Customising your video communication solution with APIs

By David Sales   5 Aug 2013

Today's working environment is more mobile than ever. Employees are no longer bound to their desks but can now work from home, on the road, while travelling, irrespective of what part of the world they are in. This trend of moving away from a traditional bricks-and-mortar environment to an on-demand, "on the go" workforce has largely been driven by new communication media, such as tablets and smartphones.

However, this trend also presents challenges to organisations. Users expect technology and communication to be available on-demand in an easy-to-use, efficient and reliable manner.

Furthermore, they require access from any device, including notebooks/ultrabooks, smartphones and tablets, and do not want to wait for the IT department to set this up. For communication tools like video collaboration (VC), achieving this on-demand mobility has typically involved complex third-party integrations, but this is changing. With the introduction of Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) onto VC platforms, customisation and integration is simplified, enabling organisations to tailor their VC solutions to meet the unique needs of their organisation and employees.

When using VC solutions, whether in the office or on the road, employees no longer wish to be dependent on IT to set up and connect their calls. They need to be able to use technology as and when they want, without the restrictions of "how", "when" and on what technology platforms they can interact. To ensure maximum adoption and uptake, and therefore maximum value of VC solutions, users themselves need to be able to initiate collaboration sessions and bring people into the conference on-demand on the device of their choice. APIs, now included on open integration-based VC platforms, can be leveraged to develop custom applications and integrate the necessary services into the VC network, allowing this on-demand access to be made possible, amongst other benefits.

A gateway that facilitates application development

Traditionally, technology such as VC and collaboration has been an island, within integration taking place with products and solutions of the same brand. Open APIs change this, however, providing a gateway that facilitates application development, allowing organisations to develop custom applications that integrate with a variety of third-party solutions and various platforms. Some examples of this include conference management applications, billing, resource reporting, provisioning and self-service portals, placing functionality that was traditionally the domain of technical resources into the hands of the end-user.

For example, this enables users to make use of a single application for the scheduling and management of all rooms and communication infrastructure, including VC. Rooms can be booked using custom APIs, which include booking

management and VC functionality in one easy-to-use, intuitive application. VC calls can easily be initiated between all of the various parties, regardless of their location and the device they are using, and resources can be centrally managed through a user-friendly interface.

Integration becomes a much simpler task, so calls can be recorded, and through the API, data can be extracted to generate reports and graphs for intelligence on usage and being able to quantify a Return On Investment (ROI). Virtual meeting rooms in the cloud can enable users to conference with a variety of end-point devices, and an API can be used to monitor these virtual meeting rooms, with an application via the API layer used to manage the call, identify participants and create visibility that previously was not available.

For organisations with in-house developers, APIs can easily be used to customise solutions. If these organisations do not have this capability in-house, distribution partners can provide this development along with the solution, opening up new avenues of business for the channel.

APIs open up the VC space to allow for greater levels of integration and customisation, enabling organisations fully to utilise the power of their technology investment to drive greater effectiveness and efficiency and maximise return. There are many applications to leverage APIs in all industries, from health care to financial services to education, allowing VC solutions to provide face-to-face interaction with any user, regardless of device and geographic location. By customising and integrating business processes within VC, video can become an integral part of modern business.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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