URL API Host Account Creation

Developer Technical Note

Introduction

This developer technical note discusses the methodology for creating host accounts using the URL API. The described approach includes tips and considerations for security, passwords, tracking codes, meeting types, and error handling.

Initial Considerations

There are a number of things to take into consideration before you being the process of integration. While the most important consideration will be "what do I want it to do?" it is also important to think about data. Depending on the goals of your integration, you may need to manage some user credentials and preferences in your application. This is particularly important when using the WebEx API for authentication purposes.

The URL API fundamentally falls into two basic categories; user or "host" account management and meeting/session/event management. While you can create host accounts that may never hold any meetings/sessions/events, you cannot create meetings without a host, and the host must be logged in before you can perform any meeting/session/event management. For this reason having access to the login (WID) and password (PW) information for the host is required for a successful integration.

Security

The security of host account information is extremely important, and there are a number of options to make sure this information does not fall into the wrong hands. Beyond the standard use of HTTPS and POST, WebEx recommends the use of the IP Referrer and Domain Referrer options. Additionally, your Partner ID is a crucial piece of information that you should take measures to protect.

IP Referrer

Creating a host account via the URL API command (AT=SU) uses a server-to-server connection. To make sure the data passing over the wire is secure (in addition to using HTTPS/POST), you can request the use of IP Referrer on your WebEx site. The IP Referrer option checks the IP address from which any AT=SU command originates, and validates the source. If an AT=SU command does not come from a valid IP address, the request will be denied.

To use the IP Referrer option, you will need to provide WebEx with the IP address of your server, or the IP of the last exit point before the Internet if you use a firewall or proxy configuration. You have the option to provide one IP address or a range of IP addresses. Forward this information and a request for enabling the IP Referrer option on your site to your WebEx Client Services Manager.

Domain Referrer

Although the login command (AT=LI) is not a server-to-server command, it does have an additional security option in the Domain Referrer. The Domain Referrer makes sure that no one, even a host with a valid login and password, can use the API to access your site unless they are on your domain. In other words, when you implement the Domain Referrer option, you will deny anyone outside your network the ability to login using the WebEx API. If they know their WebEx ID (WID) and password (PW), they will be able to visit the WebEx site to login through the normal web interface, but will not be able to use the API. Requests for site changes should be directed to the WebEx Client Services Manager.

NOTE: The URL API is supported for use in browser-based applications. WebEx uses a number of methods in its process of operation that do not work well when the browser is not allowed to "do the work." If Java or similar technologies are used, the WebEx XML API is a better choice depending on the goal of the implementation.

Partner ID

The Partner ID (PID) is a configurable value assigned to your organization at the time the API is enabled on your site. This parameter is required by the AT=SU command as an identifier that the API command has the authority to create user accounts without logging in as a site administrator. This is a very valuable piece of information that should be protected just as would any other crucial password. Because this is security sensitive information, it is not released to just anyone who requests the information. Requests for this information should be routed through the WebEx Client Services Manager who will make sure the contact receiving the information is approved.

Creating Host Accounts

Unique Identifiers

WebEx uses the combination of the WID and e-mail address (EM) as unique identifiers for an account. This means that if the WID is already in use, another account cannot be created with that same value. The same is true for the EM value: you cannot use the same e-mail address for more than one account (or can you?).

Trick: How to create multiple accounts with the same e-mail address.
WebEx can be "fooled" into allowing the use of the same e-mail address for multiple accounts by the use of the following format:

WID_value<valid_email@yourco.com>   OR   WID_value[valid_email@yourco.com]

Where WID_value is the value of the WID which is unique and helps create the "unique" e-mail address when the less than/greater than symbols (<>) are supplied. The open/close square brackets ([ ]) can also be used. In fact, this is the only method available for utilizing this format using the XML API.

Passwords

In the old days, the API was used only by partners who built integrations with the intent to manage the user accounts, and all the e-mails tied to using the API. When the API was enabled for use with these integrations, the users no longer had the ability to change their passwords or modify their host information to make sure there would be no issues with host data synchronization between the partner application and WebEx.

However, now that the API has matured and has expanded capabilities, customers have found creative uses for the API, and new partners have created specialty integrations for use by specific groups within companies using WebEx. While this is helpful for the integration users, it has created issues for those using the WebEx interface on the API enabled sites.

As mentioned, when the API is enabled on a site, users are no longer able to change their passwords. While this is not an issue for those using the API integrations with their WebEx site, it is an issue for those trying to use the WebEx site directly. WebEx developed a solution to address this issue by placing an option into the Site Preferences area of Site Admin Tool. In order to avoid confusion, this option, "Allow user to change password even if Auto Login APIs are on", is visible only after the API has been enabled for the site.

In the above case, the API had a side effect on the site. There are also cases in the Site Admin Tool that will impact the API. One of the most important areas involves passwords. The "Strict password criteria" section in Site Preferences can be used to define the password settings to match company requirements. While there are a number of options available, it is important to understand that any settings applied will also need to be considered when implementing an API integration. For example, if a requirement for a password to be defined with a specific length or special characters is enforced, this will also apply to passwords being submitted through the API. The same applies for another area of the Site Admin Tool: Tracking Codes.

Tracking Codes

Tracking codes are alphanumeric codes that identify categories of users on a WebEx service site, allowing usage analysis by various groups within an organization. For example, the use of tracking codes can help distinguish usage at Departmental and Division levels. The site can be configured to require users to provide tracking codes when signing up for an account, as part of their user profiles, or when scheduling a meeting or training session. The benefit of supplying tracking codes is that the information appears in usage reports which can be obtained for the WebEx site. This data can then be used for cost accounting or other internal billing processes.

Tracking code requirements are set within the Site Admin tool, and this will affect user account creation via the API:

- Require tracking code value(s) supplied with host account information

- Require tracking code value(s) from a specific list of values that are defined in the Site Admin Tool

In other words, if specific requirements are defined for tracking codes, this will also apply for the API implementations.

Time zones

Time zones are a critical component needed to support a global company. WebEx sites have the ability to set sites and host accounts separately, but the site is typically set up with a default time zone that is reflective of the geographic location of the headquarters of the company. Host accounts created via the Site Admin tool can set the appropriate time zone for that individual from the list of available values. Host accounts created via the API will be set with the same default value as the site unless the TimeZone parameter is supplied with the appropriate value for the location of the host. For example, if the company is headquartered in California, their WebEx site will have a time zone value for the Pacific time zone, which is 4. If the AT=SU command is used to create a new host account, and the TimeZone parameter is not supplied, that host account will created with a time zone of 4. This works well if the host is located in the Pacific time zone, but could create real issues if the host works in the Eastern time zone (which is 11).

Meeting Types

WebEx provides a number of different services that can be available via the same site URL. The offering of multiple services (Meeting Center, Sales Center, Event Center, etc.) on one URL is called the "Enterprise Edition". This is an excellent solution for companies looking for a one-stop shop for different methods of collaboration. The WebEx API is supported on Enterprise Edition sites, and host accounts created by the API have access to all the services enabled on the site by default. However, some companies might prefer to manage which users have access to the different services. The API also permits the ability to create hosts that can only access a single service.

Tip: How to create an account that uses only one service:

The WebEx API uses the term Meeting Type (MT) to define the service types available on a site. The values available for the MT parameter correspond to the index values of the session types listed on the home page of the Site Admin tool. Meeting Center PRO has an index value of 3, which means that using MT=3 in that AT=SU command will allow the user to only create Meeting Center meetings, even though there are more options avail-

able on the site. Remember that user accounts created without specifying a MT value are created with all the available MT options. When MT is specified, the user account will have only the one meeting type specified. When specifying more than one MT, only the last value specified is used.

NOTE: A "welcome" e-mail is sent to users when their account is created either via the Site Admin tool, or the API. The e-mail includes the user's WebEx login and password. Generally, if your organization's policy is that users should not explicitly know their login and password information, you should contact your CSM to request that welcome e-mails be disabled.

Error Handling

Below are common error messages returned when creating users, with descriptions of what might be wrong:

Error: AutoLoginDisabled
Cause: Auto Login is not enabled for the WebEx-hosted Web site.
Solution: Contact your Client Services Manager to have Auto Login enabled on the site

Error: DonotSupportAPI
Cause: API is not enabled for the WebEx-hosted Web site.
Solution: Contact your Client Services Manager to have API enabled on the site.

Error: EmailConflictError
Cause: The email address supplied is in use by another user.
Solution: Change the e-mail address; or check to see if the e-mail is use by an account that has been deactivated.

Error: IPRangeError
Cause: The IP address of your web site does not match the IP address information in the WebEx database for your organization.
Solution: Validate that the IP address matches the information supplied to WebEx; or contact your Client Services Manager to have a new IP address added. The IP Address should be from the last point of exit before the Internet, e.g. a proxy server or firewall.

Error: PartnerIDIsNeeded
Cause: No partner ID is specified.
Solution: Supply the Partner ID provided by your Client Services Manager.

Error: PartnerIDError
Cause: Your WebEx Partner account identifier (PID) does not match the predefined PID in the WebEx database.
Solution: Validate that the Partner ID matches the information supplied by your Client Services Manager.

Error: TryAnotherPassword

Cause: User's password does not match the restrictions for the site.

Solution: Validate that the password you are passing matches the password requirements specified in the Site Admin tool.

Error: UnknownATCommand

Cause: The specified AT command does not exist.

Solution: Validate that the command you're sending matches the command parameter per the WebEx API Reference.

Error: WebExIDConflict

Cause: User provided a WebEx ID that is already in use.

Solution: Change the WebEx ID, or check to see if the WebEx ID is used by an account that has been deactivated.

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