

A silhouette of the Berlin skyline is centered in the background, featuring the Brandenburg Gate, the TV Tower, and the Reichstag. The skyline is set against a background of colorful watercolor splatters in shades of blue, green, purple, and red.

RESTful Web API Design

Rainer Stropek

Software Architecture Summit 2015

RESTful

Web API Design



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time cockpit
Saves the day.

Agenda

RESTful Web APIs have become an integral part of modern software packages. They are important for integration scenarios in enterprises and in the cloud. This workshop is dedicated to designing RESTful Web APIs. Rainer Stropek, himself founder a SaaS-focused company, will guide you through the world of RESTful APIs. In particular, Rainer will speak about the following topics:

- Short recap of the basic principles of RESTful Web APIs
- Real-world RESTful API design (e.g. addressing in multi-tenant systems, versioning, long-running operations, etc.)
- Authentication and authorization with OAuth2 and OpenID Connect
- The OData standard for RESTful APIs
- The role of metadata using the examples of <http://swagger.io/> and OData
- Securing and operating RESTful APIs using the example of Azure API Management
- Code samples using Node.js with JavaScript and .NET with C#

Attendees of this workshop should have some understanding of http and cloud computing. Practical experience regarding RESTful API design or development is not necessary.

RESTful Web APIs

Short recap of the basic principles of RESTful Web APIs

What is „REST“?

Representational State Transfer (REST)

Architecture style, not a standard

HTTP

Request-response protocol in client-server systems

HTTP methods („verbs“)

GET – retrieve data, no side effects (except logging, caching, etc.)

HEAD – like get but without response body, useful to retrieve metadata

POST – submit new data

PUT – update or create

PATCH – partial update

DELETE

TRACE – echo

OPTIONS – query verbs that the server supports for a given URL

What is „REST“?

HTTP

Idempotent requests

GET, HEAD, OPTIONS, TRACE
PUT, DELETE

Non idempotent requests

POST

Status Codes (complete [list of status codes](#)), examples:

200 OK
201 Created
301 Moved permanently
400 Bad request
401 Unauthorized
403 Forbidden (authorization will not help)
404 Not found
405 Method not allowed (wrong verb)
500 Internal server error

Table 3-1. Response status code categories

Category	Description
1xx: Informational	Communicates transfer protocol-level information.
2xx: Success	Indicates that the client's request was accepted successfully.
3xx: Redirection	Indicates that the client must take some additional action in order to complete their request.
4xx: Client Error	This category of error status codes points the finger at clients.
5xx: Server Error	The server takes responsibility for these error status codes.

What is „REST“?

HTTP

Header fields ([list of header fields](#)), examples:

Accept – e.g. application/json

Authorization – authentication credentials

Cache-Control

Cookie

Content-Type

If-Match, If-Modified-Since, If-Unmodified-Since

X-... - non-standard fields

ETag – identifier for a specific version of a resource

Last-Modified

Set-Cookie

What is „REST“?

Important REST principles

Stateless

No client context stored on the server, each request is complete

Cacheable

Responses explicitly indicate their cacheability

Layered System

Client cannot tell if connected directly to the server (e.g. reverse proxies)

URIs

Resources are identified using *Uniform Resource Identifiers* (URIs)

Resource representation

XML, JSON, Atom – today mostly JSON

Demo

RESTful Web API

Interacting with a RESTful
web api

Tools

[Azure Mobile Service](#)

Fiddler

Postman

Create [Azure Mobile Service](#)

Show [REST API documentation](#)

Create table, allow all requests anonymously

Show POST, GET in Fiddler

Show POST, PATCH, DELETE, GET in Postman

Show table content in SQL Management Studio

Change access policy to API key

Get API key

Show GET with API key in *X-ZUMO-APPLICATION* header

RESTful Web API

Demoscript

API Design

Real-world RESTful API design

Design Rules

Do use HTTPS

No-brainer on public networks

Recommended on company/home network, too

Do use a consistent naming schema

Prefer hyphens ("-") instead of underscores ("_") in URIs

Do not mix languages

Prefer lowercase letters in URIs

Prefer camel casing for resource representation (e.g. in JSON)

Singular noun for documents, plural noun for collections, verb for controller names

Design Rules

Do carefully model URI paths

URIs should reflect the API's resource model

E.g. <https://api.myservice.com/customers/ALFKI/orders>

Bad example: <https://api.myservice.com/afe7f2cb-8e71-4472-a53b-1f8e3712dffc/orders>

Don't forget controller resources

Consider identity values for variable URI path segments

E.g. <https://api.myservice.com/customers/ALFKI/orders>

Do use HTTP verbs as they were intended to

Also for controller resources (e.g. POST for controller that creates data)

Consider firewall problems with PUT and sometimes even DELETE

Avoid using controller names instead of HTTP verbs

Bad example: <https://api.myservice.com/customers/deleteCustomer?id=ALFKI>

RESTful Web API

Controller resources

Demo

```
exports.post = function(request, response) {
  if (!request.body || !request.body.rows) {
    response.status(400).end();
  }
  else {
    var customerTable =
      request.service.tables.getTable('customers');
    for (var i = 0; i < request.body.rows; i++) {
      var customer = {
        firstName: "Test " + i.toString(),
        lastName: "Test " + i.toString(),
        revenueYTD: i * 1000
      };
      customerTable.insert(customer);
    }

    response.status(201).end();
  }
};
```

RESTful Web API

Demoscript

Custom API

Design Rules

Do use standard response codes as they were intended to

200 for success

201 if something has been created (specify URI of new resource in *Location* header)

202 if controller started an async operation

204 if no response was sent back intentionally (PUT, POST, DELETE)

401 if something is wrong with authorization

404 if no resource is present at given URI

406/415 if requested/given Content-Type is not supported

500 represents a server error (not the client's fault)

Consider returning additional error information in body

Use response code 4xx and error information in response body

Don't expose security-critical data in error messages (especially for server errors)

Use properly protected logs instead

Demo

API Design

Location header with POST

Additional error data in
case of 4xx error

RESTful Web API

Democript

Location header

POST <https://softarchsummit.azure-mobile.net/tables/customers>

Authorization | Headers (1) | **Body** | Pre-request script | Tests

form-data x-www-form-urlencoded raw binary [JSON \(application/json\)](#)

```
1 {  
2   "firstName": "Tom",  
3   "lastName": "Turbo",  
4   "revenueYTD": 2000  
5 }
```

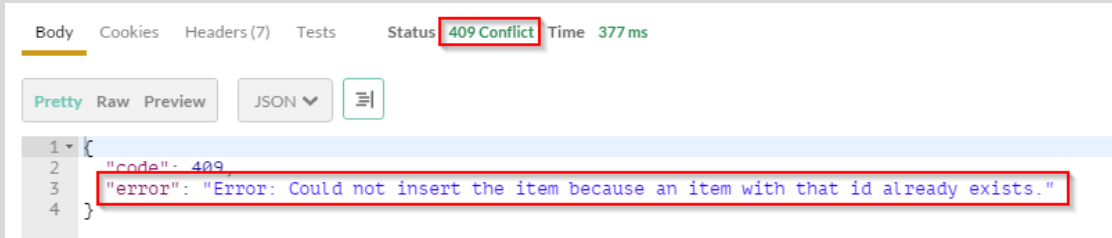
Body | Cookies | **Headers (8)** | Tests | Status **201 Created** | Time 741 ms

Cache-Control → no-cache
Content-Length → 100
Content-Type → application/json
Date → Wed, 16 Sep 2015 13:36:26 GMT
Location → <https://softarchsummit.azure-mobile.net/tables/customers/D32E38EF-ODD1-4432-84C4-FB8A9B2326FE>
Server → Microsoft-IIS/8.0
X-Powered-By → ASP.NET
x-zumo-version → Zumo.master.0.1.6.4349.Runtime

RESTful Web API

Democript

Additional error data



The screenshot shows a REST client interface with the following elements:

- Navigation tabs: Body (selected), Cookies, Headers (7), Tests, Status, Time 377 ms.
- Status: 409 Conflict (highlighted with a red box).
- Response format: Pretty (selected), Raw, Preview.
- Response content: A JSON object with the following structure:

```
1 {  
2   "code": 409,  
3   "error": "Error: Could not insert the item because an item with that id already exists."  
4 }
```

The error message is highlighted with a red box.

Design Rules

Don't use GET + query for controller actions that write

Use proper HTTP verbs and parameters in the request body instead

Do use query for ad hoc filtering, sorting, paging, etc.

Examples:

https://api.myservice.com/customers?\$filter=name eq 'ALFKI'

https://api.myservice.com/customers?\$top=10

https://api.myservice.com/customers?\$orderby=name

http://petstore.swagger.io/v2/pet/findByStatus?status=sold

See also *OData* (more details later)

Consider allowing correlation identifier in custom header

Stored in server-side logs

Can be used to correlate client- and server-side activities

Design Rules

Consider support for batching of operations

Performance considerations (latency reduction)

Execute in server-side transactions

Example: [Entity Group Transactions](#) in *Azure Table Storage*

Consider using Multipart MIME messages

Example: [OData Batch Requests](#)

Consider allowing the client to specify a server timeout

Do define a maximum server timeout to protect from over-usage of server resources

Consider progress reporting for long running requests

Examples: Polling API, Message bus, SignalR

Design Rules

Consider using *Etag* and *If-None-Match* to save bandwidth

Consider using *If-Match* or *If-Unmodified-Since* for optimistic concurrency

Consider allowing to suppress response echo on POST

Typically, POST returns created document

Consider a header with which the client can suppress this echo to save bandwidth

Demo

API Design

Location header with POST

Additional error data in
case of 4xx error

Building Web API with
Node.js

Prefer header in Azure
Table Storage

RESTful Web API

Democript

ETag and If-None-Match

Get single Customer with ETag

GET `https://softarchsummit.azure-mobile.net/tables/customers/1EE4B701-4C58-431D-B1EC-4D7C4028A7E4?_systemProperties=version`

Authorization Headers (0) Body Pre-request script Tests

Header	Value
--------	-------

Body Cookies **Headers (10)** Tests Status **200 OK** Time 428 ms

Cache-Control → no-cache
Content-Encoding → gzip
Content-Length → 229
Content-Type → application/json
Date → Wed, 16 Sep 2015 13:24:10 GMT
ETag → "AAAAAAAAAB9Q="
Server → Microsoft-IIS/8.0
Vary → Accept-Encoding
X-Powered-By → ASP.NET
x-zumo-version → Zumo.master.0.1.6.4349.Runtime

Get single Customer with ETag

GET `https://softarchsummit.azure-mobile.net/tables/customers/1EE4B701-4C58-431D-B1EC-4D7C4028A7E4?_systemProperties=version`

Authorization **Headers (1)** Body Pre-request script Tests

Header	Value
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If-None-Match	"AAAAAAAAAB9Q="

Body Cookies **Headers (6)** Tests Status **304 Not Modified** Time 260 ms

Cache-Control → no-cache
Content-Type → application/json
Date → Wed, 16 Sep 2015 13:25:02 GMT
Server → Microsoft-IIS/8.0
X-Powered-By → ASP.NET
x-zumo-version → Zumo.master.0.1.6.4349.Runtime

RESTful Web API

Democript

If-Match and optimistic
concurrency

The screenshot shows a REST client interface for a PATCH request. The URL is `https://softarchsummit.azure-mobile.net/tables/customers/1EE4B701-4C58-431D-B1EC-4D7C4028A7E4?_systemProperties=version`. The request headers include `Content-Type: application/json` and `If-Match: "AAAAAAAAAB9L="`. The status bar shows `412 Precondition Failed` and a time of `466 ms`. The response body is a JSON object:

```
1 {
2   "id": "1EE4B701-4C58-431D-B1EC-4D7C4028A7E4",
3   "__createdAt": "2015-09-16T06:54:24.399Z",
4   "__updatedAt": "2015-09-16T06:56:14.979Z",
5   "_version": "AAAAAAAAAB9Q=",
6   "firstName": "Tom",
7   "lastName": "Muster",
8   "revenueYTD": 10000
9 }
```

Design Rules

Do support JSON for resource representation

application/json

Consider other resource representation if needed

E.g. *application/xml*

Consider adding links

Programmatically process connections between resources

Consider publishing schema information

For details see *OData* and *Swagger*

API Design

Links for entities in OData
[XOData](#)

Demo

Design Rules

Consider configuring CORS to enable broad web API usage

Don't solely rely on CORS for protecting your resources

Avoid JSONP (JSON with padding)

Work around same origin policy by injecting `<script>` tags at runtime

Do use *OAuth2* and *OpenID Connect* to protect resources

See also *Protecting Resource* section later for more details

Design Rules

Do limit server resource usage in multi-tenant systems

Examples:

[Query timeout and pagination in Azure Table Storage](#)

[API rate limits in Azure API Management](#)

Policy definition

```
7      - Policies are applied in the order they appear.
8
9      To ADD a policy, position cursor in the policy document
10     To REMOVE a policy, delete the corresponding policy statement
11     To RE-ORDER a policy, select the corresponding policy
12 -->
13 <policies>
14   <inbound>
15     <rate-limit calls="10" renewal-period="60">
16     </rate-limit>
17     <quota calls="200" renewal-period="604800">
18     </quota>
19     <base />
20
21   </inbound>
22   <outbound>
23
24     <base />
25
26   </outbound>
27 </policies>
```

Design Rules

Do plan for versioning your web API

Consider using a custom header for API version to enable complex versioning scenarios

Examples

x-ms-version in [Azure Table Storage](#)

OData-MaxVersion and *OData-Version* headers in Odata

Consider using version-specific URIs for simple versioning scenarios and major versions

Protecting Resources

CORS – Cross-Origin Resource Sharing

What is CORS?

XMLHttpRequest limits cross-domain web API calls

Same origin policy: Script can only make HTTP requests to the domain it came from

CORS is a W3C spec to allow cross-domain calls

See <http://enable-cors.org/client.html> for browser support

Server specifies allowed calling domains in special response headers

See Mozilla Docs for technical details about CORS

https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/Web/HTTP/Access_control_CORS

How CORS works

Simple requests

GET, HEAD or POST

If *POST*, only content types *application/x-www-form-urlencoded*,
multipart/form-data, or *text/plain*

No custom headers in the request

Browser sends *Origin* header

Server returns error if Origin is not allowed to do API calls

Access-Control headers

Allow-Origin: * or *Origin*

Allow-Credentials: Cookies included?

Expose-Headers: Non-simple headers available to the client

```
GET /cors HTTP/1.1  
Origin: http://api.bob.com  
Host: api.alice.com  
Accept-Language: en-US  
Connection: keep-alive  
User-Agent: Mozilla/5.0...
```

```
Access-Control-Allow-Origin: http://api.bob.com  
Access-Control-Allow-Credentials: true  
Access-Control-Expose-Headers: FooBar  
Content-Type: text/html; charset=utf-8
```

How CORS works

Non-simple requests

Preflight request

Client asks for permissions

Server must support OPTIONS

Performance implications

Server returns no CORS headers if not allowed

```
OPTIONS /cors HTTP/1.1
Origin: http://api.bob.com
Access-Control-Request-Method: PUT
Access-Control-Request-Headers: X-Custom-Header
Host: api.alice.com
Accept-Language: en-US
Connection: keep-alive
User-Agent: Mozilla/5.0...
```

```
Access-Control-Allow-Origin: http://api.bob.com
Access-Control-Allow-Methods: GET, POST, PUT
Access-Control-Allow-Headers: X-Custom-Header
Content-type: text/html; charset=utf-8
```

Actual request follows successful preflight request

CORS

Adding CORS support to
ASP.NET Web API

Demo

Add NuGet package [Microsoft.AspNet.WebApi.Cors](#)

```
public static void Register(HttpConfiguration config)
{
    // New code
    config.EnableCors();
}
```

--- or ---

```
[EnableCors(origins: "http://example.com",
    headers: "*", methods: "*")]
public class TestController : ApiController
{
    // Controller methods not shown...
}
```

RESTful Web API

Demoscrypt

Protecting Resources

Auth with OAuth2 and OpenID Connect

Enterprise



Devices



Local Auth

Auth inside of the enterprise

Single, integrated domain

All devices belong to the enterprise

Everything is Windows

Problems

External devices

External services

Non-Windows environments

OAuth2

Successor of OAuth1 and OAuth WRAP

Standard for delegating authorization for accessing resources via HTTP(S)

Not a standard for authentication

Not a standard for authorization

Very common in the internet today

Many different flavors as the standard leaves many decisions up to the developer

Example: <https://oauth.io/>

Important Terms

OAuth Provider

Aka OAuth Server, Authorization Server

Examples: AD FS, Google, Twitter, Microsoft AAD

Resource Provider

Aka Resource Server

In our case: A REST Web API

Resource Owner

In our case: The end user, the organization

Client

Application accessing a protected resource

In our case: Native app, server-based web app, SPA, mobile app

OAuth Endpoints

Authorization Endpoint (aka OAuth-A)

Authenticates the resource owner (e.g. user/password)

Asks for consent

Sends confirmation (access code) to redirect endpoint

Redirect Endpoint

Offered by the client

Called via redirecting the user-agent (HTTP redirect 302)

Receives code (there are other options, too) and fetches token from token endpoint

Token Endpoint (aka OAuth-T)

Creates tokens for access codes, refresh tokens, etc.

Can validate the client using a client secret

OAuth Tokens

Authorization Code

Access Token

Refresh Token

#	Result	Protocol	Host	URL
1	200	HTTP	Tunnel to	adfs.corp.adfssample.com:443
2	200	HTTPS	adfs.corp.adfssample.com	/adfs/oauth2/authorize?resource=https%3A%2F%2Fadfssample.com...
3	302	HTTPS	adfs.corp.adfssample.com	/adfs/oauth2/authorize?resource=https%3A%2F%2Fadfssample.com...
4	302	HTTPS	adfs.corp.adfssample.com	/adfs/oauth2/authorize?resource=https%3A%2F%2Fadfssample.com...
5	200	HTTP	Tunnel to	adfs.corp.adfssample.com:443
6	200	HTTPS	adfs.corp.adfssample.com	/adfs/oauth2/token
7	200	HTTP	Tunnel to	adfs.corp.adfssample.com:443
8	200	HTTPS	adfs.corp.adfssample.com	/federationmetadata/2007-06/federationmetadata.xml

Name	Value
resource	https://adfssar...
client_id	82A2A9DE-131...
grant_type	authorization_c...
code	4zwOADzwUUK...
redirect_uri	http://anarbitr...


```
JSON
{
  "access_token": "eyJ0eXAiOiJKV1Q...",
  "expires_in": 3600,
  "token_type": "bearer"
}
```

OAuth Flows

Authorization Code Flow

Aka 3-legged OAuth

Client must be capable of storing secrets

Implicit Flow

Less secure

No refresh tokens

For clients that cannot store secrets (e.g. SPA written in JavaScript)

Resource Owner Password Flow

For trusted clients

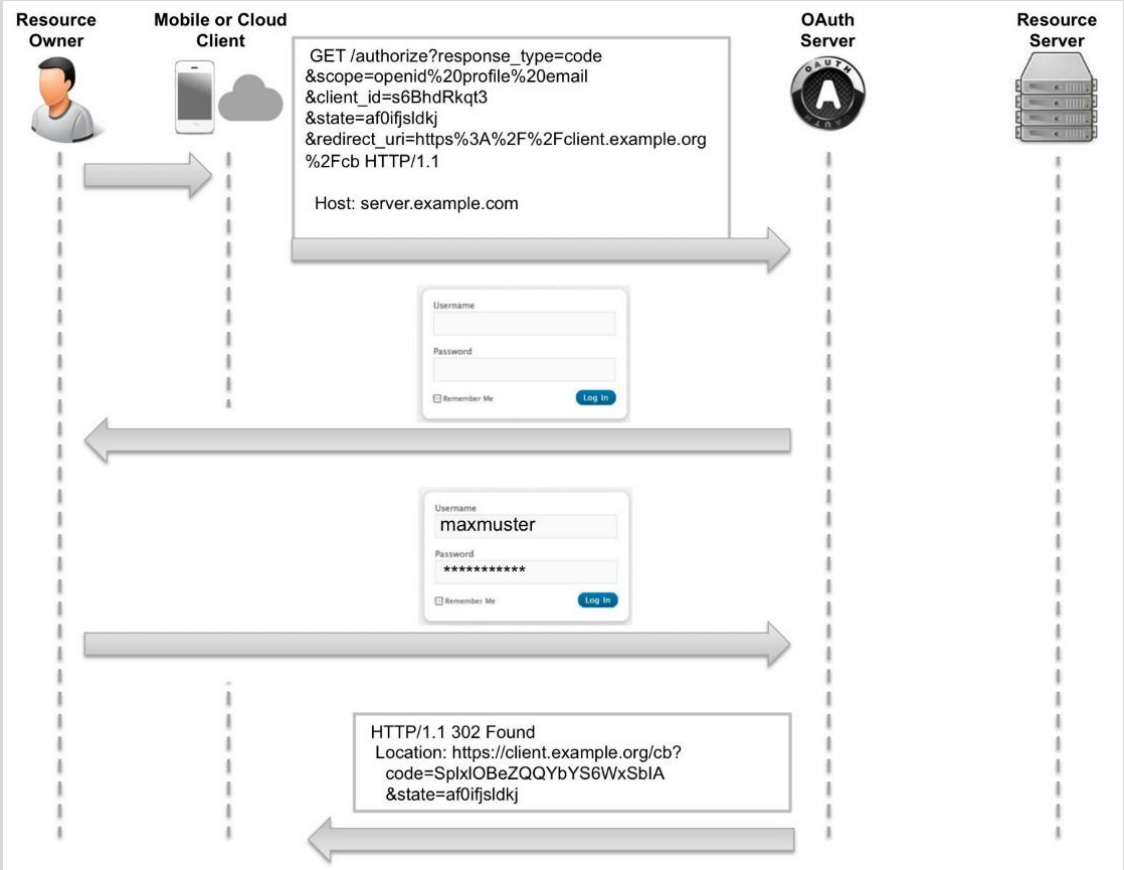
Client Credential Flow

Aka 2-legged OAuth

Client is also the resource owner

Authorization Code Flow

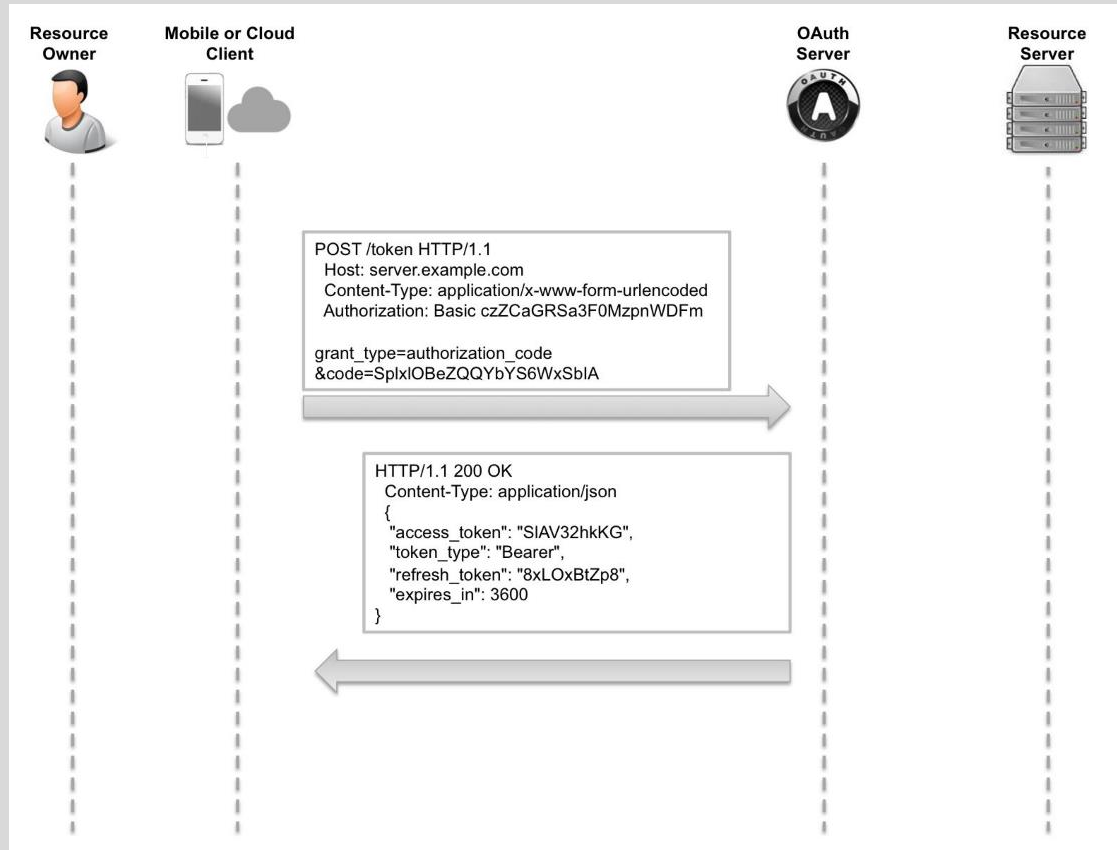
Getting the auth code



Source: Biehl, Matthias (2014-11-14). OAuth 2.0: Getting Started in API Security (API-University Series Book 1)

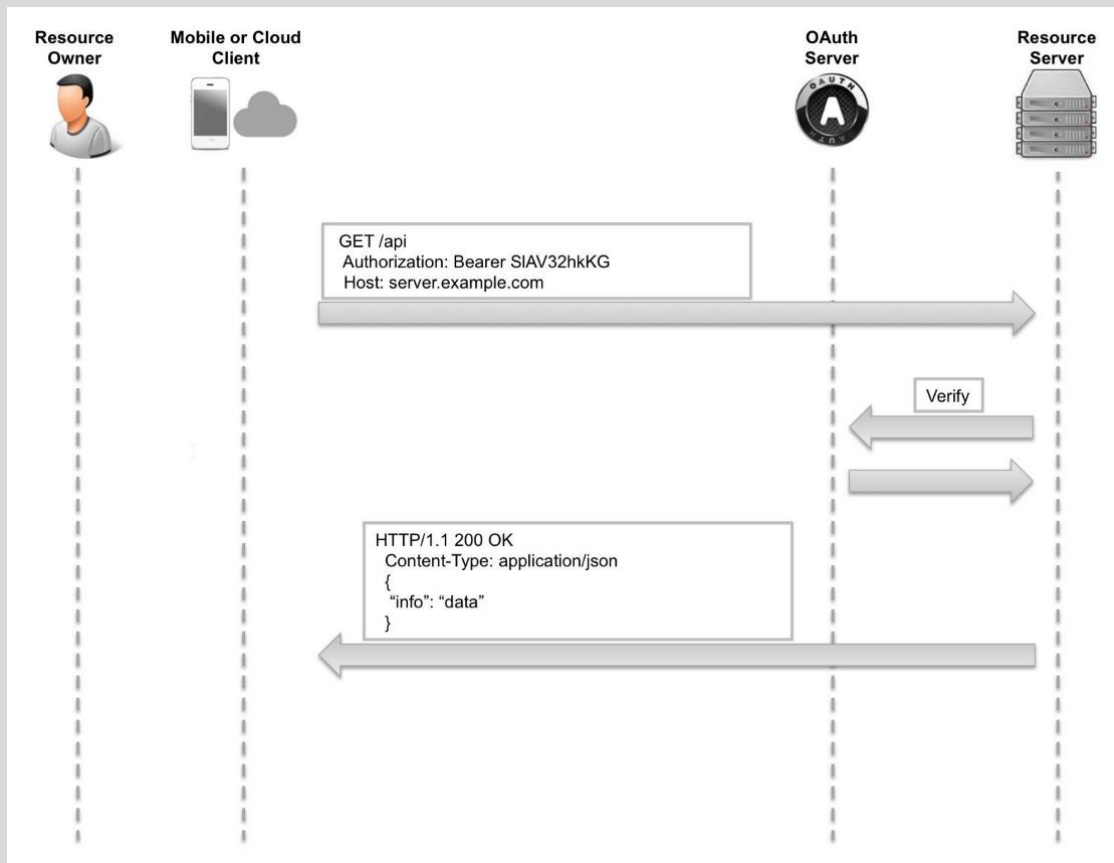
Authorization Code Flow

Getting the token



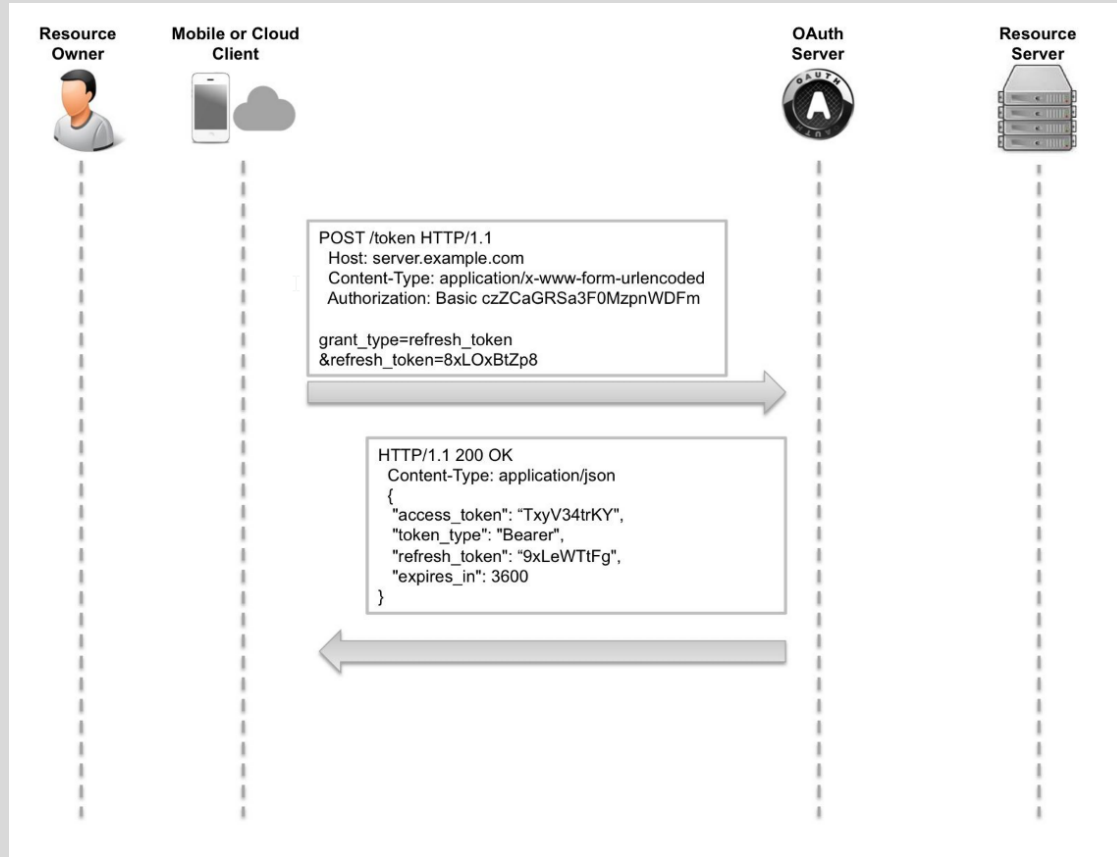
Authorization Code Flow

Accessing the resource



Authorization Code Flow

Refreshing the token



Problems with OAuth2

Many different implementations

Not compatible

Limited scope

No specified token formats, crypto algorithms, etc.

No standard for authN, session management, etc.

No specification for token validation

Open ID Connect fills many of the gaps

Standardized way to get the resource owner's profile data

Introduces an ID-Token

Standardized token format and crypto: JWT (JSON Web Token)

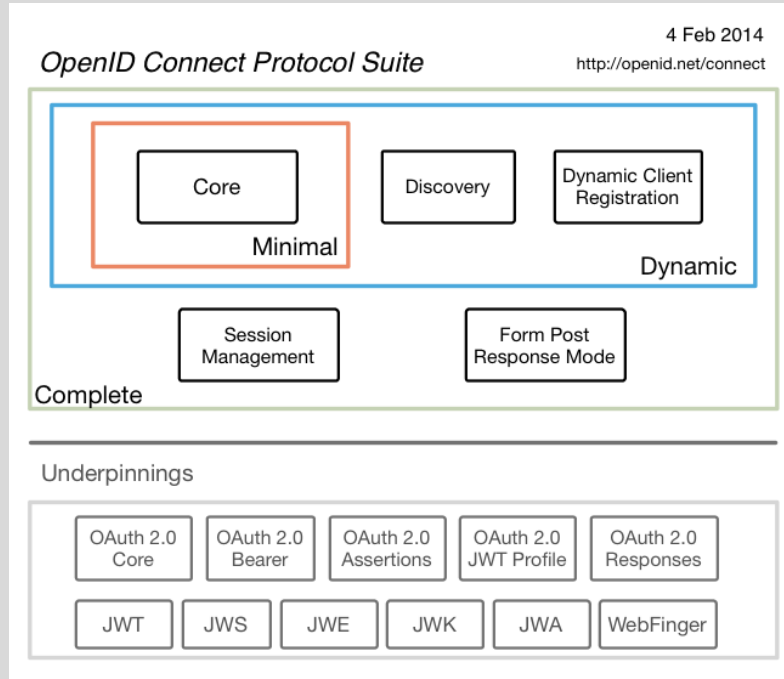
OIC Protocol

OpenID Connect extends
OAuth2

Although rather new, OIC is
already very popular

Libraries and products:

<http://openid.net/developers/libraries/>





Delivering a seamless user authentication experience



User attributes are synchronized using Identity Synchronization services **including a password hash**, Authentication is completed against **Azure Active Directory**



User attributes are synchronized using Identity Synchronization tools, **Authentication is passed back through federation** and completed against **Windows Server Active Directory**

Standards based integrations

Custom LOB applications that integrate with Azure Active Directory

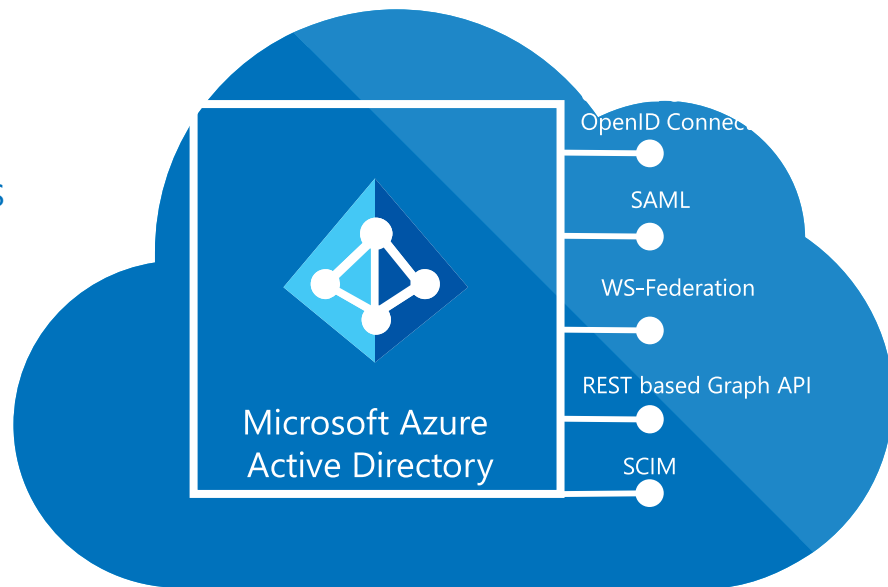
Sign in to Active Directory-integrated applications with cloud identities

Active Directory-integrated applications can access Office 365 and other web APIs

Applications can extend Azure Active Directory schema

Cross-platform support
iOS, Android, and Windows

Open Standards
SAML, OAuth 2.0, OpenID Connect, OData



Web API Metadata

The role of metadata using the examples of <http://swagger.io/> and OData

Why Metadata?

Humans *and computers* discover and understand services

Less need to read documentation or source code

Enables tools for the API creator

Write less documentation manually

Make consuming the API easier → raises adoption

Enables tools for the API consumer

Build generic service consumer

Examples: BI tools like [PowerBI](#), workflow engines like [Azure Logic Apps](#)

Auto-generate client code/libraries

Swagger

<http://swagger.io>

Tools for API creators

Swagger Editor (<http://editor.swagger.io/>) for top-down approach

Auto-generate Swagger definition from server-side implementation

Example: <https://github.com/domaindrivendev/Swashbuckle>

Tools for API consumers

Swagger UI (<http://petstore.swagger.io/>)

Code generators (<http://swagger.io/getting-started/swagger-codegen>)

Demo

Swagger

Swagger editor

Swagger code generator
(AngularJS)

OData – Much More than Metadata

<http://www.odata.org>

Common Schema Definition Language (CSDL)

OASIS standard

Extensible

<http://docs.oasis-open.org/odata/odata/v4.0/odata-v4.0-part3-csdl.html>

Libraries for API creators and consumers

<http://www.odata.org/libraries/>

Widely used at Microsoft and SAP

Examples: *Microsoft Azure, PowerBI, Visual Studio*

OData – Much More than Metadata

CRUD operations

RESTful web API

Standardized query language using URIs

<https://api.myserver.com/odata/Customers?>

[\\$filter=CustomerID eq 15&](#)

[\\$top=10&](#)

[\\$select=FirstName,LastName](#)

<http://docs.oasis-open.org/odata/odata/v4.0/odata-v4.0-part2-url-conventions.html>

Standardized document representation

XML (Atom), JSON

<http://docs.oasis-open.org/odata/odata-json-format/v4.0/odata-json-format-v4.0.html>

Demo

OData

Implementing an OData
service in .NET

OData consumption

XOData

Power BI

Software Architecture Summit 2015

Q&A

Thank your for coming!



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