



With growing edge
devices, chart your
mobile roadmap with
Backend as-a-Service



Over the last few years, an increasing number of studies have begun to show that the Public Cloud is more secure than corporate data centers. That singular fact is turning mobile Backend as-a-Service (MBaaS or BaaS) into a more acceptable form of providing infrastructure and environments for Web and mobile development. Developers trying to link applications to Cloud storage and expose APIs to applications find BaaS a handy model. It brings a host of convenient, ready-to-use features that developers need such as user management and integration with social networks.

Flexibility and agility

BaaS is barely five years old. This is because it is driven by the relatively recent phenomenon of smart mobile devices growth. These mobile devices were being pushed into service to access all kinds of enterprise data. With the expected growth in the Internet of Things (IoT), Virtual Reality applications, wearables, smart homes, smart cities, etc., this trend is not likely to slow down anytime soon. The number of edge devices interacting with enterprise platforms is going to multiply several folds, keeping BaaS firmly on the horizon of enterprises that want to be flexible and agile. The other factor contributing to BaaS' mainstream traction is that integrating multiple end-points into enterprise systems is becoming simpler. In fact, it is becoming so simple that one recent study estimates that the adoption will drive the global BaaS market to over \$28 billion by 2020.

It is important to note that improved Cloud platforms and the growth in edge devices have been big levers, but they are not the only reasons for the growing demand for BaaS. Mobile devices are becoming the primary channels for customer interaction, placing tremendous pressure on providers to be responsive. Take the simple case of a bank that earlier needed to provide customers with access to their accounts and enable transactions. Among the many services the same bank today needs to provide is information on the best deals around the customer's current location. This means identifying the customer's location in real time, storing merchant information and associated deal data, analyzing the customer's buying pattern, behavior and available credit to push the right deal at the right time. This requires extremely responsive platforms. In

addition, these platforms should not hit the bank's core platform and load it with transactions that result in degrading customer experience.

Financial services are not the only ones going through the stress of extreme demand. There is similar pressure on utilities that have a large number of field engineers that need data. Similarly, the hospitality industry needs to manage a vast variety of data that customers need to arrive at the best decisions. Even the manufacturing industry is witnessing a growth in sensor data with the IoT and must quickly adapt to a mobile world. Each of these industries stands to benefit from BaaS as a means of creating mobile services, gaining flexibility and sharpening customer focus without being crippled by bulky and sluggish legacy systems.

Picking the right provider

The good news is that BaaS providers come in different flavors. They are differentiated by the types of mobile tools and resources they invest in, enabling specific use cases or providing special emphasis to security or scalability. This means analytics, user authentication, chat functions, social network integration, issue tracking services, etc., can be easily integrated allowing developers to build applications quickly and easily on any platform, ranging from iOS to Android and HTML5. In other words, auxiliary services that developers depend on are available in plug-and-play flavors, without clunky legacy getting in the way.

The key question is: What are the top 3 factors that determine the ideal BaaS provider? Although BaaS is an evolving area, we suggest using the following factors to shortlist a BaaS provider:

- The provider should be open to the customer, bringing their own tool kits for development without hampering the agility afforded by BaaS. Relying on the provider's platform tools can be limiting
- The provider must have a mobile roadmap and must demonstrate the willingness to invest in developing the platform
- The provider's platform is easy to migrate to—and migrate from

BaaS for everyone

BaaS business models can also be a major draw for an enterprise. Some providers offer premium models where clients receive a certain number of free active users or API calls per month. Thereafter, the client pays a fee for each user or call. Some providers offer unlimited API calls within their free plans. Other providers have monthly fixed fee packages which permit a larger number of users and calls, making the plan predictable.

As enterprises deepen their IoT, API and mobile strategy, they will look at BaaS as the logical future. Even conservative industries like finance and healthcare are becoming more comfortable with the Cloud. Developers, too, will feel more comfortable working on platforms that don't limit or lock them down. With BaaS, they can concentrate on delivering a rich customer experience, quickly and without the need for deep budgets.

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