Exact: Streamlining customer workflows with 20 million API calls daily

About Exact

Exact is a Dutch software company that offers accounting, ERP, and other software for small and medium enterprises. Exact serves more than 400,000 customers, helping them manage their numbers and successfully run their day-to-day business.

Industries: Technology

Location: The Netherlands

Apigee API Platform

Exact improves reach, stickiness, and revenues with a stable, scalable API program supported by Apigee.

Google Cloud results

- Supports 6,000 developers and more than 750 apps
- Handles all API call loads with zero outages
- Eliminates spikes in API traffic with predictable, linear growth
- Gains a strong understanding of customer needs by monitoring API usage

Processing more than 20 million API calls per day

For more than 35 years, Exact has been a market leader in financial and business software for small- to medium-sized enterprises. Many of the company's over 400,000 clients operate in the Benelux region—Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg—and it also reaches international businesses with offices around the world.

Exact offers a wide range of business software products, from accounting, finance, and payroll software to ERP and CRM solutions. Today even small businesses often rely on several solutions to improve efficiencies and help them concentrate on their core business goals. Exact recognized early on that these customers would want a way to integrate these solutions, and so the company began releasing APIs to connect with third-party products.

"All of our customers have different needs, different software, and different workflows, but it did not make sense for us to build all of these connections and integrations ourselves," says Dimitri Braakman, Commercial Product Manager Connectivity, API and App Center at Exact. "APIs help us realize the integration needs for customers. Our goal is to have at least 75% of our customers connecting with other solutions through APIs."

Expanding the API program not only improves customer experiences, but it also helps Exact's bottom line. Customers of third-party products may decide to try an Exact product because they know there are integrations available through APIs. Once customers have connected their products, they start to see even more benefits, which further strengthens their relationship with Exact.

Supporting 20 million API calls daily

Exact's API program quickly became an important part of the company's business strategy. Many third-party applications rushed to connect, but this popularity also caused Exact some growing pains. The company didn't have any way of limiting API calls or placing controls on API usage through its homegrown API platform. API traffic increased dramatically, occasionally even overloading the platform and causing outages.

Exact decided that it needed an enterprise API management platform that would give the company better control over API usage while providing excellent developer experiences.

"We tried one API management solution, but it didn't deliver at all," says Braakman. "When we went live, we generated 1.5 million API calls in an hour and everything broke down. Even worse, we didn't feel that customer support was up to our standards."

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>
> —Dimitri Braakman, Commercial Product Manager Connectivity, API and App Center, Exact

Exact went back to the drawing board and took another look at one of its top choices, Apigee API Management Platform. While Exact had initially been concerned about costs due to its high volume of API calls, Apigee had just released an enterprise pricing model that better fit the company's needs. Apigee performed extremely well during tests. With excellent support from Google, including a strong SLA, Exact felt comfortable rolling out Apigee as its main API management platform.

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Highly efficient and scalable APIs

With Apigee, Exact has an API management platform that allows it to scale tremendously. Exact has released around 350 API proxies connecting to numerous API-related solutions such as invoicing, payments, and taxation. Apigee enables Exact to add daily quotas and rate-limiting policies to its proxies. This reduces spikes in API traffic, reducing the load on the back end and ultimately providing faster performance for customers.

Exact currently onboards around 15 new connected apps a month and supports 6,000 active developers. Before implementing Apigee, API traffic was increasing exponentially with every app developed. Now API traffic grows in a much more predictable, linear fashion, allowing Exact to better prepare for expected future growth.

Apigee also gives Exact the ability to monitor APIs with in-depth analysis. Exact can better understand how app developers use APIs and what types of features customers look for.

"Nearly half of our customers—over 160,000 businesses—connect to more than 750 third-party apps using APIs running on Apigee," says Braakman. "We're also interested in using more monitoring and analytics in Apigee to understand if certain types of customers produce higher value for our company. This may help us develop our business strategy to better align with our most valuable customers."

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Growing business through APIs

Exact is starting to experiment with other Apigee features to better manage APIs and further improve developer experiences. The company can employ policies to alert third parties when they use outdated security, for example.

"With Apigee, we have the enterprise API management tool we need to grow our API program efficiently and securely," Braakman says.