API Integration: The Developer Community as a Critical Resource

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In today's application programming interface (API) economy, developer teams spend a lot of time evaluating third-party APIs that can help them build superior functionality into their apps. However, in addition to looking for productive and capable APIs, they should also be tapping the associated developer community. This is a key differentiator in API integration and a critical resource that helps developers successfully leverage the API knowledge base to shorten time to market and debug coding issues.

When choosing an API integration, enterprises should look for one that is supported by an active, engaged, and honest developer community.

Since the earliest days of the internet, developers have looked for communities online where they can exchange information, and API integration is no different. From discussing new features, projects, and code branches to sharing the latest hacks and workarounds, the developer community is an important consideration when deciding which APIs to use for your communications platform-as-a-service (CPaaS) from those available on the open CPaaS market.

Evaluating Developer Community When Selecting an API Integration

Developer community is an important consideration for companies deciding which API to use to back up their applications. Investing in an integration without a robust developer community behind it is like buying a new car without a dealer network: If you have problems, you'll have a hard time finding help. So when thinking about support for integrating APIs, consider whether the developer community is:

- Active

- Engaged

- Professional

- Moderated

- Honest

In addition to these fundamental characteristics, see if the API developer community hosts content produced by developer advocates or other company subject matter experts (SMEs). While you should expect some discussion of specific third-party API features and product descriptions, it should neither contain overt marketing messaging nor bash competitive solutions from other providers. The Nexmo platform, which powers the family of Vonage communication APIs, has a developer community that meets the mark on the previously mentioned criteria.

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API Developer Communities Found across the Internet

You may think of a developer community as a single, monolithic entity. But when it comes to CPaaS and integrating APIs, the developer community for specific solutions can be found across the internet. For example, popular forums for discussion of features, limitations, workarounds, and alternatives can be found on Quora and Stack Overflow. If you search for "Nexmo" on those sites, you will find current and archival posts about short messaging service (SMS), virtual numbers, language support in Laravel and Java, and lively discussions around other topics. Developers can post questions and get answers from fellow developers or SMEs directly involved with the provider.

While not strictly considered a developer community, the GitHub Nexmo Developer repository contains many developer contributions that have helped improve the integration. There you will find more than 80,000 code samples and scripts that developers have supplied. You can copy and paste many of these into your own app development to shorten your time to market. In addition, you can have peace of mind that other like-minded developers — if not actual Nexmo SMEs — will have likely tested the code. If you have any doubts, you can click on the developer profile to see his or her contribution history and determine whether it meets the level of sophistication you seek.

The Nexmo GitHub code repository is moderated by professional developer advocates, but there can be latency between when a developer posts an issue and when an answer is supplied. If you need immediate help with an operational problem on your application integration, you should contact customer support. But if you need real-time API feedback from other developers or developer advocates,

you can join the open Nexmo Developer Community Slack channel. Like any Slack channel, participants can join in communication threads that are of particular interest to them and then leave the thread when it is no longer relevant. You can also start your own thread if you do not see the topic you want to address. Discussions can be started directly with Nexmo SMEs or other community members if you have a more sensitive question that you do not wish to discuss in public.

The Nexmo Slack channel is free to join — you only need to supply a valid email address. Once verified, you can immediately dive in and start talking with the developer community. You will find one or more Nexmo developer advocates online at most times to answer your questions and offer other insights.

Beyond the API Developer Community

Several other resources you should consider in API developer community include the open source developer-related information on Hacker News (located on the Y Combinator site), SME how-to articles on ProgrammableWeb and other online developer publications, and blogs such as In Context from Nexmo. Developers and developer advocates who are active in the community frequently author articles that illustrate specific examples of application development and integration with APIs. If you feel up to it, you can even contribute your own content.

To get even more cutting-edge ideas about application integration with APIs, Nexmo regularly participates in TechCrunch hackathons worldwide and other regional events. These around-the-clock competitions challenge developers to find quick solutions to communications problems using existing APIs and code bases. In essence, it is a deadline-driven laboratory for troubleshooting fixes to real-world problems that you probably face today. When appropriate, Nexmo developer advocates share these innovations across the developer community.

In short, developer communities are an underappreciated but highly important part of any API integration, and their importance should not be overlooked.

To learn more about the Nexmo platform and communications APIs, reach out to Vonage Business.