What Elements of a Value Proposition Will Resonate With a Developer Persona?

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Tech providers who have traditionally focused on messaging to enterprise buyer personas find that messaging to developers is quite different. Tech CEOs must adjust a number of traditional marketing tactics to effectively engage developers, but have to start with a compelling message.

Quick Answer

What elements of a value proposition will attract and resonate with a developer persona?

- Speed — The ability for the developer to deliver on their stakeholder needs (*what* gets developed) in the time frame required (*when* it can be delivered).

- Completeness — The ability for the developer to harden a given deliverable so that it can be rolled into production (without creating any new vulnerabilities or violating any critical standards).

- Individual skill development — The ability for a developer to enhance their own technical skills and understanding of best practices, and participate in a community
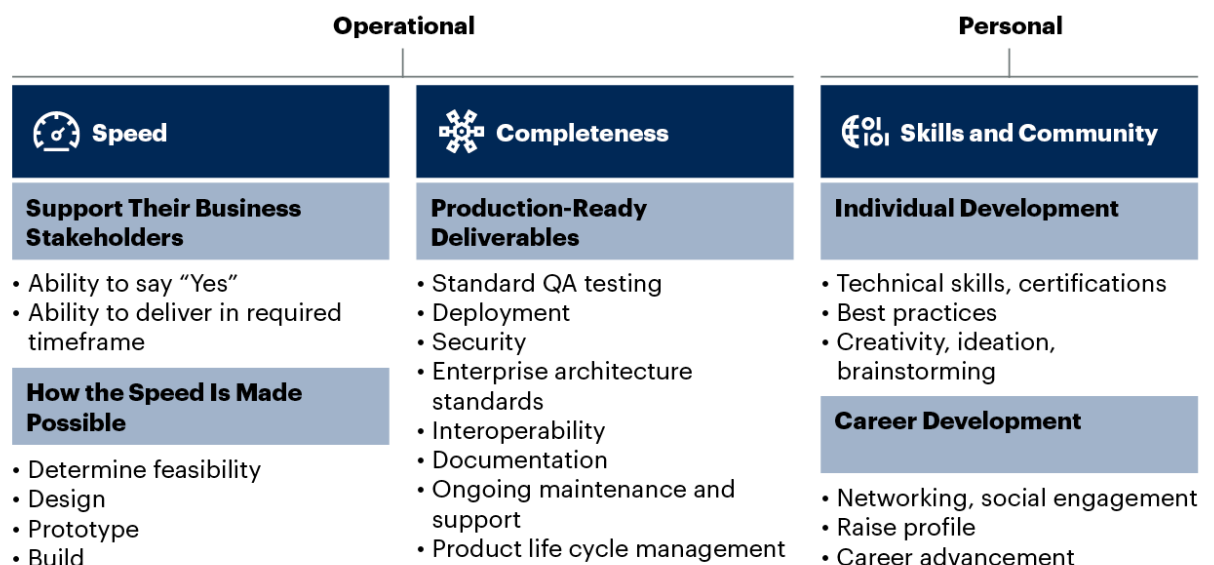
that will overall improve their productivity, while also building out their own repertoire.

More Detail

There are many different kinds of developers who work on building, extending and supporting myriad technologies. But at their core, developers are trying to solve problems and deliver value. This research proposes three value pillars — project speed and completeness, and personal benefits — that can serve as the foundation for your unique developer proposition (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Developer Messaging Value Pillars

Developer Messaging Value Pillars

Operational		Personal
Speed	**Completeness**	**Skills and Community**
Support Their Business Stakeholders	**Production-Ready Deliverables**	**Individual Development**
• Ability to say "Yes" • Ability to deliver in required timeframe	• Standard QA testing • Deployment • Security • Enterprise architecture standards • Interoperability • Documentation • Ongoing maintenance and support • Product life cycle management	• Technical skills, certifications • Best practices • Creativity, ideation, brainstorming
How the Speed Is Made Possible		**Career Development**
• Determine feasibility • Design • Prototype • Build		• Networking, social engagement • Raise profile • Career advancement

Source: Gartner
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Gartner

The first two types of value are about the developer's ability to serve an entity. This is typically a business unit or operational stakeholder, but could also be an enterprise, end-user cohort, customer base or some other type of audience. The last type of value is more about serving the needs of the developer as an individual person. While the first two may resonate with the developer's near-term needs, developers are always considering how various offerings will further their own personal abilities and knowledge. Tech CEOs should make sure to address both in the course of developer messaging.

Not all developers are the same, so they should be messaged and marketed to with some level of understanding of these nuances. Some of the differences are due to diversity in demographics, roles and jobs to be done — but tech CEOs should also consider the developer's tech, and for whom they are building (who their stakeholder is).

Speed — Ability to Deliver Quickly

There are a variety of different kinds of developers, but essentially, most of them are coding or developing because a stakeholder has asked them to. This is typically the enterprise the developer works for, and more specifically, the business stakeholder requesting the work (whether the developer is embedded in the business unit or not).

The Ability to Say "Yes"

The developer's paramount concern is to be able to say "yes" to the requests of their stakeholders. Whether they know how to build what has been requested already, or your offering will enable them to track down what they need, this is of utmost importance. How does your offering help them determine whether they can deliver on the requirements of the requested use cases?

And professional developers rarely act alone — they collaborate closely with architects and other technical team members to design a solution. Does your offering enable them to draft a number of options and compare the pros and cons of each?

The Ability to Deliver Quickly

In addition to the ability to deliver the capabilities, and of equal importance, is the ability to deliver what the stakeholder needs in the required time frame. (The converse of this point is that with unlimited time and resources, anything can be done.)

Tech CEOs should message specifically about *how* they make this speed possible — based on the type of developer offering they provide and their unique way of accelerating a typical development cycle.

Consider the following questions to shape your message:

How does our offering enable developers to determine feasibility quickly and effectively?

- Technical resources — Developer portal that includes documentation, knowledge bases, videos, "how-to" guides, troubleshooting, libraries, software development kits

- Peer-to-peer resources — Stack Overflow community, collaboration tools, Slack channels, creativity, ideation, brainstorming, innovation, birds-of-a-feather cohorts, upstream open-source projects

- Try-before-you-buy offerings — To assess fit with requirements before any significant time or money is invested

- Example: "Time to Hello World" — The time it takes a developer to prove to stakeholders that a solution meets their needs.

How does our offering enable developers to design, prototype and build what is needed?

- Developer platforms, low-code/no-code

- Sandbox environments, prototyping, Figma mockups

- APIs, SDKs, code snippets, libraries of reusable services, composability

Completeness — Production-Readiness

In many cases, developing net new capabilities and enhancements in a development environment or sandbox is fairly straightforward. More time-consuming is getting that new nugget of code hardened so it can be deployed to production without violating any cybersecurity or enterprise architecture standards in place to protect the organization and the customers they serve.

This round of work is such an important aspect of developer enablement that whole categories of providers are cropping up around each of the needs below. If you do not specifically operate in one of these categories, then your message can emphasize how your developer offering works with some of these tools and resources.

Consider the following to shape your message:

How does our offering enable developers to get new development production-ready?

- Standard QA testing — QA testing processes, scripts, hardening of packages, testing automation

- Deployment — DevOps automation and deployment, version control

- Cybersecurity — Security testing, DevSecOps practices and tools

- Compliance — Regulations, auditability, data custody

- Enterprise architecture standards — Adherence to performance benchmarks, localization, user experience, accessibility, brand

- Interoperability — APIs, compatibility, vendor and tech partner certifications

- Documentation — Automatically generated in parallel with new development

- Ongoing support and maintenance — Observability, monitoring, troubleshooting resources, ticket systems

- Product life cycle management — Tracking new development against overall headlines, product roadmap, sunsetting/end-of-life

Skills — Personal and Career Development

The first two value pillars are messages that will resonate with developers who are looking for an offering to help them get a specific development project done. This last pillar is more about the developer's personal interests, skill sets or career goals, and can be delivered by you, the provider, over a longer time frame.

How does your offering enable developers to improve on any of the following fronts?

- Technical skills — Access to emerging tech, self-service learning, expert-led training, certifications, tutorials, peer-to-peer communities, helping developers move from existing skills to more modern or lucrative technologies

- Design skills — Modern architecture and design practices (e.g., microservices)

- Development skills — Best practices, alignment with latest development trends (e.g., innersource)

- Collaboration and Innovation — Creativity, ideation, brainstorming, "what-if" experimentation via birds-of-a-feather cohorts, upstream projects

- Social — In-person and virtual events, local meet-ups, collaboration tools, Slack channels, social media promotion and amplification

- Competition — Hackathons, gamification, certifications

- Career advancement — networking events, opportunities to present, ability to build personal brand

Conclusion

There are a number of ways providers of developer offerings can deliver on any of the value pillars above. The overall developer strategy should be defined and revisited on a regular basis — where cross-functional leaders agree on the goals, target personas and monetization strategy (if part of the goals).

Tech CEOs should continue to collaborate closely with developer-facing roles to ensure that the developer experience includes the most impactful message, marketing content and appropriate timing — the how/when/where of the developer messaging should be provided.

In general, developers do not want to talk to sales or be "sold" to. Providers have to genuinely support their productivity and need for community. And yes, occasionally provide free beer and t-shirts.

*** Attention: research are originally in English and I have translated it into Chinese by Google Translate as instructed by Peter. In case of any discrepancy between the English version and the Chinese version, the English version shall prevail.*