Accelerating the Development of Enterprise Mobile and IoT Apps

ESSENTIAL APIS AND TOOLS DEVELOPERS NEED TO BUILD FIVE-STAR APPS
From App Revolution to App Economy

The Apple™ iPhone™ revolutionized computing in 2007, but it was the opening of the App Store™ in 2008 that marked the dawn of a new mobile business era. The App Store™—and Google Play™—allow businesses to deliver information and services through a new, extraordinarily intimate consumer channel. The mobile “Gold Rush” that followed turned the mobile device into what Matt Strain of AVG called an “information appliance.” App development was primarily done in native languages, using whatever toolkits were available.

As app features became more sophisticated, users could perform formerly web-based tasks with integrated mobile capabilities such as geolocation and SMS. Evolved standards like HTML5 and multi-platform languages and frameworks aided app development, as did the parallel rise of cloud computing that increased availability of data and backend services. Meanwhile, the inevitability of the bring your own device (BYOD) movement drove many companies to examine the potential use of mobile technologies within their own businesses.

Today, the app economy is in full swing. Advertising revenues and user engagement are booming as companies like Instagram and Uber grew from startups to billion dollar juggernauts.

For enterprise mobile app developers, the landscape has become increasingly complex as they deal with:

- Multiple data sources
- Legacy business rules
- Increasingly fragmented maze of devices and operating systems
- Increased scrutiny around security and user experience
Anatomy of an Enterprise Mobile App

The following diagram shows typical components of an enterprise mobile app architecture. Data and logic are fragmented across the device, cloud and on-premises infrastructure in order to deliver a full user experience that doesn’t compromise security, performance or maintainability. APIs (Application Programming Interfaces) are the connection points between the on-device app and the various backend—cloud and on-premises—services.
The addictiveness of smartphones is enabled, in part, by the intimacy of the user experience (UX)—the principle upon which mobile apps were founded. “There’s an app for that™” thinking resulted in single-task-based applications crafted for a frictionless and engaging UX. For instance, simply unbundling the basic features of photo sharing sites and social networks and adding artistic filters precipitated the meteoric rise of Instagram. This early emphasis on user experience forever raised the bar for all mobile apps.

But there is a constant tension between meeting the enterprise’s integration and security needs and the experiential expectations of end users. The enterprise demands high security, scalability, maintainability and functional reusability from legacy assets. This can result in compromises around look and feel, intuitiveness and responsiveness. Early consumer-facing apps that mimicked Web portals rather than mobile context died on the vine.

So how can companies best deal with this tension?

Start by remembering that the app developer precedes the ultimate app consumer. Developers must deal with the substantial complexity behind the app that the end user never sees. Place the same emphasis on Developer Experience (DX) as you would for UX, and you liberate the developer from much of that complexity, freeing them to design and build great apps with the expected UX. A great DX comes from the tools, building blocks and instructions you provide to developers.
MEAPs (Mobile Enterprise Application Platforms) and MADP (Mobile Application Development Platforms) appeared several years ago to address the development challenges of mobile apps across heterogeneous operating systems, integration to backend systems and deployment. But the cumbersome development-intensive nature has made these platforms insufficiently agile to support enterprises with today’s mobile needs. Proprietary development technologies force enterprises into vendor lock-in, and developers lack open interfaces they need to create apps with more flexibility.

MBaaS (Mobile Backend as a Service) solutions emerged to disrupt the MEAP space by offering mobile functionality in the cloud. These solutions come with pre-defined, shared, backend functions that make mobile app development, deployment and management easier for enterprises. However, these solutions do not fully support enterprise app scenarios. The high volume of data transactions and on-premises integration requirements can often result in data latency when delivered from the cloud. Moreover, without API management capabilities, MBaaS cannot provide the app developer with the data interfaces needed to build great enterprise apps.

Today, IT organizations need to accelerate the creation of mobile apps while dealing with rapidly changing requirements over a wide range of mobile devices. Not only is IT forced to provide faster turnaround, they must also develop the same common mobile functions for every new app they create.

Given the shortcomings of existing solutions, technology needs to evolve to reduce coding and repetitive backend functions, provide an open library of development, management and security functions and advanced management of mobile, Web and enterprise APIs.

CA Technologies has developed a unique solution called CA Mobile App Services to meet these new market needs and help organizations accelerate the development of mobile and Internet of Things (IoT) apps.
To help enterprises provide the increasingly critical developer experience, CA Technologies has created a new category of mobile development technologies. CA Mobile App Services accelerates development of mobile and IoT apps with a developer toolkit containing SDKs and APIs. The toolkit provides the benefits listed below which reduce repetitive coding and complexity for the enterprise developer.

Repeatable yet critical functions of mobile development such as user management, storage and backend/device integration are wrapped up as developer-friendly, callable functions of an SDK. Developers can invoke these SDK calls to accomplish key tasks. The underlying framework works with the CA Technologies leading mobile gateway, and API management technologies execute these SDK calls and complete the tasks.

Now, developers can focus more on creating a rich UX without worrying about backend functions.

CA MOBILE APP SERVICES BENEFITS:

- Open interfaces free developers and enterprises from vendor lock-in
- Underlying security infrastructure reduces risk in enterprise mobile apps
- Pub/Sub enables the development of reactive apps to utilize near real-time propagation of events and data
- Ad-hoc groups enhance sharing in collaboration apps
- IoT-friendly interfaces and MQTT allow for seamless integration across a large volume of devices
Key Features to Boost Developer Productivity

User/Group Management:
Developers must include easy sign-up and quick on-boarding for apps. CA Mobile App Services includes a SCIM 2.0 (System for Cross-domain Identity Management) connector that enables easy provisioning for individuals or custom groups. Out-of-the-box integration with identity providers that support LDAP is also available. With simple SDK calls, developers can manage **app-level access control** and real-time access revocation.

Secure Local / Cloud Storage:
Enterprise apps require on-device or cloud storage capabilities. CA Mobile Services offers “unified storage” capabilities, including on-device encryption of data and cloud storage APIs. The storage service offers a convenient device API that handles data encryption and sync-to-cloud as needed. The local app will use the data offline but whenever connectivity is established—and the policy mandates it—synching will be initiated.

SAMPLE USE CASES

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SAMPLE USE CASES (Applications)

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Key Features to Boost Developer Productivity

Publish/Subscribe Model for Reactive Apps:
The RESTful API design pattern is well established as the way to externalize data. However, IoT apps need more real-time access to devices, their data and events propagated from the various system components. Polling mechanisms don’t scale well. But in a publish-subscribe messaging pattern, a message broker tracks subscribers to a particular class of messages and forwards messages appropriately. The subscribers opt-in for specific classes of messages with no knowledge of potential publishers. This complements the RESTful pattern and provides an alternative transport mechanism. It also decouples system components and adds scalability for massively distributed systems. CA Mobile App Services will support MQTT and a broker proxy model that enables full control of inbound and outbound messages.

User-to-User Messaging:
Developers are often asked to make applications more collaborative by including social and messaging features. CA Mobile App Services includes a component for building direct user-to-user or user-to-group messaging into apps with just a few lines of code. Few messaging platforms provide the simplicity of CA Mobile App Services. Even fewer layer on advanced security with auto-encryption of payload so that only the recipient will be able to decrypt the messages.

SAMPLE USE CASES (Consumption of IoT data in)
- Smart homes
- Smart cars
- Healthcare applications
- Retail

SAMPLE USE CASES
- Chat application
- Collaborative enterprise applications
As the digital economy drives complex enterprise architectures, IT has embraced the complexity with simplified standards. APIs allowed new cloud and mobile architectures to co-exist with enterprise systems. And newer and evolving standards will enable integration of smart devices into these IT landscapes. The digital enterprise facilitates transactions spanning from customer devices to private cloud to enterprise systems behind the firewall. These transactions can originate from smart homes, smart cars or consumer wearable devices, and access data from an enterprise system on-premises. The enterprise’s boundaries are now more extensible and permeable than ever—making security, governance and management critical topics in the “Enterprise of Things” conversation.

Leveraging CA Mobile App Services not only enables a great DX. It also empowers developers to craft a great UX. Most security and management tasks are easily addressed with the SDK. The underlying mobile security technology also allows for SDK calls to enforce security policies specified by the developer. The same SDK allows for publish/subscribe messaging using protocols like MQTT—allowing seamless integration with a wide range of smart devices inside and outside the enterprise.

Just as the Web paved the way for the Mobile App era, it is highly likely that mobile technologies will lay the foundation for the IoT era.
Conclusion

Mobile app developers should be using their limited time and resources serving customer needs rather than building redundant, backend services for dozens of mobile apps each year. With the right toolset, developers can quickly accomplish backend tasks around user and group management, local and cloud storage, messaging and IoT integration using MQTT—leaving more time to focus on creating a more enjoyable UX.

CA Mobile App Services accelerates development with mobile-friendly SDKs and APIs. It offers common backend services in the form of SDKs and APIs that can be used and shared across multiple mobile or IoT apps. Your enterprise can develop, deploy and manage multiple mobile and IoT apps rapidly, reducing go-to-market time and development time with APIs to create repetitive, common functions. And the underlying gateway lets developers fortify their apps with industry-leading security technology.

The foundation for a strong mobile app infrastructure requires the use of open source SDKs that free you from vendor lock-in and allow you to connect with any backend identity provider or identity management solution. This allows developers to customize the SDK to suit the needs of their enterprise while contributing their enhancements back to the development community. This creates a strong developer ecosystem for the future and offers greater developer experiences for the rest of us.
Accelerate Mobile and IoT App Development with CA Mobile App Services

Discover how: ca.com/mobileapps

CA Mobile App Services works with the CA Technologies leading mobile gateway and API management technologies.

About CA API Management
With over 400 API Management customers across sectors as diverse as communications, financial services, government and retail, CA Technologies offers industry-leading technology and know-how that helps organizations deliver value through APIs. CA provides a complete API Management solution, including a full-functioned API Gateway with military-grade security and a developer portal offered in on-premises and SaaS versions. Learn about CA API Management at ca.com/api.