REST type API for non web based applications, Is It a good idea?

Asked 16 years, 3 months ago   Modified 10 years, 7 months ago

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We are developing a middleware SDK, both in C++ and Java to be used as a library/DLL by, for example, game developers, animation software developers, Avatar developers to enhance their products.

Having created a typical API using specific calls for specific functions I am considering simplifying the API by using a REST type API (GET, PUT, POST, DELETE) or CRUD type (CREATE, READ, UPDATE, DELETE) interface.

This would work in a similar way to a client-server type REST API where there are only 4 possible API calls but these can take flexible parameters.

This seems to have the benefit of making the API stable in that new calls are not being added and old calls are not being removed. So a consumer of this API need not worry about having to recompile and change their code to suit any updates to our middleware.

The overhead is that there is an extra layer of redirection in the middleware controller to route API calls and the developer needs to know what parameters are available for each REST call (supplied of course).

I have not so far seen this system used outside of web type client server applications so my question is this: Is this a feasible idea?

I am thinking in terms of its efficiency as well as if for example a game developer would find it easy to use.

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Yes, this is a feasible idea. But I'm not sure the benefits would justify the costs. REST is best applied to a networked application scenario, oriented around requests and responses. While there are definite learning curve advantages to a uniform interface, those advantages can

be present in almost any well-designed API which provides reasonably abstract procedures.

You also expressed concern for whether a game developer would find a RESTful API easy to use. I'd be dubious. I've implemented many RESTful web services, and helped many developers get up to speed both building them and using them, and the conceptual leap required to grasp REST can be substantial for someone who has been steeped in procedural APIs for years. I'd think that game developers in particular would be very strongly connected to procedural APIs, to the point that attempting to adopt a different paradigm, whatever its benefits, might prove extremely difficult.

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answered Sep 15, 2008 at 13:09

Avi Flax

51.8k ● 9 ● 50 ● 64

Remember that REST is not specific to HTTP, and does not rely on just the 4 HTTP verbs. The verbs you have and can use depend on what protocol you're using.

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answered Jul 23, 2009 at 14:27

aehlke

15.8k ● 5 ● 37 ● 45