



CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

INDUSTRY

Financial Services

GEOGRAPHY

North America

CHALLENGES

Data-driven services are a key component of Baird's business growth strategy – but multiple lines of business developing and managing APIs in silos resulted in duplicated efforts and longer development cycles for new services.

SOLUTION

Amplify API Management Platform

RESULTS

With clear visibility of APIs, Baird's developers can avoid building APIs that other teams have already created – driving up efficiency, reducing cycle times and cutting time to market for value-added services.

Baird

Driving rapid adoption with a central API catalog and secure self-service consumption

Data-driven services are becoming an increasingly important component of the value proposition for financial services companies, enabling clients to drive well-informed decisions to maximize the performance of their assets. Innovation in this space is a key goal for Baird, a leading Wisconsin-based investment bank and financial services company.

Jim Cornelius, Vice President – Solution Architect at Robert W. Baird & Co., says: "Business intelligence is becoming a major focus for Baird. Delivering analytics insights to our customers depends on ready access to the underlying data – and as a result, development of APIs has taken off throughout the business."

In the past, each of Baird's business units developed and managed their own APIs independently. As the company's growth accelerated, this siloed approach began to create challenges.

"We recently completed a merger with Hilliard Lyons, which increased the size of our private wealth business by nearly 50 percent in a matter of months," continues Cornelius. "Our IT delivery teams include business analysts, developers, and quality assurance analysts, and they align to individual business units. When demand for API-driven services was lower, this approach to API development was manageable – but as the appetite for data grew, we quickly realized it was not sustainable.

"Because we had no central view of our APIs, we had no way of identifying what had been developed and who the business owners were. This led to significant amounts of duplicated effort, which lengthened time to market for new services."

Baird recognized that siloed API development presented additional risks. The decentralized approach made it difficult for the company to implement corporate standards for authorization and authentication, weakening its security posture. Crucially, limited insight into which applications depended on which APIs increased the risk of teams inadvertently bringing down systems and services when making changes to key APIs.

Creating a single, trusted platform for API management

To enable a centralized API management regime across its growing business, Baird selected Axway Amplify API Management Platform. With the Axway solution, the company can offer a central API catalog and self-service consumption, while tightly controlling API access and use.

“We targeted an enterprise-level approach to API management, and the Axway solution checked all of the boxes for us,” Cornelius explains. “The solution offers us an accurate and intuitive way to visualize which applications are calling our APIs and to highlight any issues. If there are any challenges with API consumption or authentication, the Amplify platform allows us to troubleshoot them and get to the root cause rapidly.”

He adds: “One of our primary objectives was to drive rapid adoption in our developer community. We were impressed with how we were able to integrate the Axway solution with our continuous integration and continuous delivery [CI/CD] processes and automation and achieve a smooth transition to the new way of working.”

Working with a team from Axway, Baird deployed and configured the solution to support its community of 100 users across its IT delivery teams.

“Our engagement with Axway was very successful,” recalls Cornelius. “One thing we really appreciate about working with Axway is that it feels like a much smaller company than it is. Whenever we need help with anything, we know that the support we need is only a quick call or an email away.”

Cutting time to market for value-added services

With a central catalog for all APIs across the business, Baird is achieving its goal of driving lean, efficient development for data-driven services, even as its business grows.

“Today, our developers can see all the APIs their peers have developed, identify any application dependences, and check the source repository to see who last worked on it,” says Cornelius. “With a central view of which APIs are available, our teams can leverage already-existing code or even an entire API created by another team to accelerate their own development work. Without a doubt, this capability is reducing duplication of effort in our development process — helping us to minimize our time to market for new data-driven services.”

By pooling the expertise of its IT delivery community, Baird is driving the up the quality and effectiveness of its API development.

“As we grow, we’re seeing that it’s the non-functional aspects of APIs that are becoming the most important. For example, if there are two APIs in our catalog that perform the same function, but one of them takes 15 seconds to return the requested data and other takes under 1 second, then the latter is clearly the optimal choice and will scale better as demand for the service grows. With the Amplify platform, it’s now possible for us to uncover opportunities to replace lower-performing APIs with better ones and decommission APIs that have fallen out of use.”

Baird can now easily determine the impact of change on its data-driven services, empowering the company to deliver high-quality experiences for its customers.

“We now have more than 400 APIs in our catalog, which are called by hundreds of apps,” concludes Cornelius. “By improving the efficiency and effectiveness of our API development and management process, we’re cutting the time it takes from ideation to service deployment — helping us to bring value-added services to our customers faster than ever.”

Accelerate innovation with the Amplify API Management Platform

Learn More 

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Jim Cornelius, Vice President, Solution Architect at Robert W. Baird & Co.