

ON TREND

**Agile Telco's monthly take
on the sector's hot topic**

**“There is a vision for
APIs that will change
business processes, the
customer journey and
drastically improve the
customer experience”**

**Jorn Vercamert,
chief products officer,
Proximus Global**



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Network APIs - Show me the money

This month at Agile Telco, we're focusing APIs

A year or so ago application programme interfaces (APIs) were generating a lot of excitement as telcos and their suppliers quickly grasped the potential for network APIs to be the enablers of a new wave of monetisation for the industry. Although there are now numerous initiatives bringing together industry organisations, vendor and telco groups, the first blush of excitement has worn off. That's a typical technology industry path. We're not quite in Gartner's Trough of Disillusion but the era of APIs for everything accompanied by frictionless monetisation isn't here yet.

That doesn't mean the API monetisation opportunity has disappeared or that telcos have missed out on yet another source of potential new revenue. What it does mean is that reality has overtaken the hype. Today, we're looking at a very small market in which a few, highly-specific use cases, mostly around identity verification and fraud prevention, show how API monetisation can succeed and offer telcos a sense of how far wider monetisation of APIs will happen in future.

The vision of numerous APIs being monetised in support of network functions, quality on demand and the network-dependent innovations



around AI, is still coming to fruition. In the meantime, the means to open underlying network API infrastructure are being popularised.

The API prize isn't here yet but there are clear signposts showing the way to the money.

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INTERVIEW

There is a vision for APIs that will change business processes, the customer journey and drastically improve the customer experience

Jorn Vercamert

chief products officer, Proximus Global



Agile Telco: Where is the money in network APIs?

Jorn Vercamert: Today, it's very much in the fraud and identity space and there are real, live use cases and real-life business being done. The way we look at it in the longer term is that networks become open and programmable but a lot of blocks need to fall into place before we get there. Also, if we can build a programmable telco infrastructure, the experience it delivers doesn't stop at one network or one border.

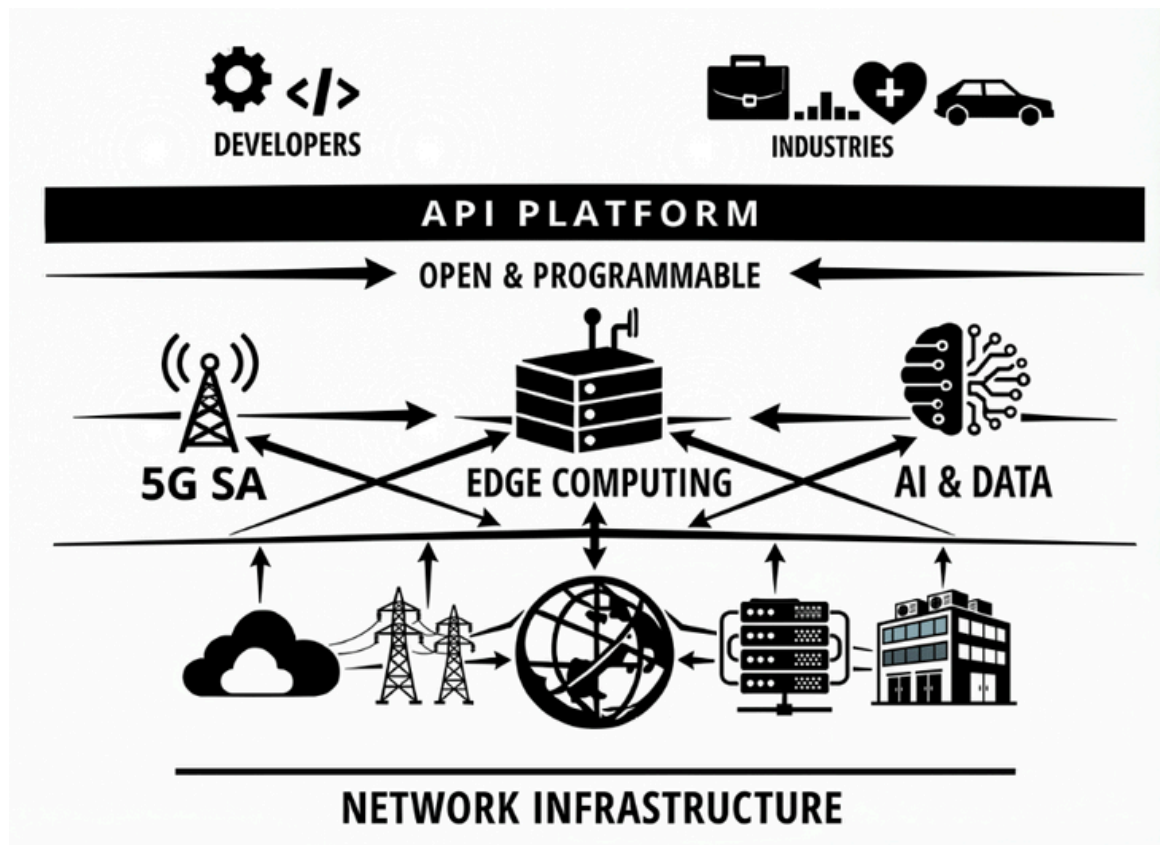
Aggregation comes into that and the ability to build a comprehensive platform for industry is needed in the same way as with AI, 5G SA and edge computing. There is a vision for APIs that will change business processes, the customer journey and drastically improve the customer experience or reduce costs for various industries. In the longer term, it's important to look at APIs and the ecosystem of mobile operators.

As Proximus Global, we think we're in a great spot to build that as one simple developer integration journey where we make our networks open and programmable. You can slice and dice and have content and media, health and medicine, autonomous vehicles and many others, with APIs ultimately seen as a key technical component.

AgileTelco: Are telcos, partners and customers ready for this?

JV: In our view APIs are an add-on to traditional models. The high-tech revolution will not replace existing offers in the market and the consumer space will remain as it is for a very long time. Consumers still want higher speeds and telcos will monetise this via subscriptions and then look at what we might also monetise.

Hopefully network APIs add to and highlight the value of connectivity less as a commodity and more as an enabler of critical infrastructure. We have the telco relationships and a big hub where we're integrating all the telcos through **BICS** and we have **Telesign** in fraud and identity which is already active in network APIs. We feel we have all the ingredients to be a very big player and see ourselves having the ability to aggregate APIs across networks.



AgileTelco: What APIs do you see being monetised, who will pay to use them and how will they be billed or charged for?

JV: Today, it remains usage-based between aggregators and mobile network operators but it's early days and the focus is on getting the infrastructure up and running. When we think northbound into the customer markets, you see some new models which are performance-based and use mechanisms such as how many frauds have been prevented or detected. In the long run, we will see the erosion of that business model and identity will be balanced between the OTP SMS ecosystem and APIs. We need to assess what the potential of authentication is today and what comes in the future.

Network APIs are a revolution that a mobile network operator has to go through at its own pace. Some will be excited but others won't want to lose older [revenue] flows so their strategies might be different.

AgileTelco: What needs to happen to take network APIs into the mainstream for telcos?

JV: Identity and authentication use cases are already here and telcos should definitely look at that and start with those if they want to get into this. I think the technology needs to be better known by verticals and industries and the technology has to be built and scale for other use cases. Industry in general doesn't know this technology very well today and there is work to do northbound to the customer on what the capabilities can be on the network and how it can help.

Ultimately, that has to be about reducing costs, improving the customer journey and aiding flexibility. I'm excited about network APIs but you need to get into the early use cases to prove the technology. The challenge is also as a telco following into this from network technology. You need to have software technologies and software capabilities which is a skillset question.

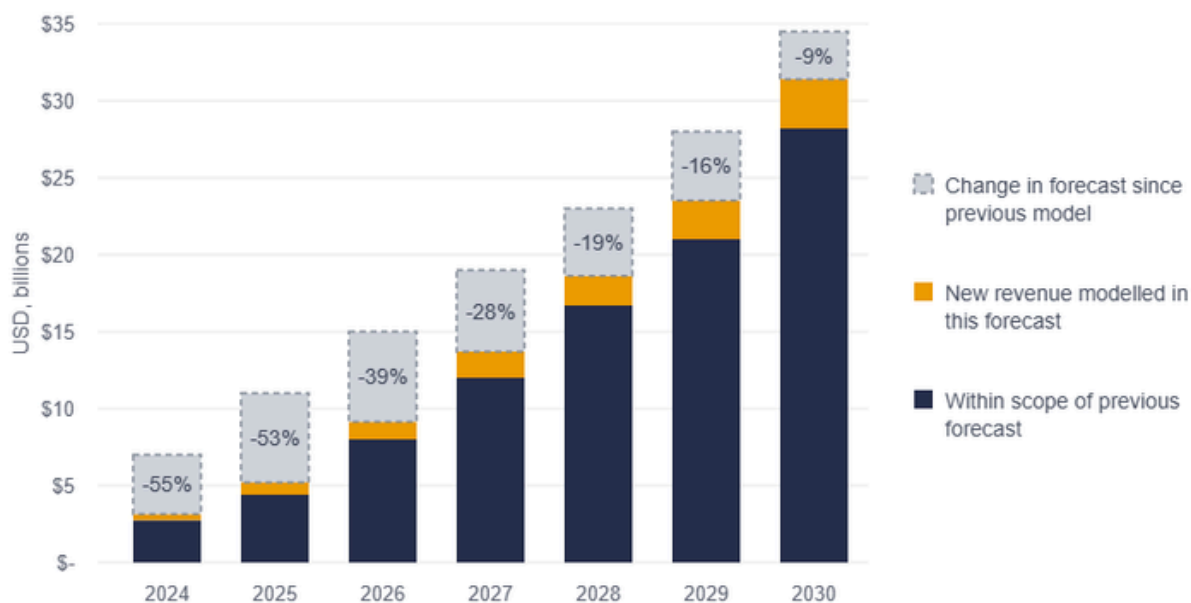


Network APIs - The biggest unlock in telecoms since the smartphone

Proper, programmable network infrastructure is an essential foundation for network API enablement and depends upon the frictionless, secure exposure of network functions to various use cases within and outside of telcos. That opening up and allowing others to touch or at least come a lot closer to the network, means telcos are still are cautious about opening up networks via APIs and see them as complex to offer and manage while also plagued by unclear business cases. This makes network APIs a risky business, writes George Malim

These challenges have resulted in heightened realism. Research firm **STL Partners**, for example, has released a 2025 forecast for the value of network APIs that is 8.5% lower than its forecast’s original release in 2024. The forecast is based on a model analysing demand for 22 network APIs from 46 main use cases and combines the projected spend in 33 countries in seven regions over the 2024-2030 period. The underlying trend is for sustained and significant growth but the velocity at which that appears has lessened.

Updated API forecast (2024 vs 2025): US\$31.5bn by 2030



Slower than expected adoption and the consequent delayed arrival of new revenue has caused the revision but the firm continues to believe that slower markets will catch up once demand is proven in early-mover markets. Even so the juice is worth the squeeze and STL Partners predicts the value of network APIs will reach US\$35.1bn by 2030 and picks out anti-fraud use cases as low hanging fruit that are driving the API opportunity. It says the long-term growth will eventually come from network performance APIs.

Significant work is being done across the industry. **GSMA** with Open Gateway, **Linux** with CAMARA, the Aduna vendor initiative, **TM Forum's** Operate APIs and Open APIs, and a number of telco and vendor-specific efforts are opening up platforms for API monetisation. These are helping the concept move beyond the theoretical and demonstrate where value can be added and revenue generated.

Unmistaken identity

Authentication and fraud prevention network APIs have been identified as early proofpoints and are helping to drive acceptance and validation. Juniper Research projects that operator revenue from these network APIs will grow from US\$252 million in 2025 to US\$4.9bn in 2030. Report author Alex Webb, a senior research analyst at the firm, explains how important development of this market has become within the API monetisation debate. "Fraud prevention APIs provide the greatest opportunity in the short term; accounting for approximately 90% of network API revenue in 2025," he says.

Juniper expects operator revenue from network APIs globally to exceed US\$8 billion by 2030, a substantial increase from the US\$284 million operators were forecasted to generate in 2025. Juniper has identified know your customer (KYC) use cases as key to this revenue boost. The firm also sees SIM Swap and number verification APIs as significant early use cases that will foster confidence in the API ecosystem. The SIM Swap API detects recent SIM changes to prevent fraud, while the number verification API confirms device ownership.

Other use cases are less clearly identifiable. Juniper Research thinks network APIs have extensive monetisation potential in the cellular IoT markets where APIs could be used to provide organisations with greater insight into the network, connectivity and status of their IoT devices. "Operators must monetise demand for location verification and retrieval APIs in asset and vehicle tracking use cases to broaden network API monetisation," Webb adds. "As enterprises will not replace existing services such as the navigation satellite system, operators must frame their APIs as supplementary data that increases accuracy and reliability of IoT location data."



Alex Webb, senior research analyst, Juniper Research

"Operators must monetise demand for location verification"

Mind the revenue gap

Significant further steps are needed for API monetisation to approach maturity and, while telcos need to find new revenues to support continued investment in network infrastructure, API revenue currently doesn't address their hunger.

"Telcos are now trying to gain revenues from APIs, although revenue streams here are small and perhaps only account for 1% of the connectivity revenue," confirms Dr William Webb, an IEEE fellow, a former director at Ofcom and the chief executive of Commsisive. "As a result, I do not expect a shift of emphasis. The main thrust will remain connectivity, though there is a noticeable push to sell APIs alongside this connectivity."

"There is some evidence that banks and financial institutions are buying API services as part of fraud prevention," adds Dr Webb. "This has proven successful in quite a few countries and is likely to grow. Beyond that, it's unclear that there is any significant demand for APIs. Broadly, telcos and their associated partners such as Aduna are ready for this. With all the standards and software in place, not much else is needed."

"The main thrust will remain connectivity"



Dr William Webb, the chief executive, Commsisive

Tim Hatt, the head of Research at **GSMA Intelligence**, is more upbeat. “With operator participation in Open Gateway at around 80% of mobile operator groups, the focus is on exposing high value network capabilities through standardised APIs,” he explains. “A growing share of commercially deployed APIs and pilots are now focusing on communication quality, particularly quality on demand (QoD), device information, such as connectivity status, and location-based services such as geofencing. QoD-driven use cases are expanding most rapidly, they have doubled over the last 12 months and reflect real enterprise needs.”



Tim Hatt, the head of research at GSMA Intelligence

"The focus is on exposing high value network capabilities through standardised APIs"

Hyperscale monetisation

“As hyperscalers, including **Microsoft’s** Azure, bring these APIs natively into their platforms, telcos gain access to huge developer ecosystems, making ‘network attributes’ the more scalable monetisation path compared to selling raw bandwidth,” Hatt adds, pointing out that technical readiness, as Dr Webb also says, has been broadly achieved. “Channel partners and mobile operators are technically ready: API supply has stabilised, commercial deployments are broadening and over 60 channel partners are now helping MNOs reach enterprise buyers. Developers are showing increasing increasing levels of awareness though deep understanding differs by region. China and wider Asia lead due to stronger education and demand signals. Enterprises in healthcare, heavy industry, energy, gaming and government are already actively partnering with operators, while manufacturing lags, signaling the need for clearer value propositions.”

"The commodity connectivity game is over"



Philip Otley, the head of telecoms, media and entertainment at HTEC

That clarity will be essential if telcos are to move from monetising speeds and feeds to profiting from providing access to network attributes via APIs. "The commodity connectivity game is over," says Philip Otley, the head of Telecoms, Media and Entertainment at HTEC. "Operators have spent hundreds of billions building highways while over-the-top (OTT) players drive Lamborghinis on them. The shift to API monetisation is the difference between high-margin service players and extinct infrastructure providers."

By the numbers

Network APIs

Predicted value of network APIs by 2030

\$35.1bn

Participation rate of mobile operator groups in Open Gateway

80%

Total IoT devices forecast worldwide by 2033

US\$8bn

Growth in Quality on Demand (QoD) use cases over the last 12 months

200%

Share of network API revenue accounted for by fraud prevention in 2025

90%

Projected revenue from authentication and fraud APIs by 2030

US\$4.9bn

"The convergence of GSMA Camara APIs and TM Forum's ODA is the biggest unlock in telecoms since the smartphone," he adds. "We're finally seeing operators expose network capabilities to developers and create ecosystems that monetise infrastructure investments. This turns stranded infrastructure assets into recurring revenue streams. Network-as-a-service is happening now."

Cash-in on edge intelligence

Mayur Upadhyaya, the chief executive of APIContext concurs. “Speed and bandwidth are commoditised, but context-rich APIs offer a new path to value,” he says. “This is less about connectivity and more about intelligence at the edge.”

Even so, not everyone’s ready for the change: “Tech vendors and hyperscalers are best placed to consume these APIs today, especially those building orchestration layers or AI services,” says Upadhyaya. “Customers aren’t quite there in terms of readiness or willingness to pay directly. And many telcos still need to modernise their stack and commercial models to support API-as-a-product thinking. But we’re seeing encouraging signs, especially when external enablers help bridge the gap.”



"Customers aren't quite there in terms of readiness or willingness to pay directly"

Mayur Upadhyaya, the chief executive of APIContext

Those include the early use cases outlined earlier such as SIM Swap, number verification, KYC and age verification APIs which dominate early traction, supported by regulatory drivers happening in the US, UK and Australia and the opportunity for immediate return on investments, according to Hatt. “Beyond security, QoS/QoD, device reachability or status, missing connectivity insights, edge discovery and location verification are scaling, accounting for roughly a third of operator launched APIs,” he says, warning that there can be a disconnect between how telcos do business and the expectation of developers. Developers continue to prefer a fixed income stream for API projects – a reflection of the sometimes transient nature of the work. The reality, however, is that many enterprise customers will want more flexibility so they can test ROI iteratively, rather than committing big money upfront. With developer support dropping for models such as usage-based and pay-per-feature, this may be put to the test.”

Chicken, egg or omelette?

Telcos themselves are at varying levels of maturity, says Randolph Barr, the chief information security officer at **Cequence Security**. “Tier-1 operators are investing heavily and deploying APIs through programs like GSMA Open Gateway with real production traffic,” he says. “Others remain culturally and operationally tied to product-centric, OSS/BSS-driven models. The good news is integration speed is no longer the blocker; APIs can now be onboarded in days, not quarters. The real challenges are organisational: pricing, go-to-market, incentives and especially security ownership.”

So the mass market only comes with scalable API infrastructure but that only comes when significant demand has crystallised. “To a degree, yes,” says Hatt. “API monetisation for telcos does present a chicken-and-egg challenge. Operators want clear evidence of demand before shifting commercial and operating models, yet strong API adoption often requires those very changes: flexible pricing, simplified contracting and faster onboarding. Developers tend to favour predictable, fixed fees, while enterprises want low-risk, usage-based entry points. At the same time, operators need revenue certainty to justify network and platform investment.”

For others there’s no time to consider what comes first, action must be taken now. “It’s not chicken-and-egg,” confirms Otley. “The current model is already dead, and operators just haven’t admitted it yet. Return on invested capital sits below the cost of capital across most mature markets. According to **PwC**, almost all cash generated gets absorbed by capex, dividends and debt service. There’s nothing left in the pot for innovation and that isn’t sustainable. One way or another, that party ends in 2026. Either operators crack network monetisation, or they become irrelevant utilities that eventually get nationalised or consolidated out of existence.”

"APIs can now be onboarded in days, not quarters"



Randolph Barr, the chief information security officer at Cequence Security

Step away from the risky gamble

Barr senses that change is underway. “That dynamic has shifted in the current wave,” he says. “Standardised APIs significantly reduce developer risk, and aggregation models mean telcos no longer have to reinvent go-to-market individually. Early signs of revenue are already showing, such as less fraud, increased billing and better conversion rates, which changes the view of API monetisation from a risky gamble to a simple addition to current services.”

With the clock running down, telcos are rushing to make sense of the opportunities. Whether this will be fast enough remains to be seen. “In effect, security and identity APIs act as the bridge: they validate the commercial and operating model, proving demand from the outside in,” Hatt explains. “This, in turn, is creating the confidence for telcos to extend API exposure to more complex capabilities such as QoD, device and location APIs.”

EDITORS TAKE

Where is the money in APIs?

In this first episode of EDITORS TAKE with George Malim, we put the microphone directly in front of the industry. We are after short, unfiltered opinions on what is really happening in telecoms, what delivers real value and what is still more promise than progress. Expect candid takes, disagreement and perspectives you do not always hear on stage or in press releases.

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