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## Plug-and-Play Business APIs Transform Dynamic Services Landscape

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Communications service providers worldwide are on a transformational journey to provide more dynamic services that address enterprise requirements for cloud-like experiences. Many have introduced or plan to introduce Network-as-a-Service (NaaS) solutions that combine on-demand connectivity, application assurance, cybersecurity, and multicloud-based services to help boost enterprise productivity, business agility, and competitiveness in the digital economy.



[MEF](#) recently released a new [State of the Industry Report - Paradigm Shift: Automating Business Functions Between Service Providers](#)—a must-read for industry professionals seeking to maximize their revenue opportunities for NaaS and other next-generation services that will ultimately be delivered across a global ecosystem of automated networks. The report is one of the industry's most comprehensive research efforts ever conducted on the topic of inter-provider service automation, drawing upon conversations with 360+ individuals from 123+ companies as well as proprietary survey data.

The report explores key trends reshaping the communications services landscape; the importance of creating an automated ecosystem based on standardized APIs; current and future global adoption of standardized business process APIs; the compelling business case for adoption of these APIs; and resources available to speed API adoption. The report contains valuable information to help accelerate the automation journey regardless of a company's starting point.

Five key themes running through the report are summarized below.

**Standards-based automation is a must-have for industry players to maximize revenue growth opportunities for NaaS and other next-generation services.** There is widespread recognition of the need for service providers (SPs) to step up collaboration efforts to meet future customer service requirements on an end-to-end basis. Advanced capabilities like capacity on-demand, real-time inventory, route-diverse selection, usage-based pricing, QoS-level guarantees, dynamic capacity management, end-to-end security, and so forth, will require extensive collaboration among various players. These partners could include retail service providers, wholesale service providers, hyperscalers,

technology solution providers, data center providers, and others.

The case is rather obvious that automation is required among ecosystem partners to reduce friction, remove potential error inherent in manual processes, speed service delivery, speed time to revenue, make dynamic changes, bill for on-demand services, etc. The question we often encounter at MEF is how a company should go about automation with partners.

We believe it is critical that automation must be standards-based. This automation must happen throughout the supply chain where all parties in the supply chain adopt a standard set of processes and APIs at both the business process and operational levels.

The industry risks fragmentation, slower innovation, and unnecessary waste of resources if companies implement their own customized, pairwise APIs with various partners at a time when standardized APIs are available and becoming widely adopted.

**Standards-based APIs are laying the foundation for the industry to support dynamic services and NaaS solutions across automated networks.** For nearly a decade, industry organizations like MEF, TM Forum, and the ITW Global Leaders' Forum have been driving towards a shared goal of enabling dynamic services across an automated ecosystem based on standardized APIs. The market has now reached a turning point where we clearly see the pieces falling into place for industry players to confidently envision inter-provider NaaS—and other dynamic services powered by standards-based APIs—becoming commonplace within the next two or three years.

This paradigm shift is significantly enabled by MEF's development of standards-based Lifecycle Service Orchestration (LSO) business process APIs and operational APIs, which provide the high fidelity (tightly defined context), plug-and-play interoperability, and extensibility required to enable service providers to “invest once” and efficiently scale implementations with many partners and services. Before the end of 2023, MEF plans to introduce LSO APIs for more than 20 separate functions in the complete

lifecycle of a typical service. MEF LSO APIs build upon and enhance TM Forum Open APIs and cover the following:

- **Automated business functions:** address validation, site query, product catalog, product offering qualification, product-offering availability discovery, quote, price discovery, product order, product inventory, trouble ticketing and incidents, appointment, work order, and billing and settlement.
- **Automated operational functions:** service provisioning and control, service inventory, service function testing, performance monitoring profiles, passive real-time and historical statistics, threshold crossing alert profile and alerts, streaming management, and fault management.

MEF also is committed to supporting nearly 20 product and service payloads tied to LSO API envelopes (functions), including subscriber and operator Ethernet, Internet Access, SD-WAN, Secure Access Service Edge (SASE), Secure Service Edge (SSE), satellite connectivity, 5G fixed wireless access, wavelength, edge compute, and other services.

**Automated ecosystem transformation is starting with global adoption of MEF LSO business APIs.** The industry has now reached a critical milestone on the migration path to efficiently building out a standards-based automated networking ecosystem with growing adoption of LSO APIs used to automate business functions between service providers. These APIs are collectively known as LSO Sonata APIs. MEF also has standardized a similar set of LSO business APIs, known as LSO Cantata APIs, for use between SPs and enterprise customers.

At the time we published our report in mid-May, we had identified 122+ SPs in various stages of the LSO Sonata adoption lifecycle—from interest through to production. At the time of this publication, we are now tracking more than 135 SPs in the adoption lifecycle. This includes Tier 1, 2, and 3 service providers based in every geographic region of the world.

The number of companies in production with LSO Sonata APIs is expected to increase rapidly from **30 today to 69+ by the end of 2024 and surge ahead in the following year**. Many of the service providers in production or committed to production are listed in the report.

**MEF LSO business APIs are delivering real-world benefits for implementers.** The report offers extensive discussion of the benefits realized when companies shift from manual processes to scalable, plug-and-play LSO Sonata business APIs. Among key benefits, the APIs enable service providers to:

- Improve service delivery, with an average 25% reduction in order cycle times
- Accelerate time-to-revenue on every LSO API-enabled order
- Boost revenue opportunities by becoming a preferred provider
- Enhance customer experience
- Migrate toward more competitive, dynamic services

**Many resources are available to help service providers on their automation journey.** Now is a great time to engage with the MEF community to learn more about LSO business and operational APIs and start your implementation journey. A large volume of LSO resources, mature software development kits (SDKs), growing experience of LSO community professionals, and an expanding list of LSO solution providers are helping accelerate development, test, and implementation times for LSO business APIs.

As an example, it would not be uncommon for a typical Tier 2 service provider to be able to implement a set of LSO Sonata APIs for address validation, product offering qualification, quote, and order in 3 to 5 months with the help of an LSO solution provider.

The bottom line is companies who implement standardized LSO APIs as sellers and/or buyers are poised to enjoy growing benefits as the LSO-enabled community expands. Those who fall outside of this group are likely to be at a growing disadvantage as more competitors in their regions become LSO-enabled. The market is on track to have LSO Sonata-based quoting and ordering available in at least 50 countries by the end of 2023.

To learn more, access the report [here](#).