

Dell Boomi Expands Support for Hybrid IT: New Features and Stand-Alone Option for API Management Solution

Abstract

The Dell Boomi Integration Platform as a Service (iPaaS) has become the gold standard of cloud integration solutions for today's hyper-connected businesses. Engineered to allow customers to connect to and consume data on premises or "in the cloud" with equal ease, Boomi has one of the highest customer retention rates in its industry. The platform continues to expand in scale and scope and now processes, on average, more than 700 million integrations per month.

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On March 18, 2015, Dell announced major enhancements and new packaging options for the Dell Boomi API Management solution. This product, introduced to the market in 2013, is fully integrated into the Dell Boomi iPaaS and supports today's rapidly expanding API (Application Program Interface) economy.

A key element of the announcement is the fact that Dell Boomi API Management will now be available as a stand-alone option as well. Currently, the multifunction Dell Boomi PaaS also includes integration functions and Master Data Management (MDM). With the API solution now also available as a stand-alone element, prospects seeking API lifecycle management but not requiring the full breadth of Boomi capabilities have a cost-effective alternative.

This ENTERPRISE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATES® (EMA™) Impact Brief details the specifics of these announcements and the implications for customers seeking to streamline and simplify delivery and consumption of API-driven services.

Dell Boomi and the API Economy

More than 50% of today's companies are leveraging "hybrid cloud," and APIs are a major part of this trend. While APIs are not new, they are one of the most important elements underlying industry megatrends such as mobile computing and social media. They are key enablers of revenue generators such as Business to Business and Business to Consumer computing and will be indispensable building blocks supporting the growing Internet of Things (IoT). All of these factors combine to make the "API Economy" one of today's hottest technology-related topics.

Although there are many ways to define the term "API", here is a simple definition: "An API is a software intermediary that makes it possible for application programs to interact with each other and share data. It's often an implementation of REST [Representational State Transfer] that exposes a specific software functionality while protecting the rest of the application."¹

APIs are well on their way to becoming the most common way of integrating across platforms, devices, and applications. While some "apps" are created specifically to run in stand-alone mode, as on mobile devices, the vast majority require devices to communicate with other systems. These could be back-end systems such as product/pricing catalogs, reservation systems, or customer information. They could be cloud applications running on Amazon or Azure. And increasingly, mobile applications are communicating with mainframes, with many CIOs attributing the growth in mainframe processing usage to the proliferation of mobile access. IT organizations are also using APIs for their internal development projects to accelerate delivery of new software via a "write once, use many" model.

¹ Techopedia, searchcloudapplications.techtarget.com/definition/open-API, accessed March 2015.

Because they have become essential to building revenue-generating applications, virtually every company is consuming APIs, and many are creating—or “exposing”—APIs as well. Dell Boomi is one of a handful of products uniquely positioned to support the full lifecycle of API delivery. Boomi’s API-management capabilities include support for creating, publishing, documenting, and delivering APIs, whether APIs (or data) are hosted on premises or in the cloud.

Dell Boomi API Management

Dell Boomi’s initial product offering was the Boomi AtomSphere integration cloud. “Born in the cloud,” it was ideally positioned to partner and interoperate with Software as a Service (SaaS) and other cloud providers to simplify the process of public cloud consumption. Master Data Management was added to the platform in 2011, providing data modeling, storage, synchronization, and validation capabilities. MDM functionality gives customers a way to ensure that shared data is clean, accurate, and consistent.

Dell Boomi API Management, introduced in 2013, supports creating, publishing, and managing APIs throughout the full API lifecycle. The solution supports version management, exposure of APIs for internal or external use, and monitoring/management of API usage and performance in production. This cross-lifecycle approach enables companies to support the evolution and delivery of APIs as business needs change.

The three essential functions of Dell Boomi API Management include the following:

- **Create APIs** – Customers can create new APIs from scratch or from existing Boomi integration processes. No coding is necessary as the entire process is driven by a Graphical User Interface (GUI).
- **Publish APIs** – APIs can be published for internal or external consumption.
- **Manage APIs** – Centralized management functions include dashboards for monitoring and administrative capabilities such as throttling and traffic control.

Dell Boomi’s strategy of combining integration, MDM, and API management capabilities with authentication and security as a single PaaS supports rapid time to value and secure, enterprise-grade delivery. In addition, the “look and feel” across the product line is similar, providing, as Dell Boomi executives describe it, “economies of skill.” The integrated hosting platform also gives customers control over both security and Quality of Service (QoS), regardless of whether users are consuming APIs or connecting to Salesforce.com.

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What’s New?

As an integrated product, Dell Boomi API Management already has hundreds of paying customers. In the latest announcements, Dell Boomi confirms the availability of API management as a stand-alone product as well. Pricing information is available directly from Dell Boomi.

In addition, Dell Boomi has significantly enhanced its API-management capabilities. As Figure 1 shows, the enhancements span API design, generation, REST, and automated documentation. They also include automated transformation of legacy Simple Object Access Protocol (SOAP) APIs into modern, lightweight REST services.

- **API Design** – Dell Boomi is accelerating the delivery of production-grade REST or SOAP APIs by simplifying the process of creating them. Via a series of drop-down menus and dialog boxes, APIs can be designed with built-in authentication and security across multiple implementations and versions.

- **API Generate** – API Generate supports SOAP to REST modernization. The product analyzes SOAP services and auto generates REST-based APIs, minimizing the necessity hand-coding modern, lightweight services. IT organizations seeking to modernize legacy services can recreate and host new REST services on the Dell Boomi cloud in 15 to 30 minutes.
- **REST enhancements** – Dell Boomi has also adopted Swagger 2.0 (versus RAML) as its standard for API metadata support. Dell Boomi, supported by Swagger 2.0, automatically generates documentation along with APIs, making them easier to develop, modify, and maintain. For those unfamiliar with Swagger, “Swagger is a specification and complete framework implementation for describing, producing, consuming, and visualizing RESTful web services. The overarching goal of Swagger is to enable client and documentation systems to update at the same pace as the server.”²

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API Management Capability	Business Impact
API Design	Simplifies management of services across the enterprise
API Generate	Modernizes legacy web services for centralized management
REST enhancements	Automation of documentation for REST services, making it easier for developers to consume new and enhanced services

Figure 1. March 2015 Dell Boomi API Management Highlights

EMA Perspective

Many IT organizations find themselves struggling to keep up with the pace of technology evolution. In fact, “incorporating new technology into existing IT systems” was the top challenge cited by IT professionals in EMA’s latest cloud ecosystem research.³ While cloud, mobile, and IoT all rely on integration, for example, few IT organizations have the skill and resources necessary to support the breadth and scale necessitated by today’s API Economy.

Security is also an issue, as internal data and resources are increasingly being exposed to external entities. And while opening up internal systems always engenders risk, IT organizations too often find themselves in a “can’t win” position—they must either accept the risk or incur the wrath of Line of Business stakeholders seeking to generate revenue from API-connected applications.

Dell Boomi API Management was designed to address these challenges. This release answers the very real need of today’s IT organizations to accelerate, simplify, and manage API delivery. Automated conversion of legacy Web Services Description Language modules (WSDLs) to modern APIs are the tip of the iceberg, with a variety of additional enhancements centered on time to value. Customers wrestling with complexity, for example, will appreciate the product’s new GUI-driven API engine, as well as auto generation of documentation based on Dell Boomi’s adoption of the Swagger standard.

In making a choice between cloud integration vendors, prospects should also consider the value proposition of the Boomi platform as a whole. This was one of the first “born in the cloud” integration platforms, designed from day one to support public cloud. Dell Boomi now boasts approximately

² Further information, including excellent descriptions of Swagger, RAML, and API Blueprint, is available at apievanalyst.com/2014/01/16/api-design-do-you-swagger-blueprint-or-raml/.

³ EMA, “Public Cloud Comes of Age: Application Performance Management (APM) Strategies & Products for Production-Ready Cloud Ecosystems,” available at <http://www.enterprisemanagement.com/research/asset.php?id=2861>

3000 customers and supports more integrations on a monthly basis than any other apples-to-apples competitor. Dell Boomi's willingness to continue to enhance the platform in ways that are valuable to customers is a key differentiator as well.

No product is a Swiss Army Knife or a panacea for every integration requirement. That being said, it is apparent that the proven scale supported by the Dell Boomi platform, combined with ongoing enhancements aimed at ease of use and fast time to value, are distinguishing factors against competitors.

Dell Boomi can mitigate many of the risks—including skills shortfalls—of hybrid cloud integrations. The product is available for a thirty-day free trial at ondemand.boomi.com/trial/.

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