



Work in Progress

Developer Evangelism for Developers

michael stowe



WORK IN PROGRESS

This book is still in progress, and as such may contain editorial errors and incomplete sections.

New chapters will be provided on an ongoing basis, and content within the book may change.

We appreciate your understanding and feedback as this book is being developed.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

With over 15 years experience in software engineering, community building, evangelism, and Developer Relations, Michael Stowe has spoken at hundreds of events, been featured in numerous publications, and worked with companies large and small to help them develop their own Developer Relations and community program strategies.

He has personally been responsible for building four high growth programs from the ground up, receiving numerous industry awards in the process. His programs have been recognized as some of the top programs in the world.

When not building Developer Relations programs or advising companies on their Developer Relations and product strategies, Michael spends his time with his fiancée, pretending to be a movie buff, being constantly harassed by his two cats, losing terribly in Call of Duty, organizing community events, and working on Nomad PHP.

You can learn more about Michael on his website at <https://mikestowe.com> or follow him on Twitter @mikegstowe.

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PREFACE

First off, thank you for picking up this book, and for your desire to help others and tackle one of the most rewarding, and most challenging jobs I have ever worked: that of a Developer Evangelist.

Despite it being over seven years ago, I still remember my very first Developer Evangelist job. I remember the journey, and I remember the challenges - and my goal in this book is to help prepare you for the role you are interested in pursuing by telling you the very things I wish someone had told me.

Lessons learned from the first day on the job, to building Developer Relations programs at companies large and small - with communities ranging from a handful of developers to hundreds of thousands and millions upon millions of dollars in impact.

Everything in this book is from my own personal experience and personal conversations with others in the field. As you read through this book, I also encourage you to network with evangelists that you know, and discuss their personal experience as well.

It won't all be good, because no job is. In fact, Developer Relations is probably one of the most difficult, frustrating, and demanding technical jobs there is.

But I also can't think of another job that allows you to impact others, and support the community the way you can with Developer Relations. *And I can't think of another job I would rather do.*

With that thank you again, and I wish you the very best as you pursue your career.

- Mike Stowe

WHAT IS DEVELOPER EVANGELISM?

You've probably heard the term Developer Evangelist or Developer Advocate. Since you are reading this book, I think it's fair to assume that you're also interested in pursuing a career as either a Developer Evangelist or Developer Advocate.

Since these two titles are both rather common in the industry, you might be wondering what the difference between them is. The answer, like most answers in Developer Relations is pretty simple, and one that moving forward we'll talk a lot about: politics.

Typically, the difference between these two titles is nothing more than a company (or evangelist) not liking the connotation of the term evangelist and rather preferring to use the term advocate to demonstrate that they are advocating on behalf of the developer and on behalf of the company. In most cases, these terms are used interchangeably and one doesn't really hold any different meaning from the other.

So with that out of the way, what is a Developer Evangelist, and what does being a Developer Evangelist entail? Unfortunately, the answer to this question isn't as simple as the answer above, and depends solely on the company hiring for the role.

Traditionally, a Developer Evangelist is one who acts as an intermediary or a messenger, delivering information about the company's products to developers in technical speak, and translating technical speak back to the company in simple, layman's terms.

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Typically this involves participating in the developer community, taking part in meetups, writing blogs and content, helping developer collateral, and helping create the code and documentation developers consume.

However, more and more companies are creating "Developer Evangelists" roles that do none of these, instead focusing solely on support or sales. In other words, you may find Developer Evangelist roles that are really Developer Support Engineers or Sales/Solutions Engineers.

To further complicate things, for most Developer Evangelist roles there are a myriad of activities or hats that most Developer Evangelists are expected to wear - and often these expectations are not conveyed in the interview process, or even known by the company itself! For companies with new programs, more often than not you'll find that they do not actually know what a Developer Evangelist is, or what this person will do - even though they are hiring for the role.

That's why it's so important to understand what a Developer Evangelist is, what the role typically entails, what to look for in a company, and how to ensure you don't burn yourself out and are successful in this type of role.

Developer Evangelism isn't for everyone

Before we get started, there is one thing I want you to take to heart. That is, **Developer Evangelism isn't for everyone.**

Over the years, the idea of being a Developer Evangelist has been somewhat glorified - from red jackets to hosting events on cruise ships - evangelists seemingly get to spend their time hanging out online, teaching others, and hitting conferences and events around the world. Who wouldn't want to code when they want, travel when and where they want, get all the best swag and latest tech, and get paid to do it!

However, like an iceberg, most of what Developer Evangelists actually do, you don't see - and like an iceberg if you aren't prepared for what lies unseen, the result can be

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catastrophic. From long hours, to constant travel, to public scrutiny, to internal company politics, Developer Evangelists face a myriad of challenges that most developers and professionals are able to avoid. Challenges that take a significant emotional, mental, and physical toll.

Most Developer Evangelists quit and leave Developer Relations completely within their first 6-12 months

Many developers who transition to developer evangelism burn out - with many walking away from evangelism for good to go back to coding, and others with a backlog of horror stories about their time as an evangelist.

Even Keith Casey, who was on the forefront of evangelism with Twilio and worked in Developer Relations for years left a warning for future evangelists in his article "Developer Evangelism: the Whole Story," stating:

**DEVELOPER EVANGELISM HAS BEEN
BOTH THE BEST AND WORST JOB IN
MY CAREER.**

You can read Keith Casey's advice and learn more about his experience at <https://caseysoftware.com/blog/developer-evangelism-the-whole-story>