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On the Radar: Rocket API simplifies modernization of core business applications

A low-code/no-code solution to digitally enable green-screen applications

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Summary

Catalyst

Most host-based enterprise applications predate the era of mobile and web interfaces and were often built as siloed systems to limit access to the data contained within them. As enterprises move to embrace the digital economy, they are stuck with the problem of delivering modern user experiences with – or despite – these older host-based applications. It is frequently not feasible to replace or remove older applications, as they form the backbone of enterprise systems of record and have been finely tuned over the years to the way the business operates. This problem is made more acute by the lack of programmers with knowledge of the languages that underlie these applications and the need for today's developers – with different skillsets – to access the functionality that they contain.

Rocket API offers a set of tools that helps to easily integrate these older systems and their underlying data and business logic into modern systems, dashboards, and interfaces so that today's developers can use these services to provide employees, customers, and partners with real-time information from multiple siloed sources.

Key messages

- APIs offer a ready way to digitally enable core business functions contained in host-based systems via web services in a secure and reusable format.
- While Rocket API has established a strong foothold for banking, insurance, and financial services, there are many other verticals – such as utilities and energy, manufacturing, and public sector – where the solution also has a proven record of success
- Rocket Software markets its Rocket API solution in both perpetual and subscription-based models, and also offers maintenance, training, and integration services.

Ovum view

Rocket API is a singularly focused solution for host-based applications and utilizes RESTful services or SOAP to provide easy access by other applications. What makes it unique is that creating APIs does not require any changes to source code, and built-in intelligent trackers ensure that any changes to the codebase do not break the links to the APIs. Using a microflow approach – which is like recording a macro in Excel – Rocket API generates APIs using a no-code/low-code approach. These microflows can then be modified to establish search parameters, capture screen logic – and the underlying business logic – which helps unlock and expose data stored in host applications, and integrate core business functionalities for cloud, mobile, and self-service applications. Rocket API provides a viable solution to modernize legacy applications quickly, and at less cost and risk than a multi-year modernization program, while providing quick returns on investment. The subscription charges offered by Rocket Software for different tiers are very competitive and depend on the number of applications that need to be linked. Ovum expects Rocket API to deliver significant revenue growth in the near term as enterprises across verticals are looking at viable options to modernize green-screen applications as part of their transformation programs. With the addition of newer capabilities and features, and its efforts to enhance its partner portfolio, Rocket API can increase its footprint across verticals as a solution of choice for modernizing host-based applications.

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Recommendations for enterprises

Why put Rocket API on your radar?

Rocket API in its current form emerged from the need to address the lack of tools for making data that resides on mature systems available to use with other applications. Rocket API can run on-premises or on the cloud, providing a platform to integrate applications residing on IBM i, IBM Z, and MultiValue platforms with any web, mobile, and middleware application by converting applications and business logic from these applications into web services (RESTful and SOAP). Rocket API is a good option for enterprises dealing with the complex challenge of integrating legacy applications, data, and the underlying business logic with newer digital applications. In this context, enterprises can exploit Rocket API to revitalize existing investments in legacy platforms and applications, improve connectivity within current application ecosystems, and avoid the risk and expense of completely replacing existing applications.

Rocket API also supports asynchronous development efforts between the user interface designers and back-end developers because of its ability to understand the impact of back-end code changes on API functionality. This enables development teams to spot code compatibility issues before they break the link between back-end systems and user interfaces. Since the product is available in both subscription-based and perpetual license models, pricing can be tailored to fit specific requirements. Given the continual need to adapt existing applications to meet evolving needs, the current product roadmap, and Rocket Software's focus on execution, we expect its competitive positioning to continue to strengthen over the next two or three years.

Highlights

Background

Rocket Software was founded in 1990 and currently serves over 10 million customers globally. Rocket LegaSuite, a UI and workflow solution for application modernization, included the ability to create APIs for several years before Rocket API's introduction. In 2015, Rocket released Rocket API as a stand-alone product with a rich feature set for the creation of RESTful and SOAP APIs, recognizing the emergence of the API economy and the need for organizations with venerable computing platforms to make services available for today's web and mobile world. The key verticals of focus for the vendor are financial services, manufacturing, and retail companies requiring a solution to ease the integration of multiple legacy and modern platforms.

Current position

One of the key issues that Rocket API addresses is the challenge of delivering modern user experiences from green screen, monolithic applications, which are notoriously difficult to service-enable. Rocket API fosters API-led modernization by offering a no-code/low-code approach to creating and managing APIs that can be used to modernize and integrate host-based applications with cloud-first, mobile and web applications (see Figure 1).

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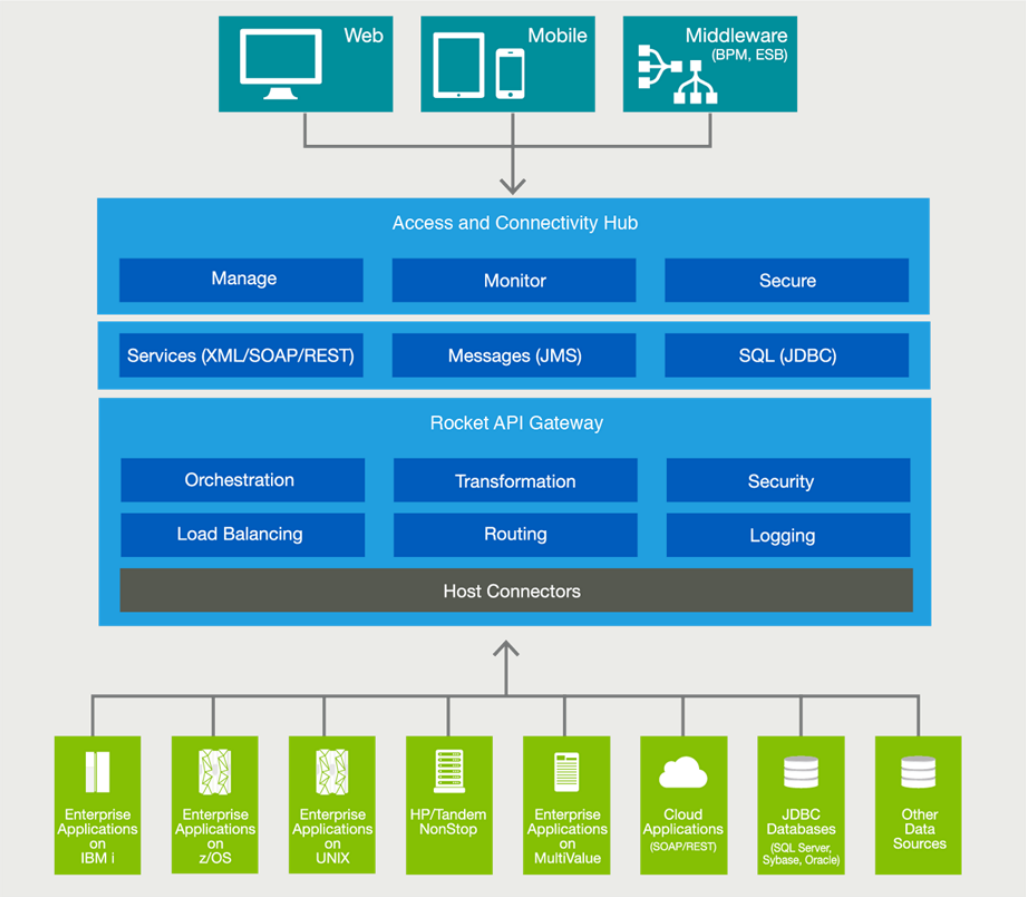
Figure 1: Application and data integration via Rocket API



Source: Rocket Software

Rocket API has two components: Rocket API Gateway, which orchestrates the APIs and connections to back-end systems, and the Access and Connectivity Hub, which manages, secures, and monitors functioning of the APIs. The pricing for Rocket API is contingent upon the number of services and the number and location of API users. The vendor also offers implementation, training, and integration services depending upon customer needs, as well as the option to conduct a pilot or trial run to test out the product's features. As part of the product roadmap, the vendor is adding capabilities such as smart application and API analysis, API management and DevOps Capabilities across platforms, and enhanced usability to Rocket API.

Rocket API is an established product addressing a niche requirement for enterprises who are heavily invested in green-screen applications that function reliably but don't meet modern needs. However, Rocket Software would do well to broaden its scope of partnerships with systems integrators who play heavily in the modernization and transformation area. This would enable Rocket Software to gain access to a larger client base both vertically and geographically. Rocket Software's ability to sustain future growth will be determined by its ability to articulate its position on the applicability of Rocket API in other verticals and to extend outreach activities to include more partners that play in target markets.

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Data sheet

Key facts

Table 1: Data sheet: Rocket Software

Product name	Rocket API	**Product classification**	Integration and API platform
Version number	3.1.2	**Release date**	April 2018
Industries covered	Financial services, retail, manufacturing, and utilities.	**Geographies covered**	Global
Relevant company sizes	Medium to large enterprises	**Licensing options**	Perpetual and subscription licenses
URL	http://www.rocketsoftware.com/products/rocket-api	**Routes to market**	Direct sales and systems integration partners
Company headquarters	Waltham, Massachusetts, US	**Number of employees**	1,400

Source: Ovum

Appendix

On the Radar

On the Radar is a series of research notes about vendors bringing innovative ideas, products, or business models to their markets. Although On the Radar vendors may or may not be ready for prime time, they bear watching for their potential impact on markets and could be suitable for certain enterprise and public-sector IT organizations.

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