bandwidth

TYPES OF
CPaaS Providers

Whether you're the next big app, an established internet giant,
or a product team looking into adding calling or texting,
there's an API provider out there for you.



Pretty much every CPaaS provider delivers on the category's most basic and important promise—letting developers and product teams quickly and easily integrate voice and messaging communications into their sales, marketing and customer support applications. However, simplifying the front end app development only tells part of the CPaaS story. It might seem easy to bang out a few lines of code, run some tests and launch new communications functionality in a matter of hours. But when your users expect that every phone call sounds crystal clear, and every message is delivered, there are certain other characteristics you may want to check out.

First, it's important to understand there are two basic types of CPaaS providers:



1 API Providers

These are the pure-play software companies like Twilio, Plivo and Sinch. They're partners to many different types of businesses but ideal for startups that require quick speed to market, have lower network traffic volume, and have simple telecom requirements. A good choice for software engineers with no telecom background but not ideal when requirements include the ability to scale big, get volume pricing, create highly customized features or if hands on dev support is a requirement.

2 API Providers that are also Network Owners

These are companies like Bandwidth that started out as network owners and added APIs along the way. These providers, often referred to as “business-grade CPaaS” providers, appeal to a broad category of users including business product owners, software developers with no telecom background and also engineers with a telecom background. Because they own the network, they are able to offer fast speed to market, access to a large phone number inventory, quality voice and messaging services and more insight into call routing than other types of CPaaS providers.

3

What about those other guys? The big telecom giants?

The traditional telecom carriers like AT&T, Verizon and Level 3 offer telephony services, like voice, messaging and phone numbers, but they are not considered CPaaS providers. Carriers don't typically partner with developers because they offer limited or no APIs, are more bureaucratic in their operations and have much longer time-to-market cycles. They're a good partner to operations or tech professionals who have a deep understanding of telecom since they offer access to mass telephony, good cost and routing control, tons of phone numbers and SIP or traditional switch infrastructure.

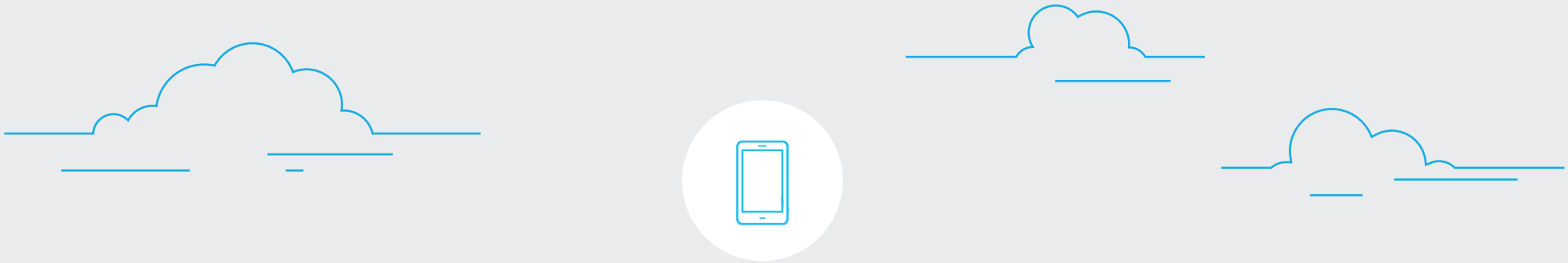
More than likely, if you're interested in CPaaS, your provider of choice will fall into either category #1 (API Providers) or category #2 (API Providers that are also Network Carriers). So here are a few differentiating areas to think about as you wrap your head around those groups of providers.





YOU JUST NEED THE BASICS - NO BELLS & WHISTLES, JUST SOME EMBEDDED VOICE OR MESSAGING FOR YOUR APP.

You're just trying out the functionality—taking it for a test drive, or want to see if it's something that might resonate for your user base. API-only providers may be a great fit here. They offer an excellent sandbox environment, tons of documentation, and specialize in speedy delivery without getting into the telecom weeds. At that stage, you don't need major customization or to be a telecom know-it-all—just easy functionality.



YOU DON'T NEED TELECOM EXPERIENCE YOURSELF... BUT DO YOU NEED TELECOM EXPERTS JUST A PHONE CALL AWAY?

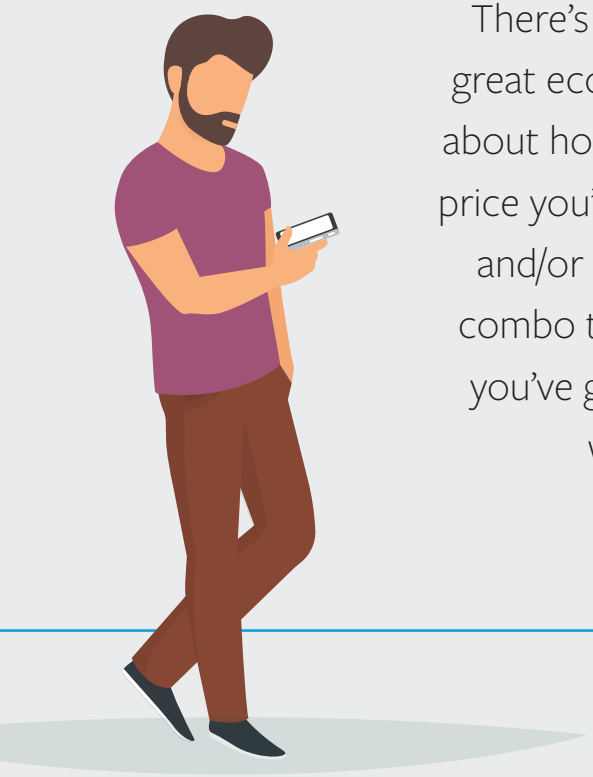
Both pure-play API providers and API providers that own a communications network let you access the most in-demand aspects of telecom with just a few clicks of the mouse—that's great news! But the pure-play software companies cater most to the quick-moving dev who doesn't require much (or any) hands on support through the stages of development. Depending on the complexity of your project, you may require more support infrastructure than document libraries, GitHub snippets and developer forums. The API/network carrier combination (or "business-grade CPaaS) providers tend to offer more dedicated support because they're setup to handle both SMB and enterprise customers.



WHAT DOES THE FULL SUITE OF APIS LOOK LIKE?

Not every API provider offers the exact same API functionality. Sure, voice and messaging typically "come standard," but it's important to know exactly what features you'll need both now and into the future so that you can choose the most robust feature set for your business needs. The API providers that are also network carriers will typically offer more APIs for number management functions such as bulk porting, placing calls and sending messages. Some providers also offer API-based 9-1-1 emergency routing, video conferencing, or IM chat which can be a rarities among the CPaaS players in today's market.

HOW DEEP ARE YOUR POCKETS?



There's no doubt that all forms of cloud-based communications deliver great economies of scale compared to more traditional models. But think about how your business will need to scale over time as you consider what price you're willing to pay today. When you need a high-volume of numbers and/or expect high network traffic, it's the API provider/network carrier combo that's going to give you the most value for your dollar. Likewise, if you've got low volume needs and a speed to market priority, partnering with a pure-play API provider just might be your best bet.

Selecting your ideal CPaaS partner

is a highly personal decision based on a variety of factors—functionality, cost, quality, scale and support being some of the big ones. Success starts with a complete understanding of the provider landscape so that you can determine the right choice for your current and future needs.

