

# On the Journey to Microsoft Intelligent Communications?

Practical insights on things to consider before moving to Microsoft Teams & Skype for Business

WHITE PAPER



## Executive Summary

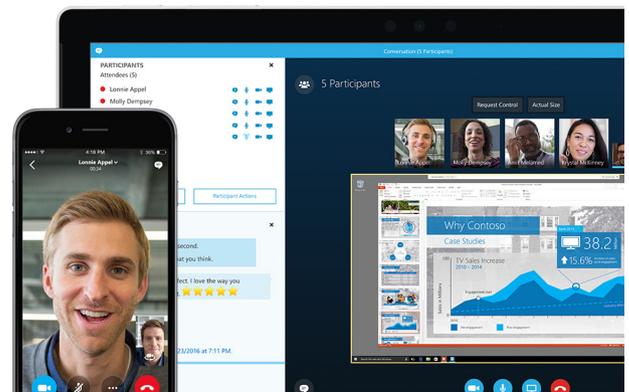
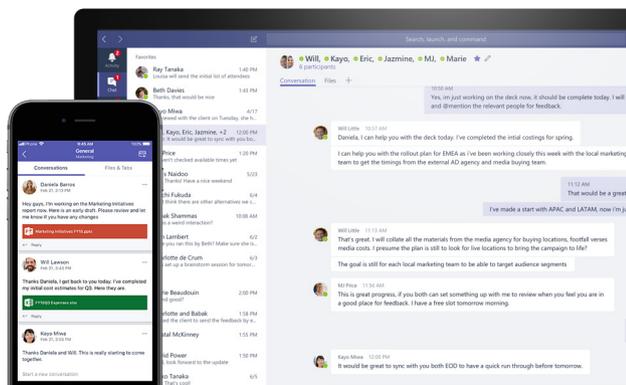
With more than 140 million licensed users on Skype for Business, Microsoft is becoming the dominant force in enterprise communications and collaboration. Skype for Business adoption continues to accelerate due to a number of drivers, including the overall business benefits of unified communications as well as attributes specific to the Microsoft platform.

More importantly, while Microsoft continues to develop Skype for Business on-premise with a new release announced for the end of 2018, Microsoft is solidifying its position in the cloud with Microsoft Teams including Enterprise Voice replacing Skype for Business Online. With Office 365 commercial license sales reaching a monthly active-user count in excess of 100 million users, Microsoft are clearly leading the way with digital disruption in the unified communications space.

However, not all users get as much out of the platforms as they should, or as their employers would like. This is based on successful user adoption and usage patterns – the human factor – which, if ignored, can result in businesses missing out on the process improvements, increased team productivity and positive bottom line impact that should result when unified communications are effectively deployed.

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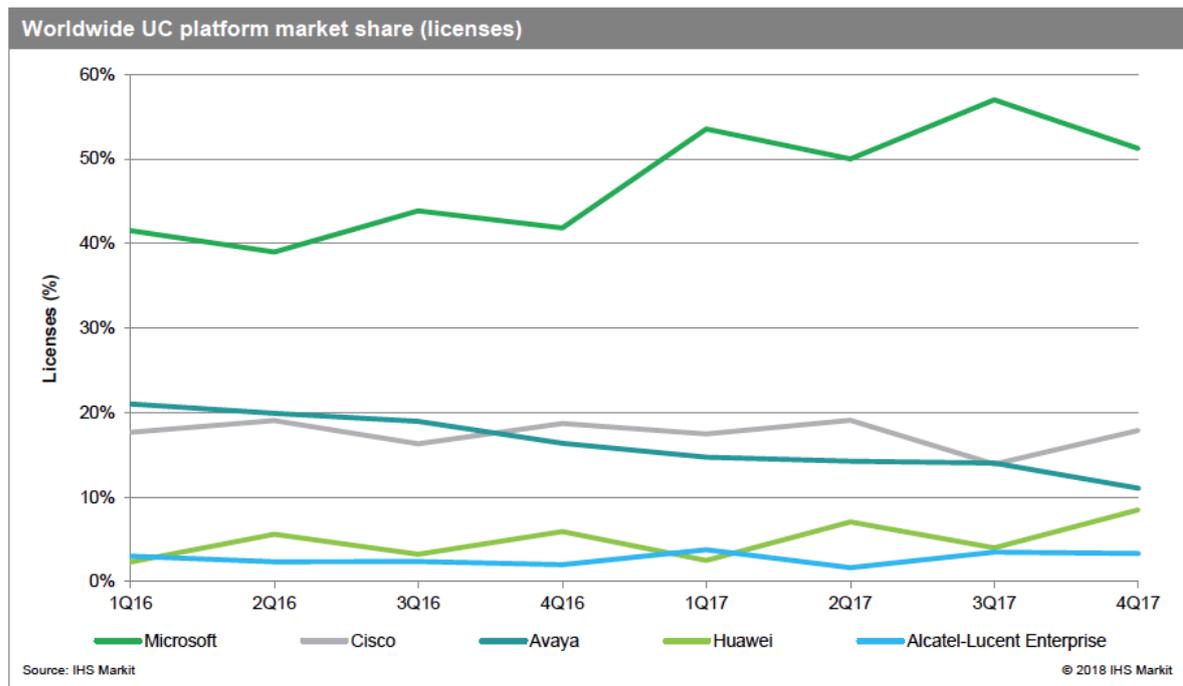
The promise of new technology that changes working lives will remain a big promise if it is not introduced in a way that engages users and improves or simplifies their experience. Businesses, while keen to adopt new technologies, therefore need to give careful consideration to several factors prior to deploying them. These include the technology itself, how it integrates with their legacy communications, commercial issues and, of course, their people.



Microsoft are considered to be the market leaders, and with good reason. No other company provides such an array of tools for productivity, collaboration and communication.

## Microsoft Teams & Skype for Business – Intelligent Communications

With an ever-increasing number of products and services, Microsoft is on track to lead collaboration and communications for the foreseeable future. Microsoft Teams and Skype for Business are layered as part of Office 365, providing Office applications, email, file storage and teaming to name but a few of the core products. Of course, there are different bundles depending on which features, and functionality are required.



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Choosing the right Microsoft voice solution has always been dictated by legacy integrations and contractual complexities, quite often commercially compared to less feature-rich products or without taking all aspects into consideration.

Most organizations consume Office 365, which has been the preferred licencing model for Office applications and email for nearly a decade. Some organisations natively use Microsoft Teams and/or Skype for Business, but without realising its full enterprise voice capabilities. For those organisations that do, the transition is relatively painless given that employees are familiar with the products and the added functionality if communicated correctly and sufficient training is provided.

If your organisation has offices across different countries, adopting one solution will yield significant savings. However, you will need to have a way of managing the environment and routing calls efficiently whilst maintaining call quality and cost savings. You will also need to consider how best to leverage any existing communications infrastructure that your business has invested in over the years to enable a cost-effective migration. This is especially the case with larger and multinational organisations, who typically have different PBXs from different vendors in different countries. In these cases, it is important to ensure that the technology deployed to support the transition to Microsoft Teams or Skype for Business is open enough and agile enough to interconnect with multiple vendors.

# THE TOP 5

challenges when deploying unified communications are:

- 01.** Managing performance in a multi-vendor environment.
- 02.** Delivering an excellent end-user experience.
- 03.** Meeting cost savings projections.
- 04.** Real-time performance management.
- 05.** User adoption exceeding expectations.

## Things to Consider when Implementing Microsoft Teams & Skype for Business

### The People Promise

Too often IT teams implement great solutions without consulting the people that actually use them, often neglecting to understand how people work and what they are currently using.

For any IT project to be successful, it is essential to engage with stakeholders within the organisation. Failure to do so will result in poor user adoption, which will create barriers or even a complete reversal. Transitioning from a conventional telecoms solution to a fully integrated unified communications solution is quite a leap for some people who are not familiar with collaborating in this way.

By conducting an organisational awareness program, you will immediately identify the weaknesses within the organisation and where special attention needs to be given. By engaging with stakeholders, you actively create “champions” within the organisation who can communicate to their teams how the new solution will improve their working lives. Stakeholders will also provide feedback about information and challenges that were previously unknown, which can now be documented to ensure that nothing is overlooked.

With Microsoft Teams and Skype for Business in mind, this brings together a workforce which can now communicate and collaborate easily through any device from any location, so again **it is essential to understand the different user personas within the organisation. Most organisations have anywhere from 3 to 5 different user personas.** You may wish to conduct a “Device Bar” session whereby you make available devices which are being considered and you allow employees to see and touch them first-hand, so they can feed back their requirements.

*According to Deloitte, not only would 64% of employees be happy to get paid less if they could work away from the office, but organisations implementing strong digital tools see as much as a 20% increase in employee satisfaction.*

As an example:

1. Office Worker: This is someone who works entirely from their desk with a PC/laptop and a desk phone. They do not have a company mobile phone or work from home.

The Skype/Teams user persona will require: Skype/Teams Client – Skype/Teams desk phone – a USB headset for convenience.

2. Home Worker: This is someone that works either from home or client locations. They are fully mobile and have a laptop and a company mobile phone.

The Skype/Teams user persona will require: Skype/Teams Client on their laptop/mobile phone (smartphone) – Skype/Teams desk phone (home office) – a Bluetooth headset for portability.

These are just examples. As previously mentioned, user personas will be different from one organisation to another. They will take many factors into account, including company policies, security policies and others.

*60% of IT professionals reported poor user adoption after deploying Microsoft Skype for Business, with lack of communication and insufficient training cited as the cause.*

Do not believe the technology hype that the desk phone is dead and headsets are the answer for everyone. There is no “one size fits all” answer. The reality is that desk phones remain the best option for many users, especially modern IP phones that integrate beautifully with Microsoft Teams and Skype for Business. Organisations therefore need to carefully consider the working practices of each user and provide the most appropriate device. It is also worth comparing the total lifecycle cost of a desk phone that is replaced on average every seven or eight years (or more) with headsets, which are often deemed consumable items, go missing or are easily damaged and need to be replaced several times in an equivalent period.

*An organisational readiness assessment will identify areas that need to be given more consideration and will identify training requirements. It will also make the workforce feel engaged in the process, and therefore increase user adoption – which is the fundamental measure for any organisation of a successful implementation.*

## The Technology Promise

There are so many areas that need to be given thorough consideration and investigation prior to implementing a unified communications solution. We will just cover a few here as they will be different for all organisations.

Often, the trigger for such a project is an end of life/contract situation with existing equipment, an attempt to gain competitive advantage through better communications, a workplace downsizing, or the adoption of a work from home or flexible working strategy. Whatever the trigger, it is imperative that you understand what you have now so that you can successfully transition to a new solution without disrupting working models.

### Environmental

A unified communications solution utilises the data network within your organisation. There is no point putting more load onto the network if you already have choke points or if it is over-utilised. Conducting a network readiness assessment will identify any issues with congestion and bandwidth both internally and externally if you have a multisite topography. You may need to upgrade switches/routers and bandwidth before you can even think about adding voice.

Additionally, there may be analogue devices such as fax machines, door entry systems, and emergency lines for lifts. You will need devices which can adapt an analogue line to digital so that it can be incorporated into the new solution.

*More than 50% of IT professionals have not been able to fix the quality issues experienced. Proper planning and discovery workshops prior to implementation would prevent quality issues from occurring.*

If your organisation has offices across different countries, adopting one solution will yield significant savings. However, you will need to have a way of managing the environment and routing calls efficiently whilst maintaining call quality and cost savings. You will also need to consider how best to leverage any existing communications infrastructure that your business has invested in over the years to enable a cost-effective migration. This is especially the case with larger and multinational organisations, who typically have different PBXs from different vendors in different countries. In these cases, it is important to ensure that the technology deployed to support the transition to Microsoft Teams or Skype for Business is open enough and agile enough to interconnect with multiple vendors.

### Contractual

This has been cited as one of the key reasons to implement change. Whether it is your phone system, lines or call bundles, it is normally the catalyst to change. However, you do not need to wait until the end of one contract to migrate to another (which usually requires a period of downtime). There are solutions which can allow you to use your existing PSTN/SIP lines while still benefiting from Skype for Business or Microsoft Teams. In most cases, your existing PSTN/SIP lines/minutes will end up being more cost-effective than porting your numbers into Office 365 and paying for a per user, per month call bundle.

Microsoft Teams and Skype for Business allow Direct Routing, which essentially means you have an appliance on-premise (which has to be certified by Microsoft). Your existing PSTN/SIP lines are terminated to the appliance, which is then directly connected into the Microsoft Cloud. All calls are routed through your existing provider/contracts.

## Regulatory

Most organisations have regulatory compliance requirements, this may include call handling, recording all interactions voice/chat/video etc. let's not forget taking payments and payment solutions to protect your customers.

All of these areas are not secondary to implementing a unified communications solution and should not be neglected. They all need to be considered, and perhaps it is a good time to overhaul what you are doing now to ensure that your organisation remains compliant once Microsoft Teams or Skype for Business has been deployed.

## Management

It is quite well known that to manage or Microsoft Teams or Skype for Business efficiently you need to be a master at PowerShell, which is normally a skill for deeply technical and usually very expensive IT experts. So, how do you go about making changes, adding new users and, of course, deleting existing users? These should all be quite simple tasks, providing you know what you are doing, and you are prepared to keep switching between different web consoles. Even then, are you sure that you have added the right policies or deleted all the user attributes? The whole process can be overly complicated and resource intensive. So, simplifying the management of your Microsoft Teams or Skype for Business deployment is a hugely important consideration. Simplicity means that less skilled (and less expensive) resources can perform the management. Simplicity also means that changes can be implemented more rapidly. So, look out for vendors or partners who can provide a user management application that simplifies those onerous tasks through one easy to use interface.

Additionally, you may have a significant number of desk phones which all require configuration and management. To ensure that this does not become a burden on the IT staff, ensure that you have access to a single management portal that allows your IT team to carry out updates and fixes quickly and easily, such as searching for a phone by a user account rather than an IP address.

## Commercial

Before any decision is made to implement a unified communications solution, the commercials need to be favourable, you may have new functionality which in many ways demonstrates the return on investment providing it delivers the promise of better collaboration and communication.

Microsoft Teams or Skype for Business has a variety of delivery options, including:

1. On-premise: This may be favourable if your organisation has third-party integrations such as a CRM system, call recording or contact centre. This, of course, will require management of servers etc., and typically you will have a capital expenditure upfront for the equipment.
2. Private cloud: This is hosted either in your own datacentre or by a service provider. This will reduce the burden of server management and replacing hardware and may seem more expensive until you take into account power, cooling and management costs.
3. Public cloud: This involves Microsoft taking care of everything with Microsoft Teams. The online equivalent to Skype for Business Server, it may seem easier but can work out significantly costlier than either on-premise or private hosted solutions when you factor in a dedicated connection (Express Route) and calling plans priced per user and the licence uplift for enterprise voice. Additionally, this is a “one size fits all” solution, so there will be some reduced functionality.
4. Hybrid: This is seen as being the route most organisations will take. If you have users that just require instant messaging and presence, keep them in Office 365 using Microsoft Teams. If you have a contact centre or other third-party application on-premise, have Skype for Business Server running locally with PSTN and SIP breakout still on-premise. Even if you choose to have Skype for Business hosted in a private cloud, you can still host users in Office 365 and on premise. One very important note: make sure that you have a system which allows you to easily move users from on-premise (Skype for Business) to Office 365 (Teams) and back again if required.

## Conclusion

Many companies are staunchly committed to Microsoft for their communications and collaboration needs. However, they find that their end users are struggling with issues around usability, call quality and support, while their IT staff is inundated with too many calls for support and provisioning. These problems hamper the wide-scale adoption that is needed to boost productivity and collaboration, and see the promised return from their Microsoft investments.

*95% of organisations say that unified communications as part of a digital workforce strategy is important, and 87% of CIOs feel that simply giving employees more digital power could drive a minimum of 5% additional revenue growth over a period of three years.*

## The Solution

The answer is to work with a partner that offers a consolidated holistic solution to all of the issues that your organisation may encounter. This will add value to your Microsoft Teams or Skype for Business deployment, thereby optimising the experience for everyone and addressing all of the concerns cited by IT managers, business executives and users.

## AudioCodes One Voice for Microsoft Teams & Skype for Business

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400 Series IP Phones  C450HD Teams Phone  Huddle Room Solutions  BTOE Client  Presence Indicator  Boss Admin	Teams Direct Routing  CCE Appliances  CloudBond 365  Mediant SBC  Azure Mediant SBC  Gateways/Adapters  Hybrid SBC/SBA	User Management pack  OneVoice Operations Centre  Smart Tap Call Recording  Fax Server  IP Phone Manager  Routing Manager	Solution Design/Plan Solution Consultancy  Network Assessments Implementation  Managed Services 24/7 Global Support

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