API management

Nick - Today we are joined by Nathan Brice from the product management in z Systems team, and he's come here today to tell us about API management, So Nathan, thank you for joining us.

Now I've heard about the API economy and you're here to talk to us today about the API management are the two related?

Nathan - Absolutely that's a great question, so let me just explain what the API economy or the application program interface economy is really all about. Businesses that developed over time hold a range of different assets including physical assets such as bank branches and IT assets such as payment systems that they use to run their businesses. The API economy is all about how those businesses can provide access to those key it services in new and innovative ways.

Nick - Okay I get that and I can see how progress is coming along with everything, have you got a real life example you could illustrate to us?

Nathan - Yes absolutely, so if you take for example a website such as cars.com which offers a range of services you can do research on type of cars that you're interested in you can purchase cars you can insure it you can even arrange a service all through one single website but in fact what's going on under covers is that that website is accessing a whole range of different services through API's into banks to provide car loans, into car dealerships to actually purchase the cars, into insurance companies to provide insurance services and all of those different services are being assembled to provide the consumer with a very simple one stop shop to provide all these services for them.

Nick - And it's really transparent what's going on under the covers for the consumer isn't it?

Nathan - That's right so the whole concept is about making it very simple and straight forward for consumers to access services in new and different ways but taking advantages of a number of critical pieces of infrastructure that have been built up over a number of years.

Nick - Right I understand that, now a lot of people I think would associate things like web pages etc. with perhaps not the mainframe, is this API management, is this relevant to the mainframe population?

Nathan - Absolutely it is! and the reason it is, is because a huge amount of the world's corporate data resides on a mainframe so its something in the region of 80% of all the data that's used by corporations either resides on or moves through a mainframe and in order for these new websites mobile applications to be really valuable then they need to be accessing that critical backend data which resides typically on the mainframe.

Nick - Right so the shiny pretty thing that the consumer sees is really just back to the mainframe in the backend to get its data. right so I can see that the relevance of the mainframe but I think I can see possible dichotomy of opinions here because I can see line of business liking the shiny fun portals to their information but I can see that the poor system programmers and operations staff scratching their heads saying "oh this poses lots of problems for us from security point of you"

Nathan - Absolutely and this is where the ibm API management product really comes in so I think you have two competing sets of priorities there I think the line of business is very interested in taking advantage of new mobile channels providing consumers ever increasing levels of ease of use and convenience but they still need to be accessing those backend services where I think from the

backend system of record perspective there is right focus on security and access and really governance of the access interface services.

Nick - And presumably there's a governance and compliance aspect but also this could put a lot more stress I guess on the mainframe on the scale of the mainframe is there means of tracking the new traffic and controlling that?

Nathan - Yes absolutely, and another key point as well the ability to throttle that workload and to really control the access that is being given to these systems and really this is the real value of the ibm API management product is it gives you the enterprise grade capability of workload control insight into the use of these API's along with the consumability pieces that enable the cataloguing and the registration of those API's so the mobile developers or whoever is consuming them can find and discover, and take advantage of those APIs very simply and conveniently.

Nick - So if I understand you correctly from what you've just said there is there a list is there a catalogue of APIs maybe for certain services or certain ways of doing things?

Nathan – That's right, that's exactly it, it really comes down to is you're providing a catalogue list of all the different APIs that the backend system of record is providing but you also are able to structure those so for example you are providing API access to business partners and for third parties then perhaps you might want to have different levels of access for business partners they may be more trusted where for the public facing API's you may want to have much more restrictions on those, on the access the use of APIs so API management enables you to manage all of those type of issues.

Nick - That makes sense. Now I'm going to put you on the spot here Nathan, I want you just to summarize give the three key elements that you would want our listeners of this podcast to take-away with them, the three main points.

Nathan - The first one is around the fact that very often mainframe customers spend a number of years, if not decades investing in their critical business applications on the backend and they want to be able to leverage and extend those through new channels such as mobile channels or even providing public access to those APIs. So I think it's really re use of assets which is number one.

Second is around the governance of the use of those assets, no one wants to be able to let anybody drive the huge amount of traffic into their mainframe and you need to be able to govern the use of those APIs and maintain a level of insight and overview of these.

Thirdly, the other key point is around, for the consumer, the person that's writing the mobile application, its discovery, so the ability to very easily discover what APIs are out there available to you mobile app development is the very frequent speedy environment to be in and you need to be able to quickly identify what's there go find it and take advantage of it.

Nick - Okay thank you Nathan that was really interesting, I hope you join us again for another podcast, thank you for taking the time to talk to us today.

That's excellent thank you ever so much for coming in it's been very interesting. Well, that wraps up this podcast discussion. Join us next time as we talk about another important mainframe topic. For now, this is Host saying "Thanks for listening".