APIs: Empowering the Connectivity Industry for Explosive Growth

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As the demand for connectivity services continues to skyrocket, teams push for more integrated internal workflows, and trading partners look to provide seamless processes for an amazing client experience, network buyers and sellers are faced with new challenges. How can they provide fast, scalable services to each other, within their internal clients and all the way through to each other's customers? In today's cloud-centric digital world, speed, scale, analytics, and integrated experiences matter. It's clear that connecting providers and internal systems before an order has even been created via application programming interfaces (APIs) and automation is the future state of our industry—and the only way to buy and sell in our increasingly connected world.

When searching for any network partner, their API use should be a prime consideration. When investigating new partners, ask about their API stack: do they invest in updates? Do they provide customers with support and suggestions on how to properly tap into it? Do they offer a standards-based scalable framework that will enable faster onboarding and better long-term engagement? Are they fast and do they handle your multi-site, multi-product needs at scale in seconds and minutes, not hours and days? Answers to these and other API-related questions will help you understand how they—and you—can use API tools to empower your business for growth.

Introducing APIs

An API is a set of definitions and code that allows two pieces of software to communicate with one another in an automated, intelligent way. APIs act as messengers, delivering one application's request to another and returning a response in near real-time (think milliseconds). The trend toward integration has been steadily increasing at a rapid rate over the past few years, driven by increasingly sophisticated ecosystems and business processes, as well as the growing need to better encapsulate and share information among disparate systems.

By leveraging APIs and automation, connectivity buyers and sellers can improve efficiency and agility and offer integration, scalability, and innovation opportunities—all of which are crucial to maintaining a competitive advantage in the marketplace. When tapping into software platforms that house strong data, APIs inject much-needed automation into business processes, allowing companies to increase revenue, extend customer reach and value, integrate backend data and applications, and more. Legacy BSS and OSS stacks, on the other hand, result in inflexible and slow operational processes with siloed architecture, expensive maintenance and upgrade paths, laggard development cycles, and less-than-ideal customer experience.

Bridging the gap between customer expectation and reality

The bottom line is that consumers expect services to be faster and easier—and that extends to the telecom world. An IT director can jump into a public cloud dashboard, click a button, and seamlessly spin up terabytes worth of data. If that person then has to wait 90 days to execute on the connectivity that's required, the disconnect between customer expectation and reality becomes a glaring chasm. APIs bridge that gap.

Let's look at a few of the ways APIs and automation can drive results for modern telcos and channel companies.

Automating the go-to-market process

There's no escaping it: network operators need to digitize and automate the go-to-market process. Everyone in the connectivity ecosystem has a responsibility to either present a strong API strategy or become obsolete. Service providers need to invest in seamless communication with the other parts of the ecosystem, to ensure they're collectively providing the customer with a holistic, best-in-class service.

For instance, if a service provider wants to know where all the network operators are within its footprint, that company needs to be able to leverage an API-enabled platform to pull up a list of available buildings quickly and seamlessly. That service provider can bulk query in real-time, and network operators can send building list data among each other and then effectively advertise their lists to partners. APIs also help customers price their products to win while maximizing profit margin.

For network operators attempting to sell network services, for instance, APIs help to communicate:

- All on-net and near-net buildings, a database that's constantly updated (when near-net locations move to on-net, sites adjust).
- Near-net impediments, such as railroads or bridges.
- Full pricing catalog, which has been optimized based on the latest competitive and geographical data.

Speed and efficiency

APIs and automation can have a significant impact on the speed and efficiency with which network operators and managed service providers can conduct various business processes. For example, APIs enable faster and more efficient processes for ordering and provisioning services—a process that traditionally requires significant manual effort and coordination between different departments and

systems. With the help of APIs, this process can be streamlined and automated. Buyers can make orders in real time, while sellers can automatically provision services and deliver them to customers faster. Similarly, when it comes to resolving issues and managing network performance, APIs and automation can monitor networks, analyze performance, and manage configurations. All this reduces the risk of errors, resulting in more reliable and stable networks. Customer satisfaction and customer loyalty improve accordingly.

Innovation and differentiation

APIs are the foundation for automation within the telco world and can be seen as the basis for automation and innovation absorption. Without APIs, the simplest tweak within the interface would require manual manipulation multiple times across multiple systems, which is not only time consuming but also extremely error prone.

APIs also play an important role in helping telcos and managed service providers (MSPs) stand out in the market. APIs provide an open platform for developers and third-party providers to build on top of existing platforms and services, which can drive innovation and differentiation by creating new products and services that enhance the customer experience and improve business growth. Also, APIs enable MSPs to create a more personalized experience for customers, which can be a key differentiator in a crowded marketplace.

One area where APIs are particularly useful for innovation and differentiation, broadly speaking, is through the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) capabilities. Businesses can easily integrate AI and ML capabilities into their platforms and services, allowing them to offer new and innovative solutions to customers. For example, AI-powered chatbots can provide real-time customer support, while ML algorithms can help optimize network performance and predict potential issues before they occur. What's more, APIs can enable the use of data from various sources and analyze it using AI and ML algorithms to gain new insights and identify patterns. This can lead to the development of new products and services that better meet customer needs, as well as more targeted marketing and sales efforts.

Improved decision-making

APIs bring together real-time data and insights from various sources, including customer interactions, network performance, and market trends. This data can be used to better understand customer behavior and preferences, identify areas for improvement, and make more informed decisions about product development, pricing, marketing, and other business operations. In the connectivity industry, network operator APIs can ensure optimal network buying decisions based on product availability and cost.

By analyzing data from customer interactions, businesses can gain insights into the most common issues customers face and the most effective ways to resolve them. This can help them optimize their support processes, reduce response times, and improve customer satisfaction. Similarly, by monitoring network performance metrics such as latency, bandwidth utilization, and packet loss, businesses can quickly identify and resolve network issues before they impact customers—this can help minimize downtime and service interruptions, leading to improved customer retention and loyalty. APIs can also provide access to market trends and competitive intelligence, enabling businesses to stay updated on industry developments and adjust their strategies accordingly.

Flexibility and scalability

APIs and automation can provide a significant boost to connectivity and companies' ability to be flexible and scalable, enabling them to quickly adapt to changes in the market and customer needs. By exposing their services through APIs, companies can quickly integrate with other applications and services, allowing them to implement new functionality in near real time.

Conclusion

Overall, APIs and automation have the potential to transform the way buyers and sellers operate by improving efficiency and customer experience while also reducing costs and driving sales. And in our industry, the reach and accessibility of a connectivity company's API stack is critical. Buyers are demanding APIs from their selling partners, so they can seamlessly process incoming data and pull it into whichever system they choose. This offers many benefits, allowing buyers to leverage important data faster and more accurately, thereby shortening the sales cycle and raising the win rate. This is a true "win-win" situation, with only those who haven't yet adopted this level of automation on the losing side. Automating a "one-to-many" and a "many-to-one" data stream with the help of APIs is the only way to scale and win in the digital world.