This paper summarizes the benefits of API Streamer - the only realtime API management platform. It shows how sports data providers can rapidly deploy realtime APIs with near-zero investment in order to meet massive developer demand and join the realtime API economy today.
The state of realtime APIs

IoT and microservices have caused event-driven architecture to proliferate. So much so that events are now viewed, and utilized, as streams of realtime data. As such, developers across the board are demanding APIs that go beyond traditional request/response REST APIs. They want realtime, event-driven APIs. In fact, Gartner predicts that by 2020 50% of all APIs will be event-driven.

Sports data providers already provide REST APIs. But for sports, which is essentially a series of realtime events occurring over the course of a match or competition, they’re not fit for purpose. With REST APIs latency is high and load is heavy, and polling them is an expensive and inefficient way of exposing this high-volume, event-driven, time-sensitive data that’s fanned out to millions of connected fans. As a result, developers are seeking out realtime sports data APIs.

There are sports data providers attempting to meet this demand. But they quickly come up against barriers. The cost of exposing realtime sports data is significant, delivering effective, performant APIs is difficult, and the new type of required infrastructure takes enormous effort and time to build. These providers are losing out on opportunities to drive innovation and increased revenue by mis-focusing on infrastructure rather than their most valuable asset: accurate sports data.

Ably’s API Streamer is helping sports data providers gain a realtime advantage by offering the tools and distribution network to rapidly create and stream realtime APIs with near-zero investment.

By building on our proven cloud platform, sports data providers are able to completely offload the cost and heavy engineering lifting involved in effectively distributing realtime data streams. This increases developer engagement with their products and services, encourages higher levels of integration, fosters innovation, and accelerates and diversifies monetization of realtime data. All while benefiting from Ably’s continued realtime innovation.

Ably at a glance

- Billions of realtime messages sent over the Ably network each day, with rates of 100s of millions of messages per second capacity
- Over 30m end-users across smartphones, tablets, devices, and servers receive data streamed at sub-65ms latencies over the Ably network
- Globally-distributed network spread over 16 physical data centers and 175+ edge PoPs
- Diverse customer base including sports data providers, financial data providers, SaaS companies, transport providers
- Delivering live score updates from courtside to 1.2 million global end-users within 500ms for Tennis Australia (operators of the Australian Open) for two years.
Sports data providers attempting realtime API creation without a realtime API management platform add load and complexity with each integration, exacerbated by protocol fragmentation.

Those building on Ably need only integrate once using an open protocol, reducing engineering complexity and infrastructure costs. This single integration provides protocol interoperability across push and pull protocols, with optional end-to-end data streaming for data consumers.
The three essential aspects of effective realtime APIs

With realtime sports data APIs there are three aspects to consider: deploying data, managing data, and distributing data from stadium to smartphone. API Streamer covers every aspect.

Deploy realtime data

API Streamer decouples the complexity of distributing data from the simple operation of publishing event data as it happens. It ensures sports data providers have a fixed level of complexity and cost regardless of the number of downstream consumers of their data.

As data is generated from numerous micro moments across sports events, sports data providers need only publish this event-data once to the Ably network over an open protocol.

Manage realtime data

API Streamer provides data flow control to sports data providers through rich management dashboards, analytics on usage, and access control tools.

As data producers they can control exactly who has access to data, specific aspects of data, volume of data, and even who pays for the data delivery costs (the bandwidth).

Distribute realtime data

API Streamer, built on Ably’s globally-distributed Data Stream Network, allows developers to easily consume data at any scale, with any number of protocols.

Ably’s platform handles the heavy lifting of scale, performance, reliability, data integrity, protocol transformation (for example, MQTT or SSE) and push (e.g. serverless function invocation or Kafka delivery) all at sub-65ms global latencies.
Key benefits and features of API Streamer

Fixed initial and ongoing engineering costs

Providing realtime APIs that developers love is a big undertaking. It requires both significant upfront investment and ongoing maintenance. As event-driven architecture proliferates and realtime API adoption increases, so does complexity, cost, and friction of integration for developers wanting to consume realtime data.

The chart below outlines the iterative evolution for sports data providers exposing realtime APIs themselves versus with a realtime API management and distribution platform like API Streamer.
Serverless cloud realtime messaging infrastructure

API Streamer is a fully-managed cloud service. You never need to worry about provisioning servers, installing or maintaining hardware and software, network performance, or service reliability.

- The hidden complexities and edge cases of operating realtime infrastructure are solved. Data integrity, mission-critical reliability, stream replay - all built into the core service. Fifty thousand hours of complex engineering available to you with a few lines of code.

- A cloud network built on our global infrastructure, distributed across 16 data centers, means we can offer end-to-end delivery - from in-stadium right to a connected fan’s smartphone.

- Our expansive, elastic network is able to rapidly autoscale to millions of concurrent connections, accommodating any amount of growth or unpredictable demand.

- API Streamer is optimized for latency with data cached globally, reduced bandwidth with binary deltas, and IP traffic acceleration with 175+ network edge acceleration PoPs globally.

Pull Subscription Protocols: multi-protocol support

The ecosystem of realtime protocols is extremely fragmented and continues to fragment. This tightly couples data producers and consumers, with consumers often carrying out custom integration work so they can consume data. For many this is a blocker to integration.

- API Streamer ensures interoperability between data producers and consumers, regardless of protocol, effectively decoupling data source protocol from end destination protocol. This reduces integration work for both sports data providers and consumers.

- Protocols are better suited to different tasks. SSE is a pull-only protocol. MQTT is a lightweight IoT protocol. WebSockets is effective for bi-directional communication. HTTP Streaming is the lowest common denominator across devices. API Streamer supports all and will continue to support new and emerging protocols now and in the future.

Pull protocols

- Native SDKs
- WebSockets
- SSE
- HTTP
- gRPC
- MQTT
- STOMP
- AMQP
Push Subscription Protocols: third party platforms and streams

Pull protocols are essential for consuming realtime data but don’t scale well with high volumes. Push protocols allow consumers to set up designated sinks so they can effectively consume data.

- API Streamer takes care of the complexity of delivering high volumes of data reliably, directly to other clouds, queues, and even serverless functions.
- Extensive support across cloud, hybrid, or legacy environments. All part of the core service.

Security

API Streamer protects realtime APIs from attack, secures them with class-leading authentication, and provides organizational peace of mind with enterprise-grade security and compliance.

- DDoS mitigation baked into the platform with rate limits to prevent API abuse.
- Authentication schemes including API keys, token auth, JWT, and more on the way.
- Enterprise-grade security and peace of mind with TLS and AES256 encryption and EU GDPR, HIPAA, SOC 2 Type II (certification Mar 2020), ISO 27001 ( certification Dec 2019) compliance.

Developer-friendly, best-in-class experiences

Developers expect great API experiences. With API Streamer you can provide the best-in-class experience developers demand - out-of-the-box.

- 40+ native SDKs available for developers, significantly lowering integration costs. Extensive documentation for consuming streams across all supported protocols.
- Dashboards help developers explore streams and read documentation, debug delivery issues, configure push protocol sinks, and access analytics.
• An end-to-end solution delivering data to systems or end-user devices with only one ‘hop’. With many current sports data APIs, delivery routes often include unnecessary ‘hops’ between data source and end-destination, affecting latency and performance each time.

Manage, Monetize, Control

With API Streamer you can go straight to realtime API-creation and monetization, leap-frogging the investment and build phases so you can drive revenue and boost profits.

• Sports data providers control exactly who has access to data, specific aspects of data, volume of data, and even who pays for the data delivery costs (the bandwidth).

• Control billing, quotas, and reporting on usage to better monetize data streams.

Future proof

Realtime technology continues to develop at rapid rates. Embracing the latest innovations is a demanding process even for large, established engineering departments.

• Future proof architecture for sports data providers, benefitting from Ably’s ongoing innovation, keeping you at the bleeding edge of realtime functionality, including support for new standards and protocols as they emerge.

• Limitless scale ready for any amount of growth and unpredictable demand - for example, global sporting events, final rounds of competitions, or world-class performance that brings an unexpected increased audience.

• Zero maintenance with predictably low and manageable costs.

Join the realtime API economy today

By building on Ably’s cloud service you skip upfront investment and go straight to creating realtime APIs. You benefit from our ongoing platform innovation, attract innovative developers to build around your service, and accelerate and diversify distribution and monetization of realtime data.

Instead of building infrastructure, focus on turning your data streams into revenue streams.
Ably’s [Data Stream Network](#) is distributed over 14 physical data centers. Each day thousands of developers stream billions of messages to over 30m end users over the Ably network in sub-65ms. Twitter sends just 500m Tweets per day. Ably’s engineers have spent countless hours predicting, finding, and solving the hidden edge cases and nuanced complexities of operating a globally-distributed Data Stream Network. We take care of the infrastructure so you don’t need to.

Our services are delivered in the cloud so there’s no software or hardware to install or manage.

To learn more about Ably and API Streamer, please contact us.

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