Edmunds.com Revs Up Partners and Revenue with APIs
Huge developer adoption, new revenue and partnerships

"By engaging developers, the Edmunds API has turned into a multi-million dollar revenue generator."

—Ismail Elshareef, Sr. Director, Open Platform

DETAIL

5,150%

average quarterly increase in production developer subscribers

CHALLENGE

Edmunds' rich automotive data and strong partnerships fueled the best customer experience possible, yet to grow the business and innovate, the company needed a fast and efficient data delivery layer that would help it open its data to developers and onboard partners fast.

"Relying on flat files and FTP servers wasn't practical or scalable," says Ismail Elshareef, senior director of open platform at Edmunds. "We knew APIs could replace legacy systems and help us leverage the incredible data we have in ways we hadn't imagined."

SOLUTION

APIs were key to enabling growth, but the company also knew it couldn't expect instant success. They began looking for an API management platform that would easily and efficiently manage partners and developers, as well as supply insights into API use. In addition, they were hungry for best practices on evangelizing APIs to developers to speed adoption and fuel innovation.

They chose TIBCO Mashery® for its established quick time-to-market and easy-to-use dashboard for managing traffic and partners. Mashery outreach services would help ensure success with the developer community. "Mashery could get us off the ground quickly, so we could have our app in the market fast," says Elshareef.

BENEFITS

HUGE DEVELOPER ADOPTION

Edmunds made its API open and free to users, which gave the company competitive advantage in the space. "Developers began to flock to Edmunds because they could access quality data with no cost," adds Elshareef.

The Mashery team gave Edmunds best practices for API marketing and evangelizing at hackathons and optimizing the developer onboarding experience. "Mashery gave us great tools, like I/O Docs, which tripled our developer adoption rate overnight," says Elshareef. In just two years, member registrations exploded 742 percent. The company has also seen steady increase in production-level developers—those who make at least 100 calls per month. The average number of production developers continues to increase quarterly, by 5,150 percent as of Q3 2013. The consistent rise in quantity and quality of developers using the API solidifies Edmunds as a voice of authority in the space, the de facto standard for automotive data.

HUGE REVENUE GENERATION

One reason both external and internal developers use the API is the speed at which they can create apps. "The API cuts app development time by as much as 75 percent," notes Elshareef. The Edmunds Car Reviews & Prices app is one of the most popular in the Lifestyle category on iTunes. "The Edmunds API has turned into a multi-million dollar revenue generator for the company."

NEW PARTNERSHIPS

One developer created a vehicle trade-in app purchased by the majority of Edmunds' partner dealerships, amounting to millions of dollars gained and the highest API query volume on the Edmunds portal. In return, the developer gained exposure to thousands of dealers, proving that API synergy results in success for both parties. Says Elshareef, "Developer outreach is critical to finding the next best app."

Supported by the Mashery team, Edmunds also used its API to grow new types of profitable business partnerships, first with more than 9,000 dealerships across the country. It offered its API for them to build Edmunds-powered website widgets to gain access to Edmunds data. "We used to have to manage code for each partner," says Elshareef. "Now, we give our partners the API, and they go to town."

"When we first started, the API was really a branding play to get the Edmunds name out there, integrate partners, and enable innovation among developers," says Elshareef. "Now the API has evolved as a launchpad for nontraditional partnerships and business development." Edmunds developed partnerships with eBay, Toyota, and Ask.com, among others, resulting in increased exposure and greater API use.

FUTURE

Already successful in evolving the business by partnering with leading companies outside of the automotive space, Edmunds is looking to again use its API to power future changes. The company has grown beyond car research and data and rolled out a car shopping platform and many new consumer-facing products on its website.