CATCHY

Five trends in
Developer Marketing

Catchy has identified five developer marketing trends as a result of our recent client partnerships.

Through 12 years of working on developer programs, Catchy has a unique horizontal view of the developer marketing industry. Our work includes global giants running programs with millions of developers through to start ups battling for share of voice in the land grab that is Web3. This gives us a perspective that may not be available to developer marketers working on a single brand or technology.

Trend 1: The Decentralization of Developers

Blockchain technology itself has always been interesting, but investing years of your career into it posed a risk for developers. Is it worth leaving a six-figure job with stock options and insurance to bet it all on something that might not succeed? Many developers stayed away because of this risk profile.

It wasn't until 2020 that crypto became mainstream, and the sector had trillions of dollars at its disposal to drive innovation. Suddenly, Web3 could offer top developers the same, if not better, incentive to move into the wild west in what felt like a blink of an eye.

In their race to become the next tech goliath, Web3 companies are destabilizing the developer economy with their newfound ability to pay top dollar for the top developer talent globally.

What is the impact on the developer marketing industry?

As Web3 increases in popularity, here's how you can build a company to compete and innovate in the next phase of the internet.

1. Increasing competition for developer capital

Developer marketing acquisition programs will be more critical than ever for companies that want to stay relevant and drive innovation. This is true of both internal developer recruitment and the third-party developer ecosystems that will drive innovation on Web3.

2. More focus on developer relations

Developer relations programs will become more critical as developers flock to the community-oriented Web3 space. Web3 moves faster. Active communities and influential figures work together to accelerate innovation. Developers will lose patience with corporate DevRel programs that are slow and lack human connection.

3. Growing need for developer marketing and education programs

Developer marketing in the form of content and education programs will be increasingly crucial for web3 organizations as they seek to convert 'crypto-curious' Web2 developers to Web3 and teach them the relevant skills they need to succeed in a new space.

Web3 is already shifting the landscape of the developer economy. Players in the space would be wise to meet this change head-on and adapt to the market's changing conditions before they are left behind.

> **Whether you are in it or not, Web3 will affect your ability to recruit developers. Keep them engaged with a clear future path for development and learning.**

Trend 2: The Influence of the Individual

Marketing has come a long way since Mad Men. The internet has changed the game for good, and how we communicate has had to change with it. Now, if you want to reach an audience, it's not enough to have a slick marketing campaign—you need to be prepared to put in some time and energy at the level of individuals.

Forget the days when businesses talked only to other businesses—now what you see is a matrix of interactions between individuals talking directly to each other. This might seem like a small change, but it has huge implications for your developer marketing strategy.

Influential people are often holding more power than influential brands. We see examples of this every day. A good example is Elon Musk. He has over 760 thousand more followers on Twitter than his business does—even though Tesla is a multi-billion dollar corporation and Musk is, well, a person. Hideo Kojima has three million followers on Twitter; his own company, Kojima Productions, which he founded and named after himself, has 438 thousand followers.

What does this mean? In a word: Influence. Not just the influence your brand carries, but the influence that individuals can carry for your brand—and themselves.

Leader		Brand
Elon Musk 79.6 Million	▶	**Tesla** 13.7 Million
Vitalik Buterin 3.4 Million	▶	**Ethereum** 2.3 Million
Hideo Kojima 3.1 Million	▶	**Kojima Productions** 440 Thousand

Developer marketers need to consider their developer marketing approach from two levels: bottom-up and top-down.

Bottom-up means you're targeting individual developers who will be able to use your products and have influence upwards from within their organizations. In 2022, no tech stack buying decision is made in a business today without input from the developer team. Marketing to these developers will impact technology decisions from the bottom up.


Top-down recognizes that your marketing channels extend far beyond just your corporate channels. Developers are no longer only getting information from brand accounts. You don't need to be an Elon Musk to have influence. There is an opportunity to unify the messaging from mid-level stakeholders with your company. Give them creative resources, give them a platform from which to speak, and the tools to tell a clear and concise message.

A great example is Sean Lee, former CEO of the Algorand Foundation. He has his own designer, content creator, and video team behind his personal content, which reflects the same vibe and level of professionalism of Algorand.

Developer marketing strategies from the past don't work anymore. The dissemination of information has never been faster, and developers are turning to different channels, and people, to stay on top. In today's world, the most effective marketing strategies are personal and leverage the influence of the individual.

Individuals are multipliers of marketing messages.
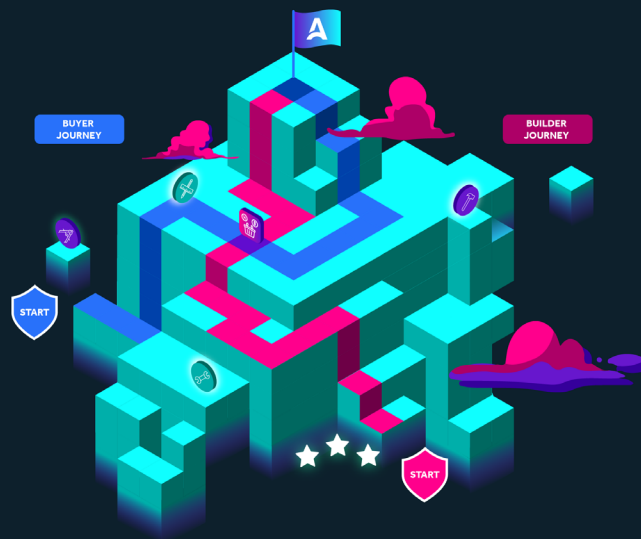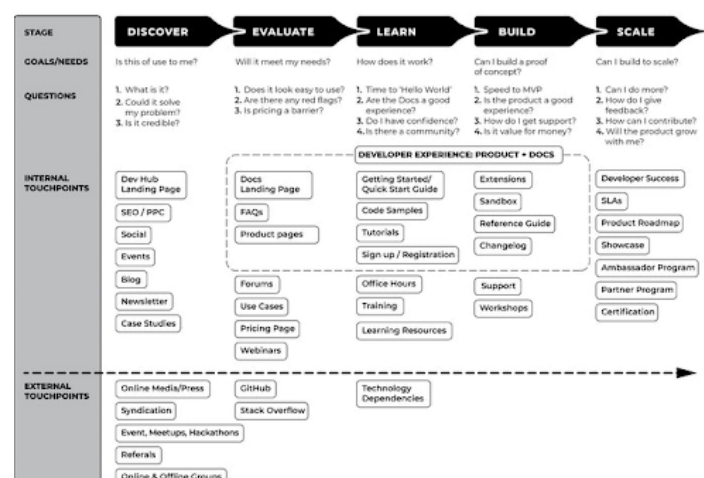
Trend 3: Integrated Buyer and Builder Journeys

As tech stacks have become more complex, so has the technology decision-making process. It is well known that developers have an increasing influence on buying decisions in organisations large and small, and you can see this in the large amount of content that has already been created on this topic. The tech stack is no longer just a "developer thing."

A quick Google search for 'b2b buyer journey' reveals Gartner's overwhelmingly complex buyer journey. A fairly standard buyer journey starts with problem identification, moves on to exploration and requirements, and ends with supplier selection. Here, the goal is to increase awareness of your products and services by making sure the right buyers know about them. You can do this through various channels, like content marketing, advertising, and events.
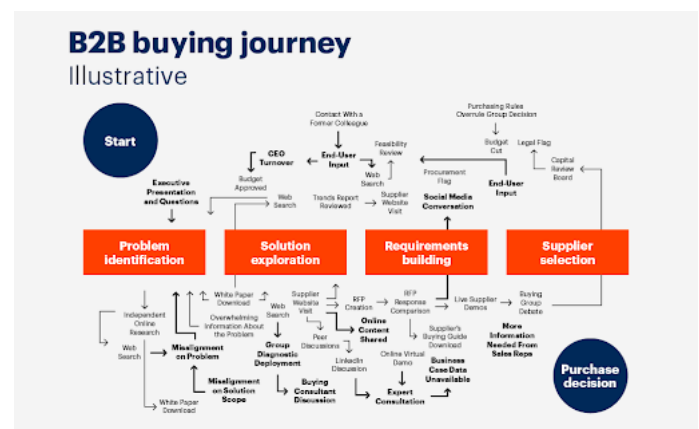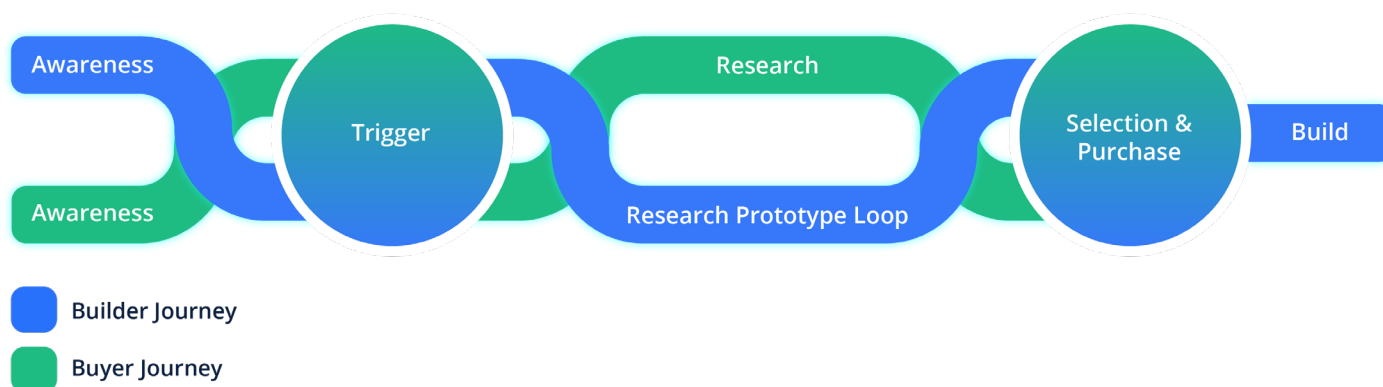
If you search for a developer journey map, you'll find the diagram below from DevRelBook. This diagram shows what a typical builder's journey looks like. There is a lot of information here about how developers tend to make decisions and what types of resources they use when making those decisions.

Integrated Builder / Buyer Journey

Builder Journey (blue)
Buyer Journey (green)

Awareness — Trigger — Research — Research Prototype Loop — Selection & Purchase — Build

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While these diagrams are great tools, Catchy's primary research has given us a clearer picture of what actually happens during a tech stack purchase. It has led us to approach journey mapping differently. A buyer's journey and a builder's journey do not exist separately. They are interdependent throughout the buying process.

Even though developers face complicated journeys, they are not isolated from the rest of their organizations. They interact with other teams and departments to build and maintain tech stacks and make purchasing decisions. They often influence how buyers evaluate and select new tools when allocating budgets in their departments. Ultimately, both builders and buyers decide what technology they are going to use.

How does this impact your developer marketing strategy?

Sales revenue and retention rates depend heavily on understanding both integrated journeys. Your marketing strategy must consider both buyers and builders at every stage of the buying process. Buyers want solutions. They drive purchasing

because they focus on achieving goals, creating business value, or solving a problem. Builders validate and implement. They are brought into the purchasing decision to apply their technical knowledge to study the feasibility of an opportunity. Although each audience may have different requirements and considerations, they both want to make sure they're making the right decision for their company.

> 💡 **Buyers will listen to you. But builders will listen to their peers and colleagues.**
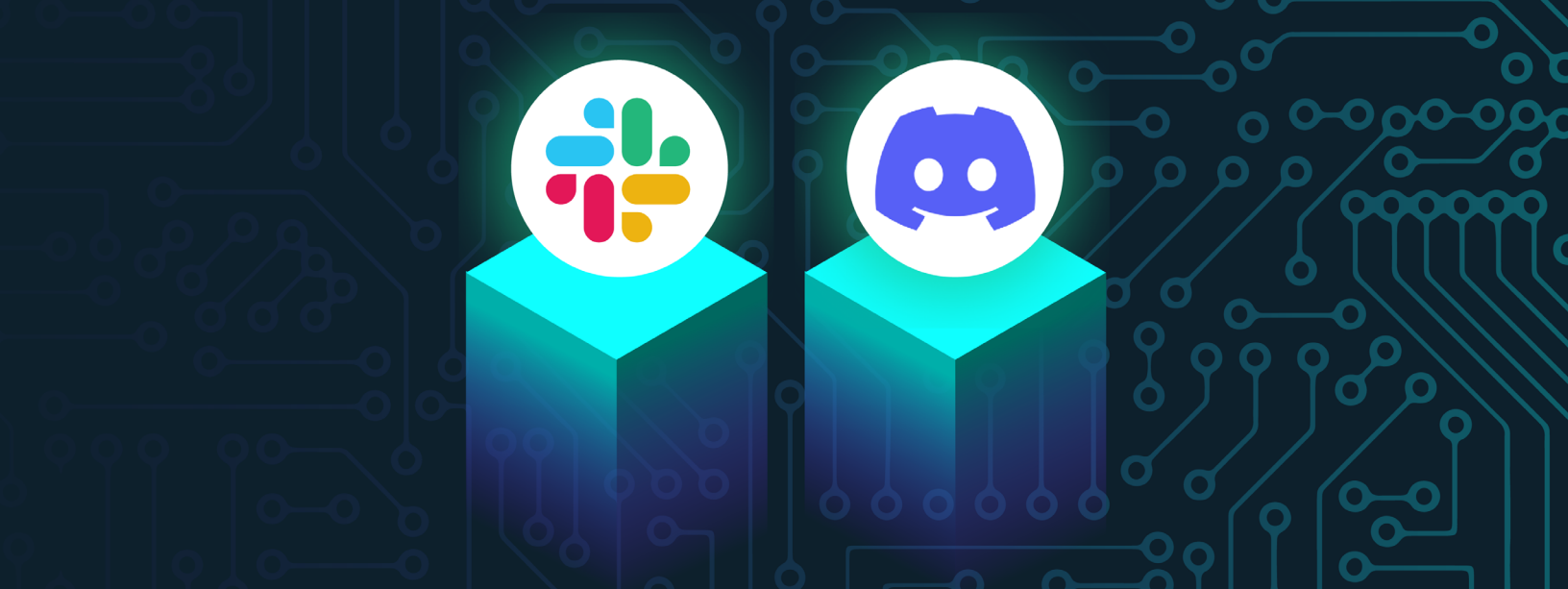
Trend 4: The Rise of Discord and Slack

In the State of Devrel Report 2021, the Top 10 list of Online Communication Channels shows a relatively unsurprising mix of developer marketing channels. Participants in the survey were asked to rank the top five online sites most effective at reaching and communicating with their developer communities. The top three remain unchanged year over year. First is Twitter, followed by GitHub, and then Company Website.

Discord and Slack are two channel-based communication platforms offering real-time messaging and file sharing. Although Slack has long been a standard for tech companies of all sizes, Discord has become a niche place for developers to collaborate, though originally founded as a communication platform for gamers.

Twitter	52.3%
GitHub	46.8%
Company Website	38.5%
YouTube	32.1%
Slack	31.2%
LinkedIn	27.5%
Stack Overflow	18.4%
Twitch	16.5%
Discord	13.8%
Medium	12.8%

Source: State of Developer Relationships Report 2021

We should consider why these channels have become increasingly important for developer communities.

Slack

Since its days as a tool just for developers, Slack has evolved into a business-wide team collaboration tool. Developers use Slack at work and in 3rd party communities to communicate and collaborate. Its popularity is mainly due to its ease of use. When a Slack account is created, any number of channels can be created and segmented according to projects or interests.

Slack has become particularly popular among developers because of its ability to integrate with other tools. Suppose a developer uses GitHub to collaborate on a project. They can easily integrate their GitHub account with Slack to receive notifications about issues and pull requests directly in Slack.

The Node.js community on Slack is another example. Node.js has an official Slack group where anyone can join, share knowledge about the framework, get help from other coders, learn more about JavaScript development, and discuss anything related to Node. There are thousands of members from all over the world in the group who share information every day. Platforms like this are incredibly valuable for open-source projects such as Node because they allow people learning how to code or developing on the framework to connect with others who can answer questions or provide insight into problems they are experiencing.

Discord

For many years, Discord has been the preferred way for gamers to communicate with each other and stream their gameplay in real-time. It has expanded beyond simply a gaming social network. With the free platform, users can build their own servers around any interest or purpose - including developer communities. With its intuitive interface, it's easy to jump into a conversation right away. Additionally, Discord has several features that appeal to users, such as voice chat channels, custom emojis (including animated ones), and support for multiple platforms.

Developers use Discord much like any other online communication channel to facilitate discussion and community building. But the thing that makes Discord so unique is its social aspect: you can join multiple communities and have conversations about almost anything. It feels more like a social neighborhood than a business communication tool like Slack.

One of the most active developer communities on Discord is Ethereum, a blockchain network that supports the Ether cryptocurrency. Although the Ethereum community was once on Slack, they migrated to Discord when they were hit with a wave of new users and needed a better way to manage their large community.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to building and managing a thriving developer community. Consider your unique product or service offering and tailor your strategy. Both Slack and Discord are effective tools for building communities with developers. One may be better suited than the other, depending on your goals with your community channels.

> Your developer ecosystem is a mash up of smaller communities. Don't ignore rising stars.

Ethereum Discord Server

Trend 5: The Death of Corporate Memphis

It seems like developer marketers have had a design identity crisis over the past few years. The design aesthetic adopted by developer brands was a corporate, tech-inspired look: flat colors, sans serif fonts, and often just a simple wordmark as a logo. Take a look at the websites of Dropbox, MailChimp, Slack, Buffer, Hubspot, etc., and they all look very similar—a bit like a tech company from the 1990s.

This style of branding has become well known as "Corporate Memphis." There is even an online generator for Corporate Memphis logos that you can use to enter your brand name. It left the developer marketing design space feeling stale and uninspiring.

## Examples of Corporate Memphis style
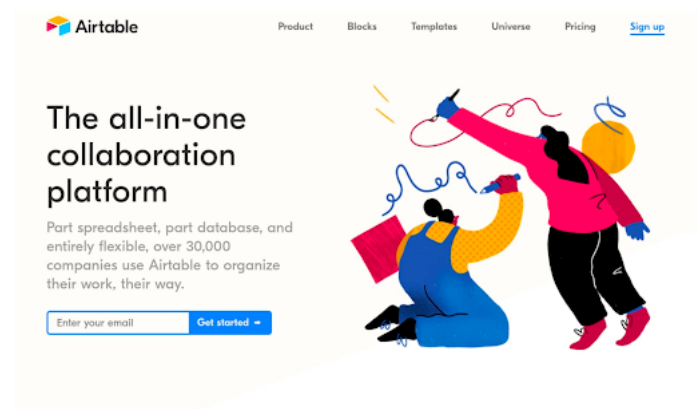
As technology advances, innovating companies are elevating design aesthetics. With more agility to keep up with design trends, these are often gaming companies or those in the innovation space like Blockchain. With a better pulse on the market, companies can rapidly move their design direction forward.

The aesthetic replacing Corporate Memphis has shifted into the abstract, vibrant, and colorful. Combined with 3D characters, motion, and shapes, this has produced striking results. Branding like this often feels like digital fine art because it feels exciting, bespoke, and bold.

Unity Gaming Services

Unity Gaming Services is an excellent example of this new style. On their blog, Unity says of their new 3-dimensional design: "It's now fully 3D; symbolically, it's where our technology (the X-axis), Unity creators (the Y-axis), and the incredible experiences they create (Z-axis) intersect."
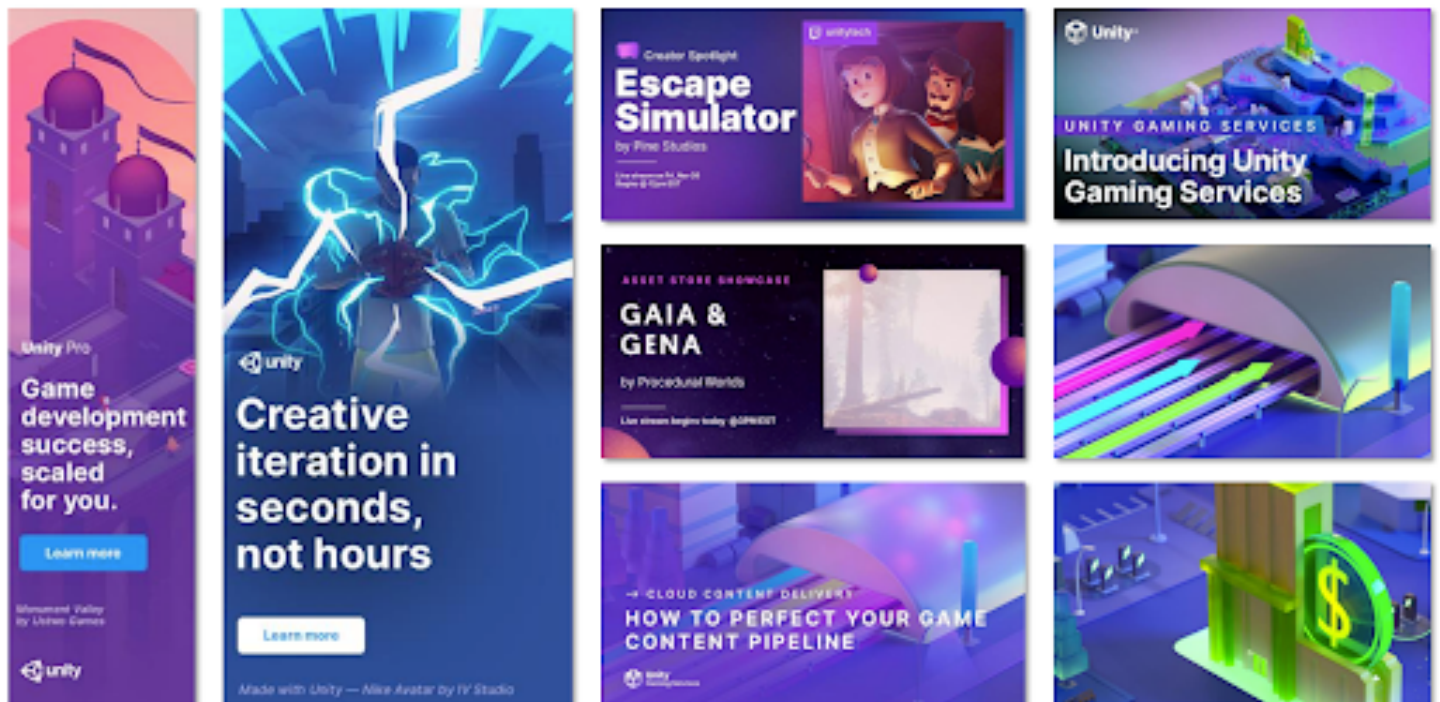
Cosmos

Another brand where we see this energized movement into the bold, iridescent 3D design is Cosmos, a developer of innovative tools for Web 3. According to the company, the branding represents an acceleration into the new world of decentralization and interoperability.
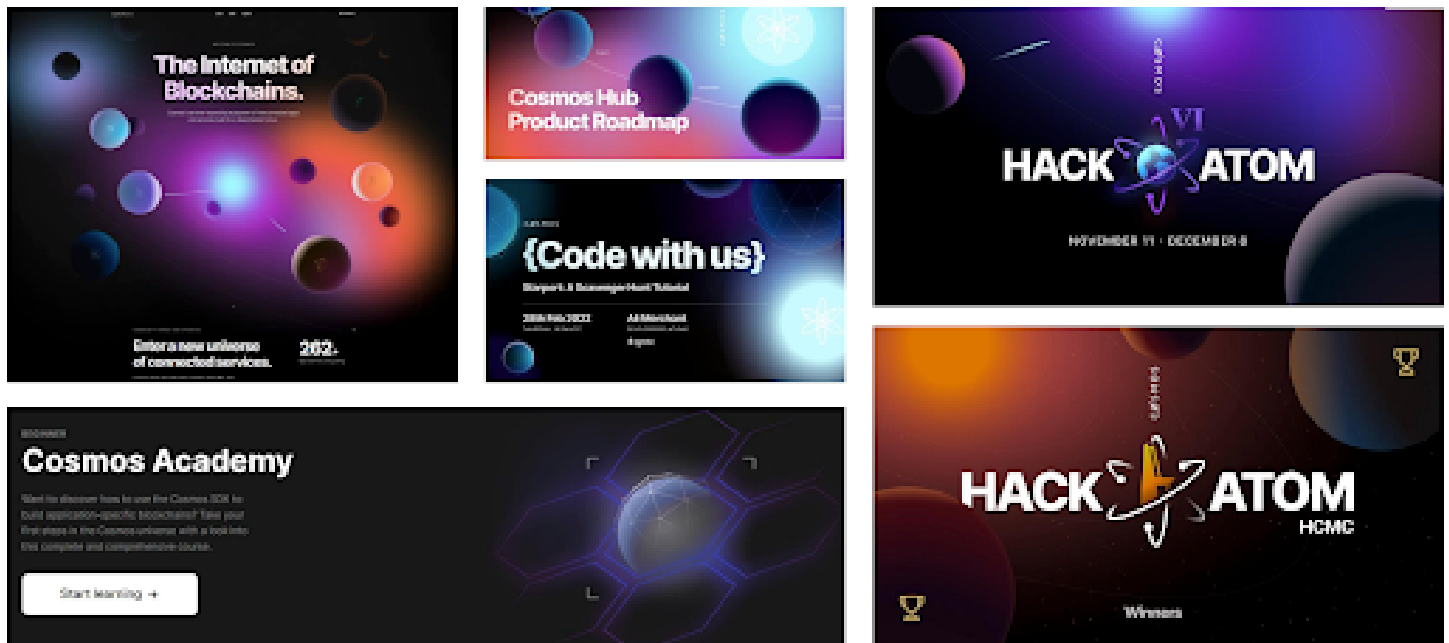
Like in previous cycles of design history, brands are learning that in order to stand out visually, they must avoid slipping into what already feels familiar and easy. Now is the time to be creative and visually exciting with your brand.

> 💡 **Be bold in your designs, developers will notice.**

Would you like to discuss your developer marketing strategy with Catchy?

Email richard@catchyagency.com to start the conversation.