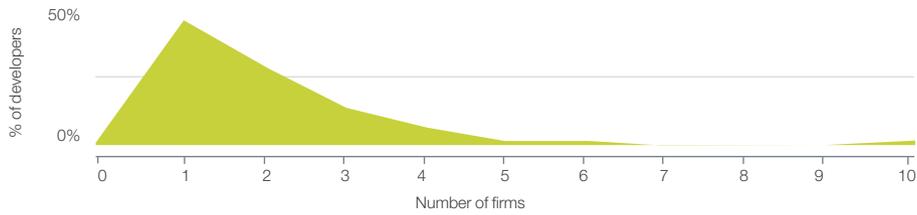
Opportunities to market to women
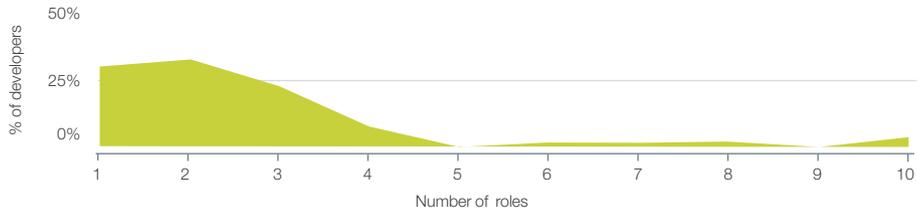
Women   Men

12%   88%

Employment status

Permanent positions   Under contract

12%   88%

0% of developers surveyed were retired or students

Number of firms worked at

% of developers

50%

0%

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Number of firms

Number of roles performed
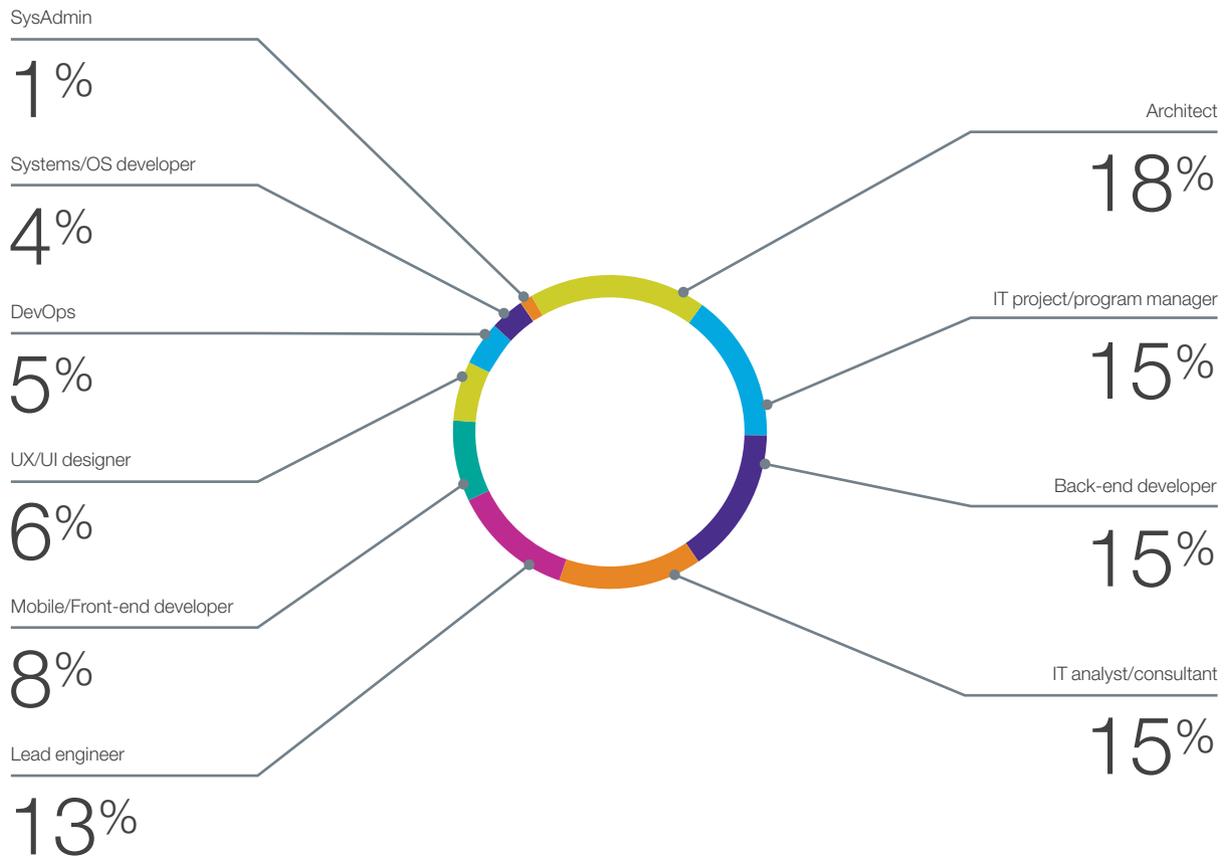
% of developers

50%

25%

0%

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
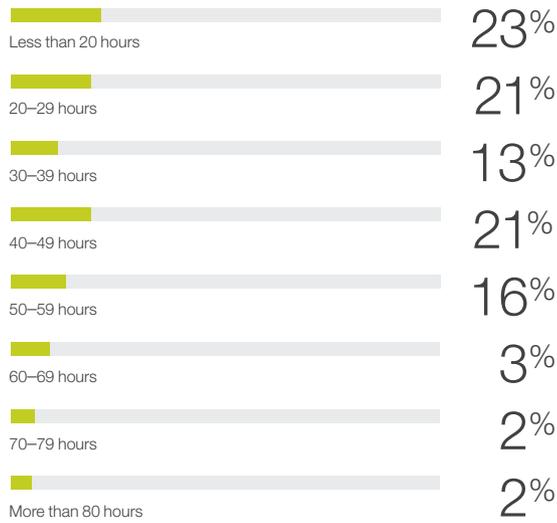
Number of roles

How is their development time spent?

The software development process is multifaceted, and tasks vary throughout the year depending on the project they are working on.

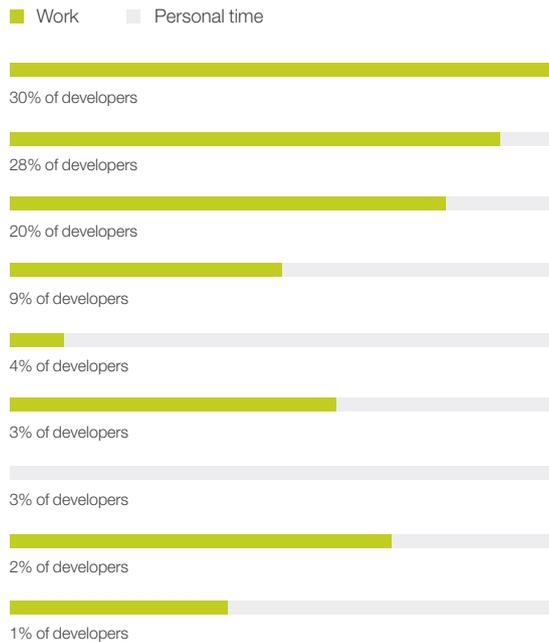**Which roles do you cover?**

SysAdmin

1%

Systems/OS developer

4%

DevOps

5%

UX/UI designer

6%

Mobile/Front-end developer

8%

Lead engineer

13%

Architect

18%

IT project/program manager

15%

Back-end developer

15%

IT analyst/consultant

15%

How many hours per week do they spend in the software development process?

Less than 20 hours — 23%

20–29 hours — 21%

30–39 hours — 13%

40–49 hours — 21%

50–59 hours — 16%

60–69 hours — 3%

70–79 hours — 2%

More than 80 hours — 2%

23%

of developers surveyed spend fewer than 20 hours on software development per week.

Percentage of time spent on work versus personal projects

■ Work　　■ Personal time

30% of developers

28% of developers

20% of developers

9% of developers

4% of developers

3% of developers

3% of developers

2% of developers

1% of developers

How do developers balance work and personal projects?

The majority of developers work at home, so developer communities and programs must be accessible outside of corporate firewalls and memberships, and services must be available outside of business hours and accessible on personal devices via private connections.

Developers spend more time on work projects

78%

of developers dedicate 80-100% of their development time to work projects

Java dominates.

The results show Java is the most popular programming language, used daily by 44% of respondents. .NET is a close second, and UNIX and the C languages third.
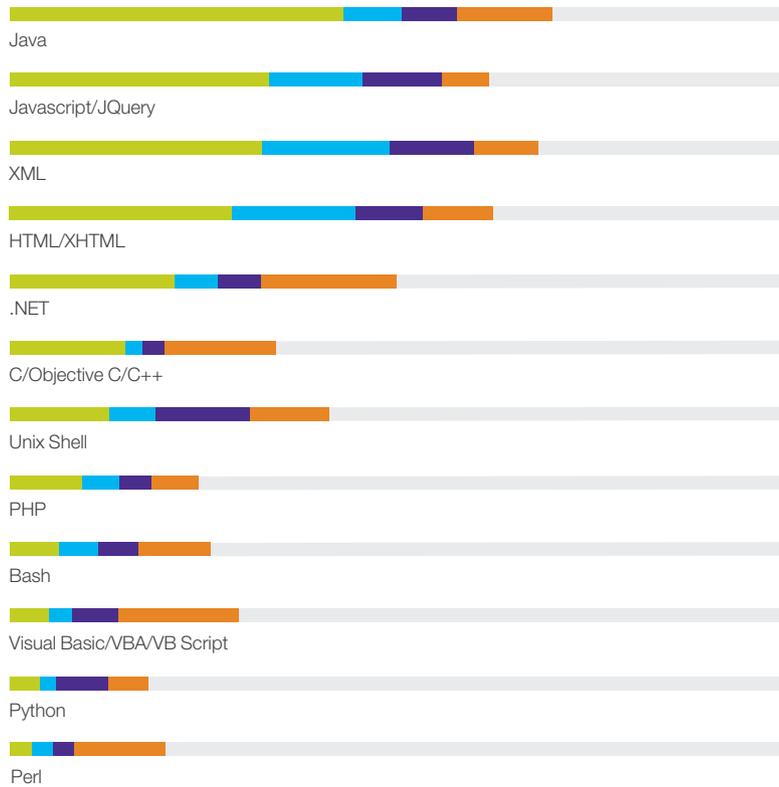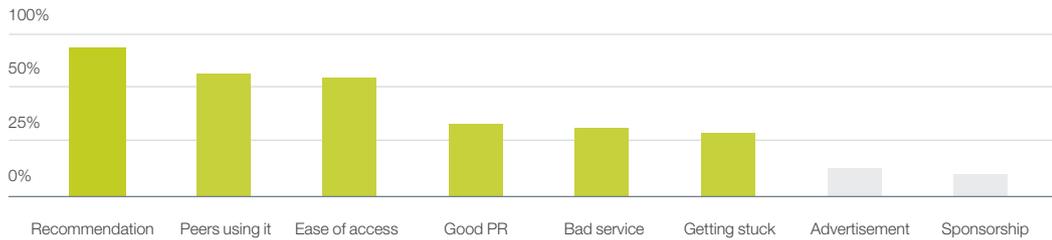
Java comes out top due to its open source nature, .NET second because of its speed in programming and the prevalence of Microsoft's enterprise contracts. And the C's are third due to its speed in performance and its granular control.

44%

of developers surveyed use Java daily

- ■ Used daily
- ■ Used weekly
- ■ Used monthly
- ■ Used rarely
- ■ Never used

Which programming and mark-up languages do they use and how regularly?

Java

Javascript/JQuery

XML

HTML/XHTML

.NET

C/Objective C/C++

Unix Shell

PHP

Bash

Visual Basic/VBA/VB Script

Python

Perl

Research drivers based on developer study

Recommendation · Peers using it · Ease of access · Good PR · Bad service · Getting stuck · Advertisement · Sponsorship

81%

Say that a recommendation was the main research driver

> Access is critical. If it's difficult to start using an API, there will be fewer referrals from users and enthusiasts.
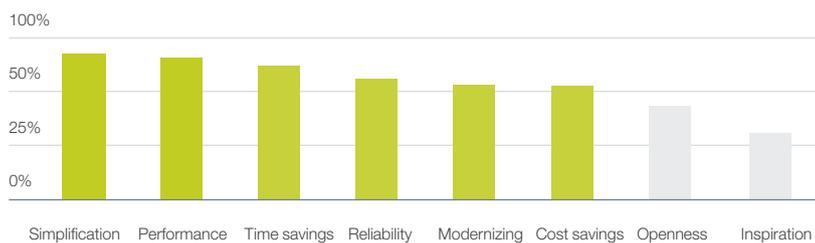
What triggers research?

Word of mouth prevails with 81% saying that a recommendation was the main reason for researching a technology, and 'peers using it' came in second with 64%. Notably, 61% research new technologies because a vendor has opened up access to its technology, igniting their curiosity.

Considering switching technologies?

An SDK needs to save time by launching well and bringing the user up to production speed quickly. It also must perform well and be more efficient to use than competing methods.
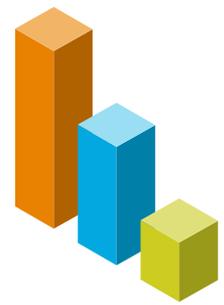
Why developers switch technologies

Simplification · Performance · Time savings · Reliability · Modernizing · Cost savings · Openness · Inspiration

80%

Say that simplification was a reason to switch technologies

79%

Say that performance was a reason to switch technologies

Assessing developer marketing programs

How should you invest in developer relations?

Marketing key attributes

Marketing budgets should focus on great content and experiences. Flashy campaigns don't engage developers. We explored important attributes of developer marketing programs from a variety of brands.

The top-performing brands all include collaborative forums such as GitHub, Jive, and Lithium.

Developers want the 'whole story.' They need fully working technical use cases.

Top four attributes of developer marketing programs

Project-hosting (sandbox) facilities

Online shop

Email subscriptions and nurturing
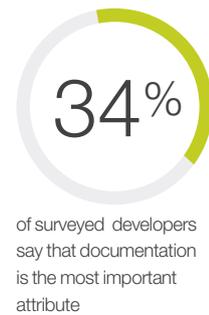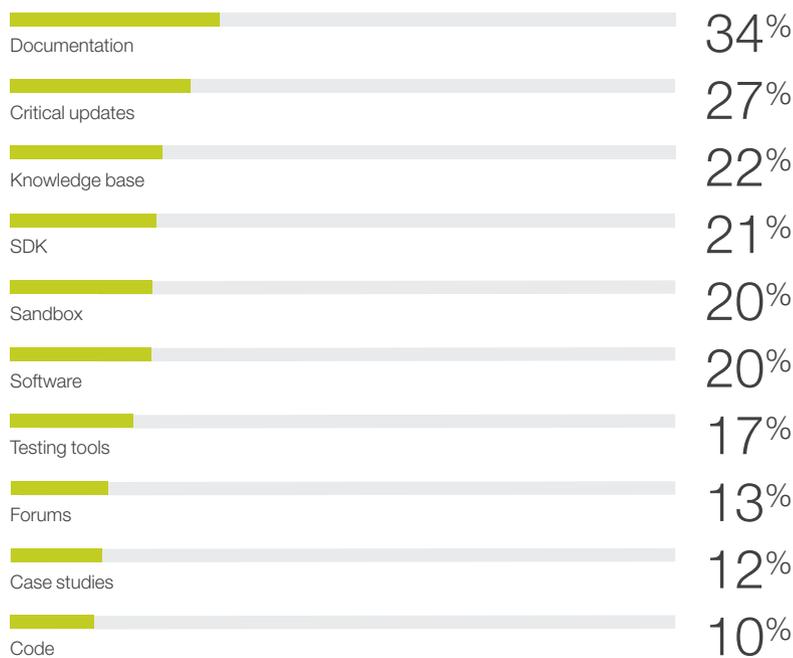
Collaborative forums

What assets matter most to developers?

When considering which groups own developer-focused assets, the top 10 assets asked for by developers belong to the product teams. The 10 least desired assets are often owned by marketing.

Many brands have no developer-focused offerings, which is a frustration to developers.

The strength of a technology is matched by the activity of its online community. A good community can replace or supplement official support.

We asked developers which assets are most essential

Asset	Percentage
Documentation	34%
Critical updates	27%
Knowledge base	22%
SDK	21%
Sandbox	20%
Software	20%
Testing tools	17%
Forums	13%
Case studies	12%
Code	10%

34%

of surveyed developers say that documentation is the most important attribute

What content do developers look for?

Reward/loyalty program	Product brochures	Vendor's news	On-site support	Email news updates	Industry reports	Technical SM	Industry news	Phone support	Online shop
23%	18%	9%	9%	7%	7%	6%	6%	6%	6%

Velvet-roped, private, collaborative areas are at risk of becoming no-go zones

A firewall is a huge barrier to developer communities.


Private areas are perceived as elitist

Developers overwhelmingly prefer programs designed for them. A site with a developer-centric sub-domain, e.g., http://developer. brand.com, with developer-focused technical content and tools will perform better than a site designed for a broader audience.

Developers enjoy researching new technologies

More than two-thirds of the surveyed developers said that they proactively research tools and technologies when starting a new project. The challenge is to be both searchable and accessible at th is vital moment.

Percent of developers that research technical solutions before a project begins.

Not likely
0%

Absolutely
37%

Somewhat likely
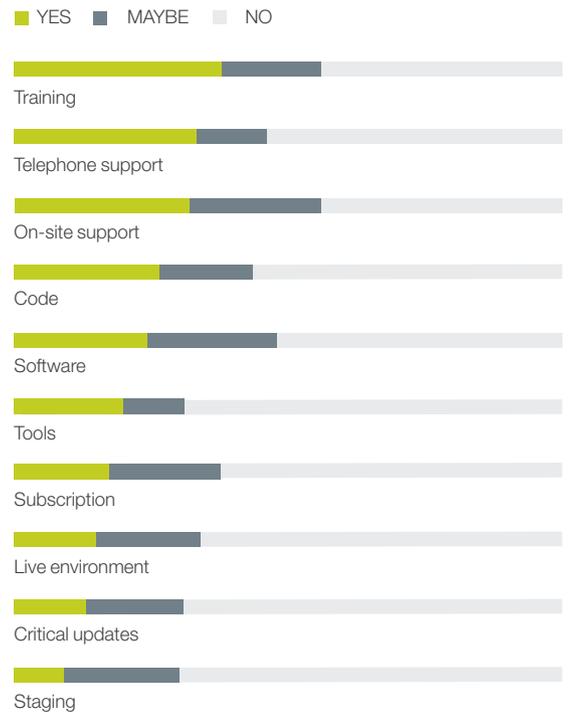33%

Very likely
30%
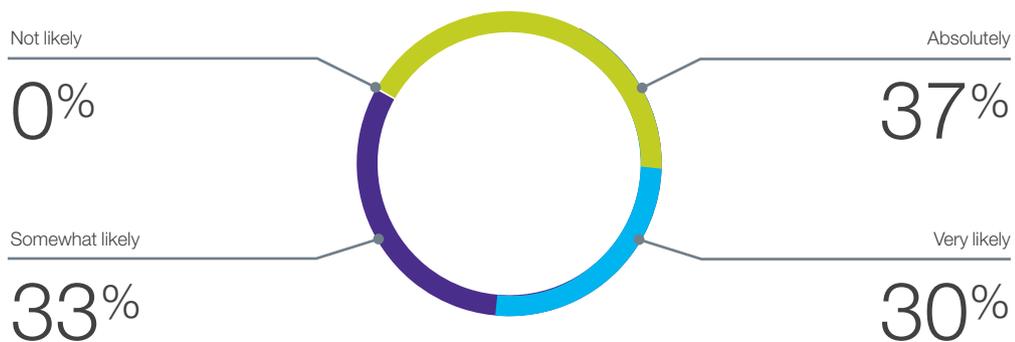
What are developers willing to pay for?

Developers will pay for training and support, and software and code. Some may be willing to pay for live and staging versions and subscriptions to a developer program.

Many vendors offer services via a paid subscription model, but fall short in providing access to technology to the unsubscribed. Hiding content behind a subscription firewall is risky because developers want to initiate searches and help themselves.

Top ten assets developers will pay for

■ YES   ■ MAYBE   ■ NO

Training

Telephone support

On-site support

Code

Software

Tools

Subscription

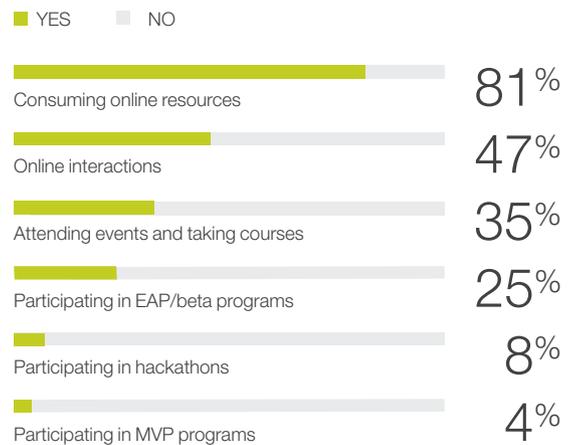Live environment

Critical updates

Staging

Developers avoid interacting with software and tool vendors in person.

Developers are happy to engage online and consume resources, but they avoid meeting in person or getting involved in an initiative.
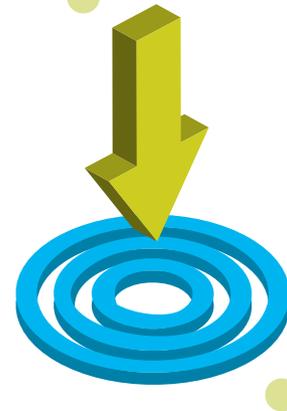
81%

of developers surveyed will consume online resources

Interactions between developers and vendors

■ YES   ■ NO

Consuming online resources   **81%**

Online interactions   **47%**

Attending events and taking courses   **35%**

Participating in EAP/beta programs   **25%**

Participating in hackathons   **8%**

Participating in MVP programs   **4%**

Conclusion

Developers, above all else, like great technology.

Support first. Sales second.
A developer program should showcase the technology above all else. If the technology doesn't satisfy the developer community, no amount of marketing or PR will make up for its shortfall.

Address the complete developers' experience, and eliminate obstacles or barriers to their research and experimentation.

A successful developer program will feed into other business and marketing strategies. The program is a collaboration between product, stakeholders, thought leaders, R&D and support teams that's signed off by marketing and supported by legal and procurement.

About Metia

In business for 26 years, Metia is a leading marketing strategy, design, and development firm with global offices in London, Singapore, Seattle, and Austin.

We know the technology sector: the innovators; the trends; their applications; the use cases; their business and cultural implications.

Metia delivers programs that influence key decision makers, deliver fantastic user experiences, develop deep customer relationships and build vocal communities of advocates.

Contact us to learn more about our developer relations expertise, programs, and services so that you can better engage this vital audience.

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