

Microsoft Teams Telephony: What Happens After You Agree to Integration?

The thing about Microsoft Teams, is that if you knew what you'd be getting, you would have signed up yesterday.

I guarantee it.

The quandary is that you don't know. That you can't know.

Because it's not possible without experiencing the immense flow of Teams and what makes it literally impossible to quickly understand the breadth of what Teams brings, and more importantly, WHY Teams gives you such an advantage over your competition.

On one hand, Microsoft Teams is very easy to understand, use and get integrated, in part because chances are, you've probably already paid for licensing, so, it's even kinda free!!!!

Well, minus the phones and the integration and such, but good start nonetheless...

However, on that other hand, Microsoft Teams is complex, as it's a very specific, grand set of functionalities designed to handle ALL your enterprise communications and collaboration. And in that sense, it's seemingly very complicated.

Not that the normal user would ever see any of this, as literally EVERYTHING is managed through a single pane of glass interface and it's in the centralized location approach that provides the immense value, including the ease of use, on a familiar platform that you've probably been using for several years.

The enormity of Teams integration is what's so valuable here. Valuable for employees, administratively, for analytical analysis, provisioning, billing, for hybrid workers and for overall cost-effectiveness and enterprise-wide adoption success. I can even take it a step further and say that even though you may never have used it, that you would pick it up quickly, because it's the same familiar Microsoft UI/UX that you've already been using for years.

Yea, I know. What's that worth?

“To understand it, you're really going to have to use it.”

There is no question in my mind that once see it in action, spread throughout an organization, you'll quickly see how each function works seamlessly with another, that it works across multiple locations, to groups of most any size, and that it covers every nook and cranny of the world.

And that's when the epiphany occurs... when you realize the uniquely HUGE advantages it brings to succeed over the competition.

In an effort to bring an organization closer to fully understanding this point, I'd like to discuss what an implementation consists of, what you can expect and what is required from you to successfully transition to a Best-in-class, Unified Communications platform from Microsoft.

The Implementation Process

What happens after saying "Yes, I would like Teams Telephony."

1. Performing a Readiness Assessment

First, a company's existing IT and phone infrastructure makeup would need to be understood, then assessed to identify any major issues that might slow down a Teams Telephony rollout. This is largely constructed by the makeup of each company and typically involves a full review of technical and network requirements, while understanding best practices and existing security procedures of each individual organization.

Common areas explored in this type of readiness assessment can include:

1. **Examining Call Routing:** How is an organization planning to connect users to the PSTN (public switched telephone network)? How will this differ by site and even country?
2. **Finding Network Obstacles:** Is your corporate network optimized for Microsoft Teams Telephony? For example, the need to open firewalls and gateways or through managing Quality of Service for all call traffic.
3. **Finding Teams Certified Devices:** What types of devices will be required so users can make calls? Does the company need desk phones, or will headsets be sufficient, or do they need both? Who will source this equipment, will it be a Hardware as a Service arrangement, will they buy them outright or possibly lease. Is there an existing external vendor that needs to be consulted? What equipment is required for meeting rooms and communal spaces?
4. **Teams Licenses Strategy:** Which Microsoft 365 licenses does each organization have? For example, Enterprise E5 licenses already include Teams Telephony functionality, but other licenses may require an additional Microsoft Phone System add-on. How many licenses are needed, and how will they be allocated.

2. Design and Plan the Upcoming Implementation

Most of the time spent implementing Teams Telephony takes place during this phase. Here, all technical business requirements are gathered and mapped out. Geographical considerations such as E911 (emergency calling compliance) to make emergency calls, as it's crucial in the United States, would be addressed here.

During this phase providers will look at main phone number routing and the experience for end users, to ensure call-routing will function effectively for remote workers, or those who are often on the go and need to take calls to a mobile. The objective is to ensure your network configured inside of Teams matches the network outside of Teams. For location-based routing, all regulations and local laws need to be addressed and configured accordingly.

It's important to remember that while some features of cloud-based telephony won't replicate old systems exactly, you will find new features that far exceed capabilities of legacy voice solutions. Moving your telephony to Teams gives each company an opportunity to redesign and reimagine ways of working, for the better.

3. Configure the Environment

Once all technical requirements are documented and configured, the new infrastructure can now be conceptualized and tested in a staged environment.

At this point, it's often helpful to develop an end-user plan to ensure site-specific phone system features used within the organization are being met or exceeded with Teams-based Telephony. Some businesses find it useful to run a pilot, using a sub-set of users, with configurations that match the business needs of that site (i.e. boss/admin scenarios, call park, group call pick-up, attendant type call handling, call queues, simultaneous ring, international calling, cloud voicemail).

4. Migrate Users

After design and testing phases are completed, it's time to start migrating all your telephony to Microsoft Teams. With Teams Telephony there are a variety of additional features in comparison to a traditional handset used to make phone calls, so it's important that users understand those features and best practices.

Training is key to ensure users are comfortable with the new technology and to ensure their specific job functions are met.

In migrating users, one main consideration is to minimize the amount of disruption to the end-user. There are a variety of ideal, specialized, and recommended roll-out strategies that will all differ depending on your individual site requirements. For example, for a site roll-out of a company in Boston there are few options:

- A full migration of all users in the US
- Migrate all users tied to a main number in the US
- Migrate all users in San Francisco, then New York, then Boston

The best approach in migration is to move as many users across as possible, but this may not work depending on your site configurations. These discussions would take place beforehand with your service provider to ensure a seamless migration.

5. Review and Collect feedback

Once the migration to Microsoft Teams telephony is complete, the final step is to check-in with users, stakeholders, management, and administrators and ask for pointed feedback. Keeping users involved with the process at all stages is essential to make sure it's functioning smoothly across the organization and is providing as much value as possible.

This is a good time to provide additional training where required and to iron out any reservations or challenges users may have. Feedback will differ greatly from one group to another, so this final step should be revisited from time to time.