

Aragon Research

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Topic: Collaboration

Issue: Who are the collaboration providers and how will they evolve?

Microsoft Kills Skype Desktop APIs; Leaves Developers Scrambling

Summary: Microsoft will terminate its Skype Desktop API and Skype Kit API, and is encouraging developers to embrace the Skype URIs – which will give them markedly less functionality.

Event: On July 13, 2013, Microsoft announced via an email to developers that it would end support for its Skype Desktop API and Skype Kit API, and effectively closed new submissions to the Skype App Directory. The Desktop API will cease to function in September 2013. Chris Andrews, Head of Skype Developer Program, sent the email.

Analysis

This move by Microsoft effectively will end the creation of unique add-on solutions to the Skype platform. The Skype application programming interfaces (APIs) hail from the Skype Public API, which was released in 2004. They offered a protocol that allowed developers of third-party hardware and software products to communicate with Skype and to enhance Skype communications with add-on functions. The APIs were free for commercial and non-commercial uses.

Implications

Terminating these APIs will impact revenue streams for many developers who used them to bring useful commercial add-ons to Skype. This is what many feared when Microsoft initially bought Skype. The news also comes on the heels of Google diminishing XMPP support in Hangouts, which also left developers

scrambling, since Google released no APIs for the new Hangouts (see [Google Adds Voice to Hangouts, But Steps Backward On Interoperability And Federation By Reducing XMPP Support](#)).

Microsoft is also closing the Skype App Directory. There were some very interesting applications in the Skype App Directory that will now become defunct before the end of the year. IDroo is a whiteboard collaborative sharing app with capabilities for education. DicoLab offers ParticiToo, a multi-user collaborative app that allows screen sharing and simultaneous editing and authoring in Skype sessions amongst multiple participants. The company has decided to continue making ParticiToo available for free, but it will probably be unusable after September 2013, since the Desktop API will stop working.

Microsoft says it's killing the Desktop API because it doesn't support mobile application development, and the company wants "a consistent user experience across all platforms and devices." Microsoft says developers can use Skype's uniform resource identifiers (URIs) to develop applications that use Skype features across all major platforms. However, the Skype experience is not currently consistent across all devices and OSs.

The big caveat to using the Skype URIs is their limited functionality. They let developers open and close Skype sessions from within their applications, but don't allow them to use Skype's Presence or buddy list, or to send notifications. Developers will not be able to make any real add-ons to Skype with the URIs. Apps like IDroo or ParticiToo will not be able to function using the Skype URIs, since they can

no longer use the Skype network for additional functionality.

We believe that Microsoft is headed in a similar direction as Apple, driven by a desire for more control of its ecosystem and any future app store. Third party developers will be directly impacted.

Microsoft will need to give definitive guidance to enterprises about the future of Skype. Also, those developing for other applications, such as Lync, should be concerned about similar moves for those platforms. If the roadmap information from Microsoft is not fruitful, enterprises should look at other options as an exit strategy.

Aragon Advisory

- Enterprises doing Skype development using Skype Desktop APIs must stop.
- Enterprises should ask Microsoft for definitive roadmaps of all UCC offerings, including Lync and Skype.
- Enterprises should evaluate alternatives such as Google, Cisco and IBM SameTime.

Bottom Line

Microsoft is effectively limiting what third-party developers can do with Skype as a platform. Increasingly, major vendors are taking control of their ecosystems, leaving less room for third parties. Like Google's move to diminish support for XMPP in the new Hangouts, this is another direct move by a major vendor to not only control its ecosystems, but to be more proprietary.

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