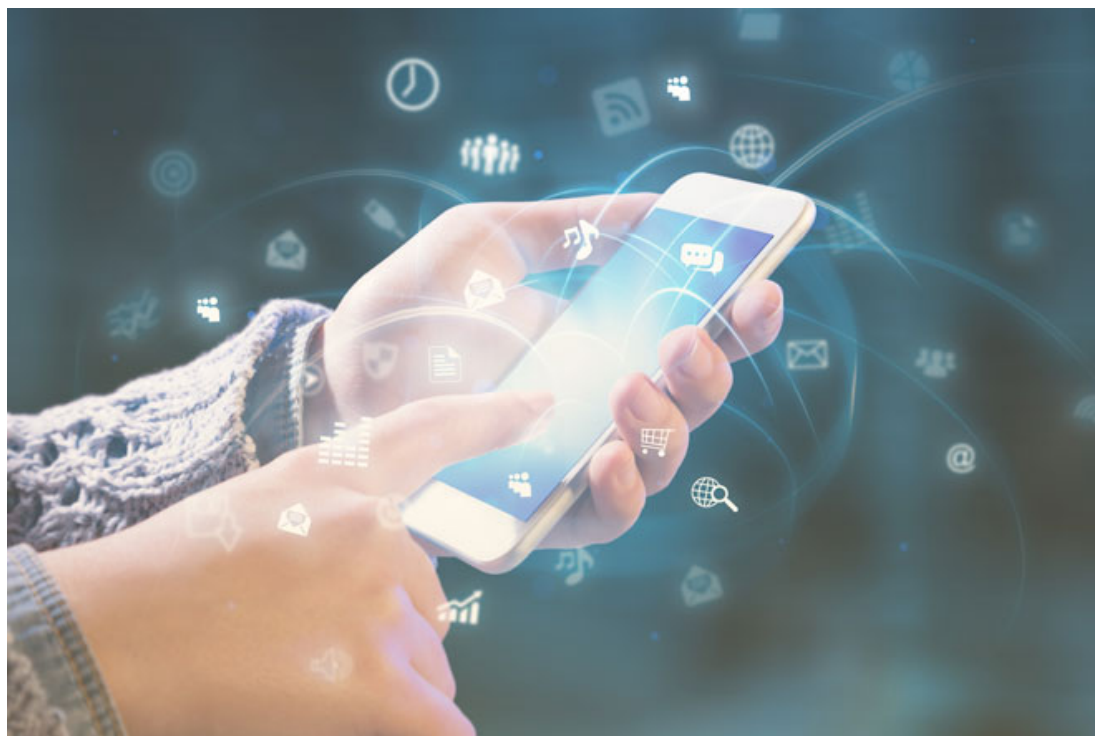


API Doesn't Mean 'Any Programmability's Interesting.' Why an API Platform > Application APIs



By **BRYAN STOKES** - VP, Product Management

APIs are a hot topic here at Enterprise Connect this year. A number of players in the enterprise cloud communications space are announcing their flavors of these application programming interfaces. I certainly understand why so many UC companies have joined Vonage in advancing programmability: APIs are a powerful technology for augmenting and enhancing the capabilities of cloud communications products with custom features.



Not all APIs are created equal: some are far more powerful than others.

I wouldn't blame you for getting excited about the possibilities of that concept—I certainly am—but not all APIs are created equal. Don't fall into the trap of defining API as any programmability's interesting. To truly grasp the value of an API, it's important to ask: how powerful are the resources to which this API is an interface?

If it is the type of API that you will hear vendors tout as an extension to their application, it essentially is a connector that exposes their product's predefined feature set to developers for some custom programming. Again, there's nothing wrong with that. I'm a fan of APIs and if some extensions to your deployment of a UC platform deliver incremental value within its available features, great.

But that's a far cry from the types of APIs we offer and utilize at Vonage. The true power of an API comes from the services it can deliver beyond what's available in your chosen cloud communications platform. Communications platform-as-a-service (CPaaS) APIs, such as those offered in our API platform, Nexmo, allow you to integrate with any number of powerful third-party communications services to create wholly new communications experiences that “off-the-shelf” applications just can't support, either natively or through application APIs.

What Do CPaaS APIs Offer That's Different?

For a little more clarity, take the Number Programmability feature we've announced for Vonage Business Cloud (VBC) customers. Leveraging virtual phone numbers and the Nexmo Voice API, Number Programmability enables businesses to build voice applications that can easily integrate with voice services such as natural language processing, bot platforms, as well as transcription and translation services from providers including IBM Watson and Salesforce Einstein.



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All sorts of innovation can result from having direct access to those types of services. Number Programmability allowed us to build a simple paging application that checks a busy call recipient's Google Calendar for available times and allows the caller to schedule a callback time. But that only scratches the surface of what's possible. Because the One Vonage platform is underpinned by our programmable communications platform, we can offer easy integration with CPaaS APIs across our entire UC and contact center solutions stack.

Ultimately, having both a cloud communications application's native features and the option to leverage CPaaS APIs will allow you to build workflows that deliver the most value to your business and your customers. That can be a unique use case that boosts productivity or a custom application that alleviates a whole set of customer pain points. You're not building from scratch but you do have the flexibility and tools to build a 10 percent improvement that truly differentiates your business.

I'd be doing my fellow builders a disservice if I didn't also note that the developer experience around different APIs isn't created equal either. A CPaaS API like Nexmo's Voice API, for example, comes not only with a richer set of call controls for orchestration and integration, but it's also cosigned by a community of some 700,000 developers. And expanding to the other Nexmo APIs for programmable messaging, video, and user authentication is easy.

So, as you're processing all the API announcements and trying to sort out what they could mean for your business, remember: API doesn't stand for any programmability's interesting. Product APIs won't deliver the flexibility, power, or potential for innovation that CPaaS APIs do.

Find out what your business can achieve with Number Programmability.