Best Practices For Implementing A Partner API Hub

A Phased Approach for Enabling API-Driven Partnerships

RapidAPI

For leading enterprises, APIs are the new fabric for digital partnerships. APIs enable companies to deepen existing partner relationships, extend product and services lifecycles, and even create new revenue streams through robust partner ecosystems. These ecosystems are cultivated through effective API sharing and collaboration — extending to partners the tools and services they need to enrich their digital products or build net-new applications.

More than ever, leading enterprises face the challenges of creating new digital revenue streams, developers adopting competitors' APIs, increased scrutiny, and difficulty in implementing effective governance. All of these challenges are further complicated by increasingly complex API environments with multiple gateway providers creating technical and organizational silos.

The clear choice to meet these challenges is RapidAPI Enterprise Hub. RapidAPI Enterprise Hub is the next-generation API hub that enables leading enterprises to extend the reach of their APIs and build powerful digital partner ecosystems around their business. RapidAPI offers an API hub to share and collaborate on all the APIs available to external partners, as well as manage access control among partners' development teams, driving partner developer adoption and enabling new revenue streams.

Enabling these API-driven partnerships starts with proper implementation of RapidAPI Enterprise Hub through a phased approach that drives both immediate and long-term value for organizations and their partners. This approach enables companies to provide a customizable partner-facing API hub that exposes all of its partner APIs to drive developer adoption through superior API discovery, collaboration, and consumption.

This guide will cover the steps and phases required to implement your partner-facing API hub most effectively. Using this phased approach to implement RapidAPI Enterprise Hub, enterprises can deliver on the partner-driven promises of their digital transformation strategy.

In this guide, you will learn:

- **What is RapidAPI Enterprise Hub**
- **How to design a partner API hub strategy**
- **How a phased approach delivers partner adoption**
- **Key questions that define successful implementation**
- **Examples of RapidAPI Enterprise Hub implementations with leading enterprises**

RapidAPI Enterprise Hub

Leveraging years of experience working with leading enterprises and millions of developers, RapidAPI Enterprise Hub is a next-generation API hub that is built to solve the challenges of modern day API environments — disparate API gateways, expanding number of unmanaged APIs and subscriptions, new API types, increasing requirements around developer tooling for API development, API testing, and more.

RapidAPI Enterprise Hub creates one place where developers can publish, share, and manage all of the APIs in use across their organization and with their partners. This single connection point for APIs enables better partner developer collaboration, creating new revenue streams and extending product and service lifecycles.

RapidAPI Enterprise Hub is designed to support the needs of both internal and partner users: API administrators, API builders, and API consumers. Each user type has their own set of needs and expectations for how they want to interact with the platform.

RapidAPI Enterprise Hub

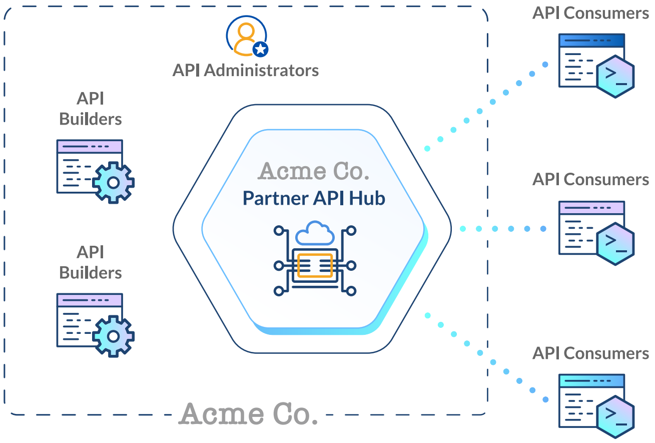
Administrators - Critically important for partner API hubs, administrators are the developers and business owners that oversee the governance of the APIs. These users enable partner access to the organization's APIs. To do so, administrators should leverage tools such as Role-Based Access Controls to ensure that the following two user types have the proper permissions when interacting with the API hub.

Builders - Internal developers that design, build, and publish APIs to the API hub which your partner developers can discover and consume.

Consumers - Partner developers who subscribe to the APIs listed in your company's API hub.

Administrators can set permissions for API access and usage by partner organization with Role-Based Access Controls (RBAC). RBAC allows administrators to assign on a per user and per organization basis which APIs partners can access as well as apply a layer of governance as to how they can interact with the API hub. For example, in a partner API hub, builders will need to publish APIs (sometimes gated by an administrator) to the hub.

Conversely, partner developers typically only need the right to consume APIs, not publish them. Additionally, some APIs are only meant to be consumed by certain partners, whether because of sensitive data or that they are relevant or not to those partners. Administrators can also use RBAC to give different partners access to different sets of APIs. Administrators should consider permissions on a per API and per partner basis when planning the partner API hub implementation. For more details, see the API Catalog implementation phase guidance section below.



Creating A Partner API Plan

Establish Your API Strategy

For any partner API hub, one of the most critical steps to take before implementation is clearly defining your partner strategy. This starts with establishing the clear objectives of the program, such as: adding API-driven revenue (either directly or indirectly), increasing your addressable market through partnerships, expanding your partner ecosystem, or reducing existing partner churn. These are just a few possibilities - it is important to align on your objectives before implementing a partner API hub. Establish the company's top-level goals at the very beginning of the program to best select which APIs should be selected or developed for partner use, and subsequently evangelized through an effective communication plan.

Align APIs and Partners

Not every API is suitable or interesting to every partner. As is the case with any product, it is important to think of your APIs in the context of the target audience and their needs. It simply is not enough to take existing internal APIs, expose them through a partner hub and expect to see partner engagement. APIs should be carefully selected based on the use case or use cases they solve for a specific partner profile. As part of this process, your organization should outline what types of partners it wants to initially target, ISVs, VARs, SIs, etc., and define their key API requirements. Lacking clear understanding and direction on either one of these items puts the success of partner API hubs at risk for a lack of partner adoption.

With that clear understanding of the APIs that will be included as well as the intended partner types, the organization is ready to move on to the next phase of its partner API program, building it's communication plan.

Create a Partner Communication Plan

Before getting started with implementation, it's important to think about and outline an effective communication plan that speaks to all of your API users, especially your partner consumers. In a partner API hub, those developers become your target audience. It is important to clearly define, and communicate the value of your APIs to them. Which APIs are available to them? What are their capabilities and limitations? What problems do they solve, and what are some of the potential use cases for them?

These are some of the baseline questions that need to be addressed and evangelized to ensure that your organization is making a compelling case for the use of its APIs. Thinking about and defining the answers to these questions will also facilitate a better overall experience both for your organization when initially (and continually) adding APIs to your hub, as well as for your partner developers as they discover and consume them.

But the communication plan needs to account for more than just the API program's value proposition and benefits. It also needs to clearly communicate the onboarding and operational aspects of interacting with your APIs. What does the sign-up process look like? Where does one go for support? What happens when there is a change to an API and how long in advance will developers be notified of breaking changes? Educate your partners that in addition to finding and connecting to APIs in the partner API hub, they can also find in the hub relevant documentation, discussion forums, and tutorial content for your APIs.

When sharing APIs with partner developers, organizations have to think of those APIs the same way they would any other product. With that mindset and plan of what needs to be communicated, the organization is ready to start on its phased approach of implementing RapidAPI Enterprise Hub.

Taking A Phased Implementation Approach

To successfully introduce RapidAPI Enterprise Hub to your partner network, it's best to implement it in phases. Taking a phased approach enables an organization to expedite time to value for the API hub deployment, maximize the likelihood of timely project delivery and ensure partner developer adoption.

Implementing RapidAPI Enterprise Hub is best accomplished following three sequential phases:

1. API Catalog

2. Analytics

3. Access and Provisioning

Preparation Phase - Goals and Self Assessment

Before implementation begins, there are some useful questions to answer which will help you clearly define your program's goals and assess the API program's performance against them.

Questions To Ask

For more details on questions see Appendix

- **What are the top-level goals of your partner API program? Attract new partners? Create a new revenue stream? Other?**
- **What stage of maturity and operationalization is your API environment?**
- **What is your current level of partner developer adoption/usage across these systems?**

Phase 1 - API Catalog

Implementing an API catalog first with RapidAPI Enterprise Hub offers the fastest route to value. An API catalog creates a centralized place for all your APIs. Organizations can determine the APIs the partner is allowed to access by setting permissions via Role-Based Access Controls. This complete view of the available APIs, combined with an effective communication strategy, showcases to partner developers all the ways your organization can help them solve challenges. This combination drives adoption and sets up the API hub for long-term success.

Additionally, with this API catalog available to partners, your organization's builders can begin adding to it with any API they create, laying the groundwork for a healthy, growing API ecosystem which partners can consume. This gives your organization and partner network a centralized location for an expanding ecosystem of API discovery, publishing, and collaboration. Partner developers can consume your APIs made available from across the entirety of the organization, creating new revenue streams and extending your organization's products and services. Finally, this catalog sets the foundation for the subsequent implementation phases of Analytics and Access and Provisioning.

Metrics and KPIs

- **Total Number of APIs Published**
- **Total Number of Partners**
- **Total Number of Users**
- **API Driven Revenue**

Questions To Ask

For more details on questions see Appendix

- **Who are the users, and what are their role types?**
- **What are the different types of partners, and how should their usage and access vary based on the type of partner they are?**
- **How are you going to categorize the APIs that you publish?**

Phase 2 - Analytics

With APIs effectively cataloged, the next step is to unlock insights from their performance. Analytics empowers API builders and consumers to monitor and analyze API performance. Without it, API builders have to undertake extensive manual effort to determine if there are any issues with the APIs they have published, what normal usage looks like, and the overall utility of their API. Similarly, API consumers at partner organizations are exposed to blindspots in their applications' experience. This can be particularly problematic for partner developers who rely on your organization's APIs for their applications' performance. For instance, a slow application experience could be attributed to a slow-performing API. Left unchecked and unaddressed, this could motivate a partner to migrate off of the API.

Metrics and KPIs

- **Average and Max API Latency**
- **Issue Resolution Times for Applications**
- **Total Number of APIs Consumed**
- **API Call Volumes**
- **API Call Volume By Partner**

Questions To Ask

For more details on questions see Appendix

- **What does the overall analytics environment look like today? How can data from RapidAPI Enterprise Hub be leveraged to complement that?**
- **Who are the intended users, and how are users expected to leverage analytics?**

Phase 3 - Access and Provisioning

To this point, even with an API catalog and analytics in place, all developer onboarding has still required manual steps in the workflow to provision API access. Introducing some level of automation can reduce onboarding time and deliver a better overall developer experience for your partners. Enabling this streamlined onboarding experience becomes increasingly important as your program begins to scale and more developers request access to your APIs.

During this phase, it is important to keep in mind that these APIs are being exposed to partners outside the organization. This necessitates some level of scrutiny in selecting which APIs you choose to offer without administrative oversight. APIs which access sensitive data or proprietary functionality should often be excluded from this phase so as to retain a level of human oversight into their access and onboarding.

But for those less sensitive APIs, adding automation in this third phase can dramatically improve the developer onboarding experience and reduce the amount of administrative overhead dedicated to your partner API program. Partner developers can request access to APIs and be assigned and provisioned API keys all from within the API hub without having an administrator in the loop. This expedites access for the partner developer and frees up administrators who oftentimes are developers themselves to focus on higher value projects and tasks.

Metrics and KPIs

- **Time to 200 (time it takes a developer to request access and make their first call)**
- **Number of Users Logging in Monthly**
- **API Call Volumes**

Questions To Ask

For more details on questions see Appendix

- **What does the approval process look like today? How much of it can/should be automated?**
- **As a policy, who should be responsible for approvals?**

Large Financial Services Firm Implements RapidAPI Enterprise Hub

RapidAPI's implementation strategy has proven successful with many leading enterprises worldwide. To better understand the implementation approach described above, let's examine how one leading financial services company implemented RapidAPI Enterprise Hub.

One of the world's largest global financial services companies needed a partner-facing API hub to drive new direct and indirect revenue streams for the business. To reach a wider addressable market, the company needed to extend its APIs, including those for investment calculations and portfolio recommendations to its network of registered investment advisors. These partners, in turn, would be able to embed these services within their applications, sharing them with their own customer base.

With multiple gateways (including Kong and Apigee) making up its disparate API ecosystem, this financial institution first attempted to build their own partner facing API hub in-house. However, the result lacked the tools needed for effective API discovery and collaboration resulting in a lack of partner adoption.

Using RapidAPI Enterprise Hub, backed by the security and governance of Role-Based Access Controls, the company was able to create a centralized place where its partners could discover and obtain access to a portfolio of APIs. With those APIs, partners were able to enrich their applications with the company's tools and data. This drove successful partner adoption and significantly expanded the organization's total addressable market adding more users through these downstream services.

The company had a clear view of who their expected partners would be and the desired outcome from their interactions with the API hub. This enabled them to clearly define metrics aligned with the objective of increasing shared API use across the organization.

Key metrics included:

- **Total Number of Partners**
- **Total Number of Users**
- **Number of Calls**
- **Users and Apps per API**

Conclusion

Organizations that want to ensure successful execution of their API-led partnership program choose the next-generation API hub, RapidAPI Enterprise Hub. Following RapidAPI's recommendations and suggested phased approach to implementing a partner API hub establishes the most effective path to immediate and long-term value for both the organization and its partners. This value is built on the new efficiencies enabled through a better overall developer experience as well as a clearly defined partner strategy that advocates your APIs to partners based on their needs. Starting implementation with API Catalog offers the most efficient path to value for partner developers. Analytics expands on these immediate benefits to deliver deeper insights into API usage and performance. With this complete view of users, APIs, and their performance, Access and Provisioning optimizes the developer experience building further on the efficiencies and user experience that has been implemented in the first two phases. With this phased approach, enterprises can deliver on the promise of their digital transformation strategy, create new revenue streams, and extend their products and services via API-enabled partnerships.

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Preparation Phase - Goals and Self-Assessment

What are the top-level goals of your partner API program? Attract new partners? Create a new revenue stream? Other?

The API hub will enable you to execute your digitized partnerships enablement, so it is essential that you frame its objectives with your organization's broader strategic initiatives in mind. Are you looking to create stickiness with your partners, reducing churn? Do you want to leverage APIs to attract new partners or strengthen existing relationships? Is this initiative targeted as a new revenue driver? Starting with north star goals helps keep business and technical objectives in sync, and creates a clear vision for how you intend for your API hub to be used across your varying user types.

What stage of maturity and operationalization is your API environment?

Do you have a few APIs? Hundreds? How many gateways are currently being utilized along with ancillary systems for functions such as support? Getting a baseline on where you stand today will help inform which capabilities and functions you will implement for the first time with RapidAPI Enterprise Hub as opposed to those which exist but require upgrades and subsequently a change management plan.

What is your current level of user adoption/usage across these systems?

Having a view on how utilized and effective your existing systems are offers a solid foundation to start thinking about and planning change management for your users. Systems that are currently performing well can be transitioned after those that have more significant gaps have been addressed. This allows you to solve the bigger issues first and showcase the value of RapidAPI Enterprise Hub to its users. The goal is user adoption so it's important to avoid needlessly forcing users onto new systems before the benefits of RapidAPI Enterprise Hub have been recognized and experienced by its users. Drilling down further into existing usage also offers a clear indicator of the effectiveness of your existing system(s) — those with low adoption or usage rates may well be an indicator of functional gaps RapidAPI Enterprise Hub can quickly address.

Phase 1 - API Catalog Questions

When approaching the API Catalog phase of your RapidAPI Enterprise Hub implementation, it is important to consider two primary components: users (again factoring in the different user types) and the APIs themselves. The objective of these questions is to help draw out how you can deliver the most value for your users quickly to spur adoption.

Who are the users and what are their role types?

Think back to the roles outlined previously, administrators, builders, and consumers — each of these user types have their own set of needs when using RapidAPI Enterprise Hub. With partner API hubs, it's particularly important to distinguish between internal and partner users. In these use cases internal users will most likely be administrators and builders, whereas partner developers will be only consumers. These role types come with varying levels of access and enabled capabilities requirements, which is why leveraging Role-Based Access Controls becomes so critical. You want to enable all users with the functionality they need to provide an optimal developer experience — for instance builders need to have some route to publish what they create to the API hub whereas consumers need only access for discovery and consumption.

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What are the different types of partners, and how should their usage and access vary based on the type of partner they are?

Just as different user types warrant different levels of access and capabilities, varying partner types should inform access and limits. In most partner programs, not every partner should have the same level of access and usage for every API. Defining your organization's criteria for which type of partners can access which APIs and applying those standards through Role-Based Access Controls helps your organization ensure proper governance of its API program. It also reduces the extensive manual effort that would otherwise be required to apply those controls on a case by case basis.

How are you going to categorize the APIs that you publish?

How the organization chooses to sort and filter the APIs listed in its API hub ultimately makes those APIs more or less discoverable for the consumer. Establishing and adhering to a clear methodology from the outset lays the groundwork for long-term and effective discovery as the API ecosystem continues to grow. When thinking about and applying this methodology, it's important to keep the partner consumer in mind, thinking about the categorization from their extra-organizational perspective that does not have the benefit of your company's internal nomenclature.

Phase 2 - Analytics Questions

When planning the addition of analytics there is a fundamental principle that should drive your answers to the following questions — maximize the insights derived from the API ecosystem to inform broader business and technical decisions, both for you and your partners. To guide this component of implementation and ensure that your users (both builders and consumers) benefit from adding analytics, there are a couple key questions you should ask:

What does the overall analytics environment look like today? How can data from RapidAPI Enterprise Hub be leveraged to complement that?

Like other components of your RapidAPI Enterprise Hub deployment, it's important to assess analytics in the context of existing systems you are already using. Data exposed via analytics in RapidAPI Enterprise Hub can be married with that exposed in existing analytics platforms to fill gaps and complete the picture of API, application, and business performance. For instance, growth in your API call volumes could be an indicator of scaling applications, signifying adoption amongst your partners. This indicator can initiate further investigation in call volume distribution. Is the growth being driven by a single partner application, or is the growth distributed, indicating more widespread adoption?

Who are the intended users and how are users expected to leverage analytics?

Broadly speaking, analytics users fall into two categories, those within your company, the API administrators and builders, and partner API consumers. Each user category has their own implications and uses for analytics. For instance, builders within your organization will generally look to analytics to help identify any issues or problems with the APIs they have built. Your partner consumers, on the other hand, are more concerned with usage deriving insights for their applications' adoption and performance-based metrics such as call volumes and their increase or reduction over time.

The insights drawn out of analytics can also be utilized to make strategic business decisions. For example, in analyzing your API ecosystem, you may uncover particularly high retention and reuse of a particular or set of APIs. With that performance in mind you could decide to promote those APIs to a broader audience. Or in this instance, where it is a set of APIs, it could be an indicator of a new API collection, which groups multiple APIs often used together to serve a specific use case. Such additions help your organization to keep the API ecosystem evolving and ensure you provide the best possible developer experience through API discovery.

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Phase 3 - Access and Provisioning Questions

The last phase of implementation should be guided by the idea of policy access as a function of user experience. The idea is you can leverage access and provisioning policies to deliver a better user experience for administrators, builders, and consumers. As is often the case with user access controls though, there needs to be a balance between ensuring security and providing ease of use. This is especially true in partner API hub scenarios where you extend your APIs to those outside your organization. These questions can help determine the proper balance for your organization:

What does the approval process look like today? How much of it can/should be automated?

Access and provisioning to this point has been a mostly manual process, but it's likely that not all of the organization's APIs necessitate that level of scrutiny. This is more commonly the case for strictly internal API hub use cases, but it is likely that there are at least some APIs within your ecosystem suitable to a more automated approach for granting access. Those APIs which do not interact with sensitive data are good candidates for self-service provisioning policies eliminating the need for a human in the loop. By contrast, some API types or user types should always involve a manual review of API access and/or usage.

Who is responsible for approvals today? Is there any opportunity to decentralize approvals further?

There are two common routes here, administrators (often a centralized team) or the builders themselves. Placing the responsibility on administrators offers a higher level of oversight and scrutiny but can sometimes slow onboarding with fewer people handling requests. Opting instead for builders may create more overall coverage from a resource standpoint. In pursuing this option though, particularly in partner API hubs, it becomes critically important to ensure those developers are enabled with the tools and policy criteria they need to monitor and properly administer access in accordance with company policy.

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Rapid API

Global HQ
2 Shaw Alley, Fourth Floor
San Francisco, CA 94105

Contact
info@rapidapi.com
www.rapidapi.com

RapidAPI empowers millions of developers to build modern software with a next-generation API platform including the world's largest API hub and fully-integrated solutions for API collaboration, discovery, testing, publishing, consumption, and more.

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Questions Worksheet

Preparation Phase - Goals and Self Assessment

- What are the top-level goals of your partner API program? Attract new partners? Create a new revenue stream? Other?
- What stage of maturity and operationalization is your API environment?
- What is your current level of user adoption/usage across these systems?

Phase 1 - API Catalog Questions

- Who are the users, and what are their role types?
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Phase 3 - Access and Provisioning Questions

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- As a policy, who should be responsible for approvals?