



In 2002, according to tech legend, a mandate was issued by Amazon founder Jeff Bezos. This mandate – also known as the “Bezos API Mandate” or “Amazon API Mandate”- would serve to form the backbone of Amazon in the modern web space, informing both the API development paradigm in the corporate mindset and a general improved approach to externalizing API functions.

Below, we’ll talk about the mandate and discuss why it has become so legendary in the API space. We’ll dive into each point’s specifics and look at how the mandate formed much of the modern thought around APIs and microservices.

The Jeff Bezos API Mandate

The mandate in question was issued in 2002 to Amazon by founder Jeff Bezos. For many reasons, it’s become somewhat legendary in the API/microservices space, as it formed the basis for much of the modern API design paradigm within the corporate view. By legend, the mandate is as follows:

1. All teams will henceforth expose their data and functionality through service interfaces.
2. Teams must communicate with each other through these interfaces.
3. There will be no other form of interprocess communication allowed: no direct linking, no direct reads of another team’s data store, no shared-memory model, no back-doors whatsoever. The only communication allowed is via service interface calls over the network.
4. It doesn’t matter what technology they use. HTTP, Corba, Pubsub, custom protocols – doesn’t matter.
5. All service interfaces, without exception, must be designed from the ground up to be externalizable. That is to say, the team must plan and design to be able to expose the interface to developers in the outside world. No exceptions.
6. Anyone who doesn’t do this will be fired.
7. Thank you; have a nice day!

This mandate helped encourage a lot of Amazon’s thinking around AWS, externalized infrastructure, and business-to-business functionality. Let’s dig into each of these points (with the exception of 6 and 7, which are more cheeky than API-minded) and look at why they may be important, generally speaking.

Before we do so, it’s important to mention that this memo is often unattributed – the original source seems to have been lost to time due to the shutdown of Google+ (for an early reference, see this post by API Evangelist (<https://apievangelist.com/2012/01/12/the-secret-to-amazons-success-internal-apis/>)). Nonetheless, the lessons imparted are essential, and as such, we’re going to discuss them with the assumption that the memo did exist in the form commonly shared.

Data and Functionality Exposure

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