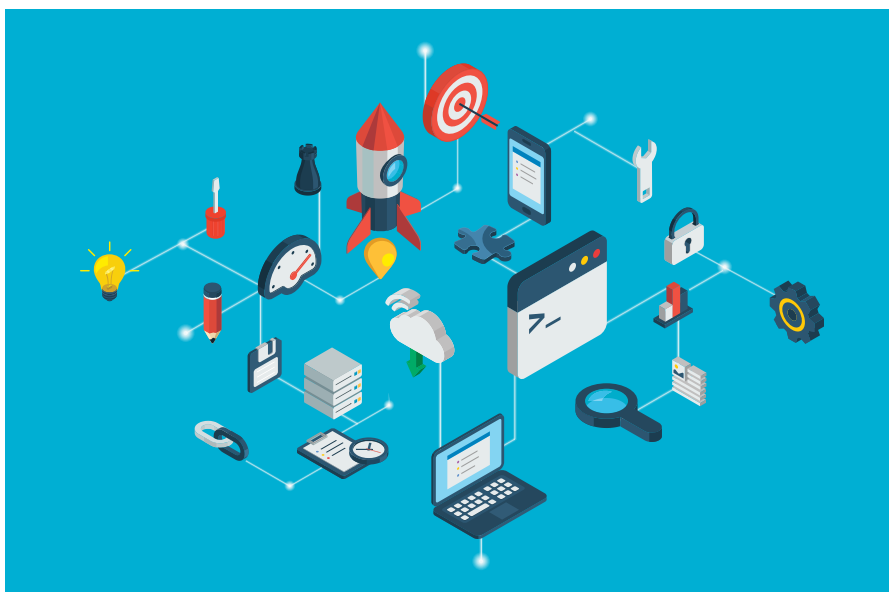




# Devrel, the Career Created for a Developer-Centric World

This explosion of tech-centered jobs and business needs—from computer programmers to technical solutions and support teams—has necessitated employees have a deep understanding of both business and technical aspects. One of the more recent careers to address these needs is the developer relations (also developer advocacy or evangelism) role.

So, what is this new role and what do folks with this title do? Technology companies need people who understand the needs of developers and can communicate, as well as demonstrate, how their technologies work in practice. These people *advocate* for a technology, integration, architecture, method, etc. with the goal to improve the daily work of developers, data sci-



They also need to *relate* this information to all practitioners and form trustworthy relationships with technical communities. Devrel teams often use the concerned technologies themselves, understanding strengths and limitations to provide informed education to communities on how to maximize their benefits or navigate issues. A combination of technical and communication/interpersonal skills make those in developer relations highly valuable to any company, as they can influence technology usage, product feedback loops, user understanding, or awareness of good technology practices.

The role of developer relations is still relatively new and developing, so the responsibilities can vary widely from

- ▶ **Training and education;** online or in-person course content, demonstrations, certifications, and more

► **Content;** technical blog posts, video presentations/demos, tutorials, best practices, etc.

► **Community engagement;** user forums, Stack Overflow, surveys, events, and more

► **Trial/gamification technology;** creating interactive playgrounds with a low-barrier entry point for users to evaluate/learn the technology. It usually requires minimal information from the user and little to no prior knowledge of the tech.

Other possible responsibilities can include community support, event organization/details (especially for developer-focused events), customer site training/technical solutions (complement sales reps by providing additional product breadth or depth), social media engagement (awareness and technical content), and building integration projects (often in response to user feedback).

## SKILLS REQUIRED

To be a technical advocate requires some level of technical knowledge. While you often don't need to be an expert in a specific language or system, you need to be able to relate, understand, and recommend technology and technical practices to heavily technical audiences. Just as with any field, it is vastly harder to help someone if you don't know or understand the subject matter yourself, and your credibility is much lower. No one can possibly know everything; however, audiences will look for people who can and want to help solve their problems or find answers to their questions. If you do not want to interact with code and learn technical skills, then developer relations is probably not the best fit for you.

Outside of technical skills, strength in some sort of communication form is required. Again, these skills can (and will) be improved on the job, but you provide the highest value if you can communicate and

share technical messages efficiently, authentically, and effectively. Whether you excel in video recording/editing, technical writing, or something else, being able to express technical concepts that are clear and broadly understood is a major component of the role, no matter what communication form that takes.

As mentioned earlier, the skills and requirements for this position include a wide range of options, which can be both a gift and a curse. It provides a plethora of opportunities for those looking to explore or expand their knowledge, but it can also require a broad spectrum of skills and demands almost too overwhelming for any one person to master. When companies and individuals balance these extremes, this role can provide enormous flexibility and opportunity for personal growth. If you have some mastery of technical and communication skills, plus a willingness to constantly learn, you are likely to excel and be successful in this field.

## PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

I have been a developer relations engineer for more than three years now, and I have found the role to be one of the most satisfying and rewarding jobs for me. I enjoy learning new things, gaining a deeper understanding of code, and sharing what I have learned with others. The role at Neo4j has offered a mix-and-match of all the things I previously mentioned, but I have specialized my efforts around backend technologies and developers.

I work with a team of extremely talented and diverse individuals from all over the world, which means I mostly work remotely (though office life is available, if desired). I can connect with colleagues from any part of the company through occasional travel, usually for technical events in the area. Though it's not all glamour, it certainly offers a variety and experience of different things that I wouldn't trade.

My daily tasks usually consist of writing code and content for technical demos or usage examples that I share through different mediums, usually written or spoken, such as blog posts, presentations, videos, and guides/tutorials. I gain deeper knowledge of my company's technologies, as well as learn and experiment with influential or up-and-coming technologies. I also gather resources, content, and maintain code supporting Neo4j's Educator Program. Some other tasks include updating/fixing code projects, testing beta features or products before release, building and maintaining personal rapport among technical communities, answering technical questions from users, and so much more. Boredom isn't a concern; I have endless opportunities for growth and technical development.

## IS IT FOR YOU?

While requirements can vary depending on the company and individual, I have found my Devrel job to offer the perfect blend of technical and interpersonal skills, with plenty of room for personal growth in all areas. There are many businesses looking for individuals who are passionate and knowledgeable about technology, giving you the opportunity to share technical expertise on code, solutions, processes, and best practices with technical audiences. Developer relations can offer you endless sources of learning and improving along your career path, too. I wish you all the best for whatever adventures your career may hold. Happy advocating.

### Biography

Jennifer Reif is a developer relations engineer at Neo4j, conference speaker, blogger, and an avid developer and problem-solver. She holds a master's degree in computer management and information systems and has worked with large enterprises to organize and make sense of widespread data assets and leverage them for maximum business value. She has worked with a variety of commercial and open-source tools and enjoys learning new technologies, sometimes on a daily basis! Her passion is finding ways to organize chaos and deliver software more effectively.

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