



A D E P T 4

IT AS A SERVICE

Now We're Talking:
Driving digital
transformation with
Microsoft Teams

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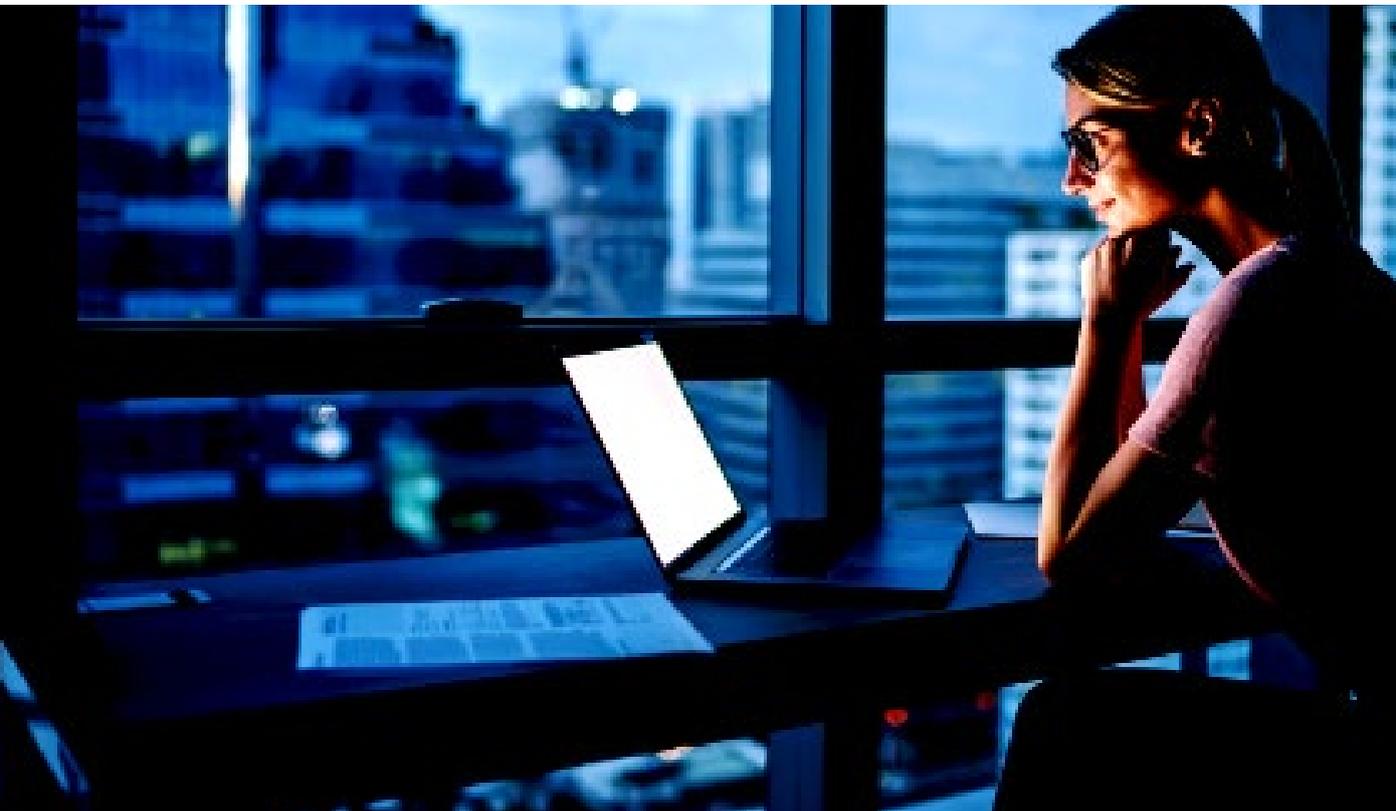
Driving digital transformation with the cloud

‘Achieving digital transformation is a key strategic goal for many businesses. It’s a broad objective, tweaked and tailored to suit the context of the organisation in question. Generally speaking, however, digital transformation involves not merely deploying more digital technology, but deploying it in ways that make business processes more efficient, drive the development of new products or services, or collect data to generate new insights and strategies. Digital transformation done well can help companies to innovate and optimise, and ultimately stay ahead in a competitive world.

The cloud is key to many digital transformation strategies because it offers a more agile and cost-effective way for businesses to deploy this new technology. Rather than shelling out for a hefty upfront investment, organisations can try out different tools and technologies on a flexible basis, setting up trial periods with ease and experimenting with different approaches before settling on one. They can pay for tools and applications on a per use basis, switching from cumbersome CapEx to flexible OpEx models.

This, of course, is the foundation for ‘as-a-service’ models of technology procurement and deployment, and they have had a significant impact across multiple business functions. In this Insight Guide, we are taking a closer look at a specific ‘as-a-service’ technology – Microsoft Teams. This product has the potential to optimise how people work within your organisation, driving a truly multifaceted and impactful form of digital





What is Microsoft Teams?

Microsoft Teams is a Unified Communications as a Service (UCaaS) product, meaning that it offers a fully integrated set of communication and collaboration capabilities, all delivered as-a-service via the cloud. It was launched in 2017 as an addition to Microsoft's Office 365 portfolio and was quickly recognised as one of the company's most exciting developments in terms of group working and productivity.

The tools on offer can be broadly organised into two strands. Strand one focuses on communication, with functions such as instant messaging, voice over IP, videoconferencing and public switched telephone network (PSTN) conferencing. Strand two focuses on working practices. It offers a shared workspace for Microsoft Office applications such as PowerPoint and Word, as well as a hub for virtual meetings. Additionally, Microsoft Teams incorporates bots which deliver enhanced productivity according to the needs of the organisation in question. These might include creating scheduled reports, or polling groups of colleagues for opinions and feedback.



The rise of UCaaS

The launch of Microsoft Teams is part of the broader UCaaS trend, which has gathered significant pace over recent years. Some market predictions suggest that by 2020 more than half of all organisations will be deploying UCaaS technology, while the market is already growing by around 25% every year.

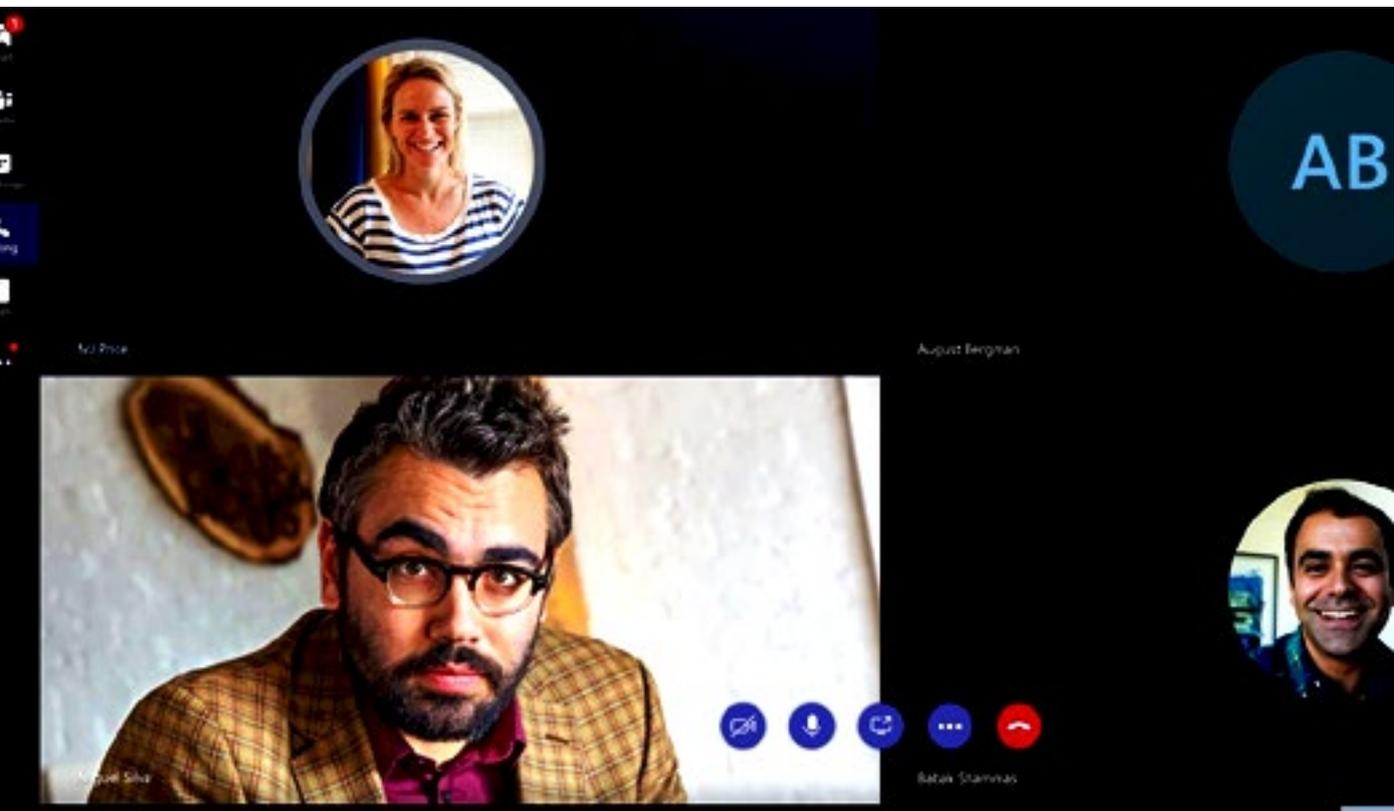
This rapid growth is thanks to a perfect storm of technology innovations and evolving workplace behaviours. On the technology side, both virtualisation and cloud computing itself have developed to the point that they are now key elements in almost every organisation's overall technology strategy. Now that a wide range of communications applications can be virtualised and delivered on demand from the cloud, even small organisations can take advantage of unified communications platforms.



Meanwhile, on the people side of the equation, flexible, remote and mobile working are becoming increasingly normalised. Employees are pushing for greater flexibility and better work-life balances, which in turn means being able to take greater control over when and how they work. Achieving this from a management perspective means being able to offer effective collaboration and team-working tools, so that staff members who are working from home, travelling between sites or taking on flexible hours can contribute and participate in projects as conveniently as they can in the office.

These trends, then, add up to a powerful appetite for UCaaS.





How can UCaaS drive digital transformation?

With Let's take a closer look at the kinds of digital transformation that UCaaS platforms can be the engine for.

- **Support efficient and optimal working practices.** As outlined above, UCaaS has risen in popularity out of increased demand for staff to be able to work on the move, remotely and to flexible hours. Deploying UCaaS enables organisations to put their employees' needs and desires at the heart of their working practices – leading, in turn, to more engaged and motivated workforces. An internet connection is all employees need to access ongoing projects, receive and implement feedback, and communicate with colleagues across a wealth of different channels.



- **Develop new lines of collaboration.** UCaaS doesn't just have to act as a way for existing teams to collaborate and co-work. It can also generate new teams and working groups between widely dispersed offices, enabling organisations to create new lines of collaboration between offices, nationally and internationally. This allows ideas to be shared more easily, and for different work cultures to learn from each other.
- **Create a seamless technology experience.** UCaaS offers a single working interface for staff across all their devices – PCs, tablets and smartphones. This reduces time spent jumping between devices, and training up new staff members. It also makes the management of patches and upgrades much easier.
- **Free up IT resource for long-term strategy.** Selecting a third-party UC platform frees up internal IT teams from cumbersome management and troubleshooting tasks involved with running an on-premise UC solution. In turn, this frees up valuable time for those IT personnel to focus on longer-term strategy and projects tied to the development of new products and services. It stops IT managers from spending the majority of their time 'keeping the lights on' and enables them to act as business leaders and drivers of change.

'UCaaS ... can also generate new teams and working groups between widely dispersed offices...nationally and internationally'



What makes Microsoft Teams special?

These benefits, however, apply to a whole range of UCaaS platforms. Why do we recommend Microsoft Teams above others?

First, Microsoft Teams offers some rich features which are not available on other UCaaS platforms. Like other platforms it is **group-focused**, designed from the ground up to facilitate group working and shared documents and processes. However, unlike some others, it is also **document-focused**, built to enable a seamless shared approach to documents across the Office productivity suite. This speeds up document creation and management, and reduces errors and duplication.

The platform also offers an array of **voice, data and text-based communications**, enabling users to select the most appropriate form for the specific context they are working on. These functions come with further rich features, such as inbuilt user tagging and meeting scheduling tools embedded in the instant chat function. A wide range of **bots** are available to enhance the Microsoft Teams experience, meaning that each organisation can genuinely tailor the application to their own needs. The POPin bot, for example, enables anonymous questions to be asked, which in turn can generate more honest feedback on particularly sensitive projects.

The platform comes with high-level **security and compliance** built in; all data is encrypted at rest and in transit, and compliance standards such as ISO 27001 are met as a matter of course.

Guest access is also available, meaning that external third parties, whether contractors and freelancers, or outsourced organisations such as design agencies, can log into Teams using their existing Microsoft account. This is quicker, easier and more reliable than using a separate portal login.



An extension to office

Indeed, this seamless integration with the broader Microsoft Office experience is perhaps above all what makes Microsoft Teams a compelling choice over other UCaaS options.

Microsoft Teams operates as an extension to Office 365 – which means that if your organisation subscribes to Office 365 then you get access to Microsoft Teams as a matter of course. And given that almost every business uses at least one Office application as part of its day-to-day operations – and the majority of businesses have at least a partial cloud migration in mind as part of their future IT strategy – shifting to Office 365 is on almost every corporate IT roadmap.



This means that Microsoft Teams can be seen not as an additional IT investment to debate and weigh up, but rather an additional benefit of the shift to Office 365, which most organisations should be seriously considering anyway. Migrating Microsoft Exchange to the cloud and deploying Office 365 is one of the most straightforward ways to begin harnessing the scalability and flexibility benefits of hybrid cloud computing – and now it comes with sophisticated collaboration software built in.



About Adept4

Adept4 is a managed services provider. It enables organisations to become operationally and culturally agile through smart, adaptive cloud based technology strategies that respond effectively to everyday challenges.

Adept4 is a northern based power house delivering hybrid IT, Microsoft cloud and managed services that enable organisations to securely transition, flex and integrate between on premise and cloud-based services.

Adept4 is a market–leader in developing solutions that enable mid-market sized organisations to make faster decisions, improve operational efficiency and gain competitive advantage.

[Get in touch](#)





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