

WHAT IS A CITIZEN DEVELOPER?



In a time when enterprise businesses are rapidly evolving, cloud computing offers new ways for them to expand and increase their business footprint. One such way businesses are growing to meet the demands of their customers is by relying on citizens without formal training to create programs that allow them to deploy resources, services, and software. In this article, we'll underscore the importance of citizen developers to enterprise businesses.

What is a citizen developer?

A citizen developer is a title given to a software developer whose skills are not defined by formal training, or who may have some formal training or certifications but hasn't worked in the field or trained extensively. The term "citizen" in this context implies layman. A citizen developer can work in a number of different platforms that help them create successful software, but the key trait of a citizen developer is they create software packaged for enterprise businesses.

For example, using tools like Amazon Web Services (AWS), paraprofessional developers can create business-enriching software that businesses can use to build their brand, performing essential functions and tasks without as much heavy lifting as traditional development environments.

[Infrastructure-as-a-Service \(IaaS\) and Platform-as-a-Service \(PaaS\)](#) web services have paved the way for citizen developers. Gartner was among the first to acknowledge the transition of the business general populous from laypeople to citizen developers. Today, Gartner asserts [anyone can be a developer](#), and this revolution is one that helps businesses save money.

[Low-code and no-code technology](#) make it easier than ever for anyone to work as a citizen developer with the right set of adjacent skills and experiences.

Who should be a citizen developer?

The ideal citizen developer has the following traits:

- **Recognizes business needs:** A key component of becoming a citizen developer is having a keen ability to recognize the needs of various businesses. If you're looking to develop within your own organization and reskill or upskill, you should be able to identify how you can fill the needs that meet your company goals. If you're looking to create applications for a broader range of business users, then finding your niche and understanding their needs is tantamount to success.
- **Acts as a solution architect:** If you're someone whose natural curiosity and divergent thinking make you a strong problem-solver who could come up with a number of good solutions for a single problem, you could be a shoo-in for becoming a citizen developer.
- **Enjoys learning:** Becoming a citizen developer requires taking on new skills, learning new platforms, coding styles, and more. The only people qualified for this type of position are those who are willing to learn and who are capable of being self-taught.
- **Works with little oversight:** A citizen developer may work for a company or may work by themselves. Either way, in order to sell their role as a developer without the former training that many developers have, they need to be able to work independently and produce high-quality, creative business solutions.
- **Take constructive criticism:** Developers have to be able to take constructive criticism, and it's even more important when you haven't been formally trained in development. A client or manager may have feedback for you to help you sharpen your performance, allowing you to become more effective. Taking feedback and applying it to your work is an essential skill.
- **Role adjacency:** If your goal is to upskill from your current job, it can be helpful to have role adjacency. A role that applies math and logic and has a basic familiarity with some coding is ideal for people who want to crossover into development. Some examples of this might be a data analyst, business analyst, database administrator, IT administrator, or a [DevOps](#) release coordinator.
- **Passionately sells their cause:** Importantly, you may need to sell the idea of a citizen development position to your organization or potential clients. The ability to exude your passion for development with a level of sales acumen that makes clear the benefits to the person or organization you are selling it to is essential.

The role of software development in enterprise business

Software has long played a role in business, but that role has evolved over the past decade.

Years ago, it was commonplace for businesses to own large pieces of technology that are expensive to purchase and operate, like mainframes and in-house servers. Using these tools, employees could gain access to important company information, collaborating securely without compromising company or data.

Today, cloud computing makes it easier to gain access to secure data and files, to share ideas, collaborate, and even develop new software and services that play a vital role in the success of a

company by filling a need for employees and customers, alike. Because of the advances in cloud computing, businesses have been able to undergo a [digital transformation](#) which allows them to fully digitize their business model.

At the heart of a fully-digitized business model is Software-as-a-Service (SaaS). Whether creating cloud software for your internal customers or your employees, making it easier for them to do their job faster and more efficiently from anywhere, or for your external customers who rely on services to power their businesses, finances, and personal lives, there's a need for a polished developer that can make independent decisions.

How to become a citizen developer

There are two primary ways to become a citizen developer:

The first way to become a citizen developer is to upskill or reskill in your current job. If you have a job with software development adjacency, you may not need extensive ramp-up time to start as a citizen developer. You should identify the need for the role in your business, and use your keen salesmanship skills to pitch it to your IT management team as a role you can fill. You should come prepared to talk about why you are the best person for the citizen developer job, including skills, experience, and alignment with the company mission that make you a good choice for the role.

Another way you can become a citizen developer is to do it from home. You can practice with the extensive resources offered by companies like Amazon and Google that encourage software creators to make and share software on their dedicated platforms. Once you feel like you have leveled-up your skill as a developer on a coveted enterprise platform, you can offer your services in a freelance capacity using platforms, like Upwork, that make it easy to reach enterprise businesses looking for citizen developer help.