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07/11/2023

WEB 420 - Discussion 8.1 - WebHooks

A Webhook is an API’s used to send notifications of events (Lauret, 2019). More specifically “it is an HTTP-based callback function that allows lightweight, event-driven communication between 2 APIs.”(RedHat, 2022). The best way to understand this more clearly is through an example.

Let’s say you use your calendar app and put all your appointments in for the week. Now you could keep pulling up that calendar every day, every hour even to see what’s next. Or, you, the user, can tell the calendar app to remind you of your next meeting 10 minutes before it happens. The calendar app would use webhooks to achieve this. At a certain time, (10 minutes before your next meeting) the calendar app would send relevant information to you via a text message, or notification on your phone’s home screen. It’s given you the information you want without you having to request it.

This is in contrast to the communication patterns we have seen in the past. A consumer normally requests something from the provider. Normally, you pull up the calendar and add an event to your day. You, the consumer, are using GET requests, to see the calendar, POST requests to add an event. You may have to DELETE an event that got cancelled or change the time of a lunch plan. All of this is you, the consumer, communicating with the provider, the calendar. However, “consumer-to-provider communication is not always the most efficient way of communicating” (Lauret, 2019). Webhooks allow communication to flow in the opposite direction. They put the responsibility of communication on the provider.

We see webhooks used all the time. Every time we send money on Venmo and get an text immediately. Every push notification that your food is out for delivery from DoorDash. You are not requesting this information, the provider is sending it to you when it becomes available to them. Webhooks work in tandem with API’s to provide a better communication highway between user and app.

Sources

Lauret, A. (2019). *The design of web apis*. Manning Publications Co.

Red Hat. (2022, June 1). *What is a webhook?*. Red Hat - We make open source technologies for the enterprise. https://www.redhat.com/en/topics/automation/what-is-a-webhook