

Microsoft Teams Calling for the Modern Workplace and Worker

Simplifying Voice and Unifying Systems with Teams Voice



In this whitepaper, you will learn how Microsoft Teams Calling removes inefficiencies and unifies voice in the context of an organization's entire digital ecosystem; the different paths for migrating to Teams Voice; and key factors in choosing a partner to implement this vital part of a digital workplace transformation strategy.



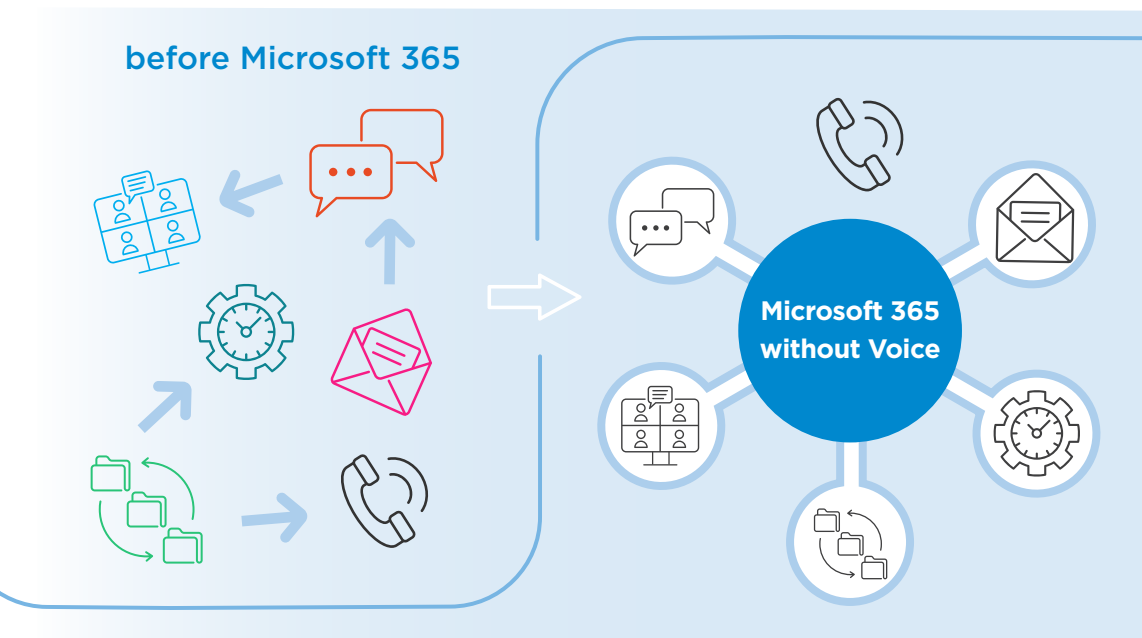
Giving Voice to the Modern Worker

Over the last five years, a number of collaboration and communications tools have entered the workplace, including conferencing and messaging platforms, file share programs and Skype, followed by Microsoft Teams and numerous other presence tools, that, added to the organization’s existing phone system and email server, resulted in an unhealthy smorgasbord. Users gained productivity tools with more features in exchange for fractured workflows, and organizations began to seek more uniformity.

Microsoft Teams has risen as a unifying platform that replaces many of the disparate options that organizations were struggling to integrate within a streamlined workflow. It reduced time and resources spent on weighed-down user workflows and eliminated the nightmare of disparate UC&C elements, with the exception of legacy phone systems.

“Simplicity is at the heart of the Modern workplace initiative. Yorktel’s embrace of Microsoft Teams Calling and our own industry leading design for our direct routing service ensures the continuity of the end user simplicity story down to the level of the management and maintenance of voice. While the cost savings offered from Microsoft and Yorktel are significant, the real gains for organizations will be the enhanced productivity that are the result of simplifying user workflows and management/ maintenance workflows”

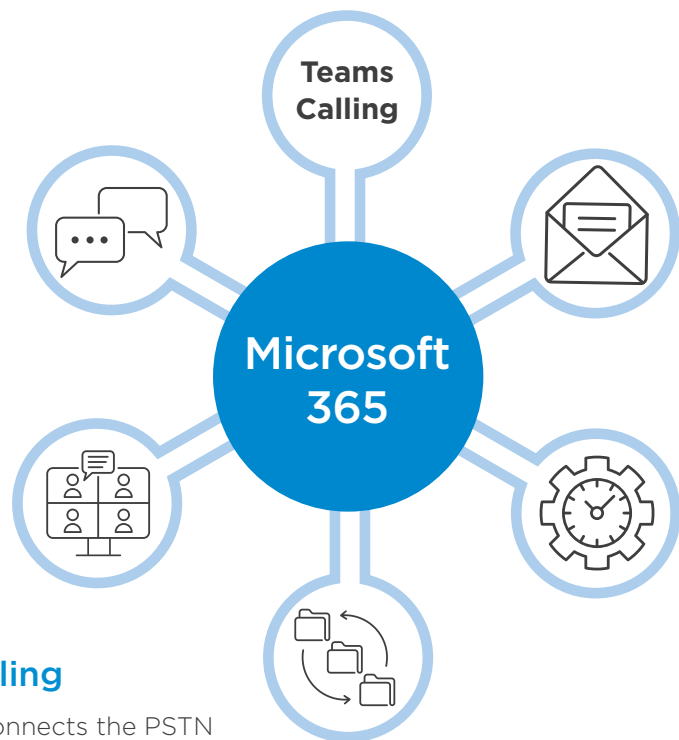
- Noel Gish, Chief Strategist - Office of Innovation, Yorktel



Workers increasingly rely on personal mobile phones while working remotely; calling a worker’s office number often leads to a dead end. This puts privacy and security at risk and makes PBX systems redundant as they are not in use. Even for teams based in the office, without an integrated voice solution, workers have to switch between multiple video, voice and productivity platforms for meetings and collaboration, despite the fact that almost all other aspects of their work are centralized in Microsoft Teams.

As part of a response to the pandemic and overall digital workplace strategy, organizations are retiring legacy telecommunications systems in favor of cloud-based solutions that integrate with their UC&C ecosystem and are eliminating on-premise PBX. For organizations using Teams in particular, Teams Voice has become the logical path to enable PSTN calls in the cloud and relieves organizations of the burden of managing and maintaining legacy systems, equipping them to evolve modes, or preferably straight to Teams-only.

PTSN Calling in Microsoft Teams



PTSN Calls with Microsoft Teams Calling

Teams Voice is a 100% cloud-based solution that connects the PSTN to the Microsoft worldwide network, allowing organizations to have all their phone systems connected and administered in Microsoft Teams. Teams Voice removes reliance on legacy on-premise PBX systems and allows workers to experience voice as part of their unified Teams experience.

With Teams Voice, workers can make PSTN calls from anywhere, pick up from different devices and move seamlessly through video, voice, productivity and collaboration in Teams. Organizations can manage onboarding of users and other administration functions in Teams, access reporting and diagnostics in Microsoft 365 and subscribe to monitoring and management of Teams Voice within the entire Teams ecosystem.

There are two options for Teams Voice: Microsoft Calling Plans or Direct Routing with a third party. Each option differs in costs, extent of voice capabilities available, flexibility within the voice plan and the amount of management needed.

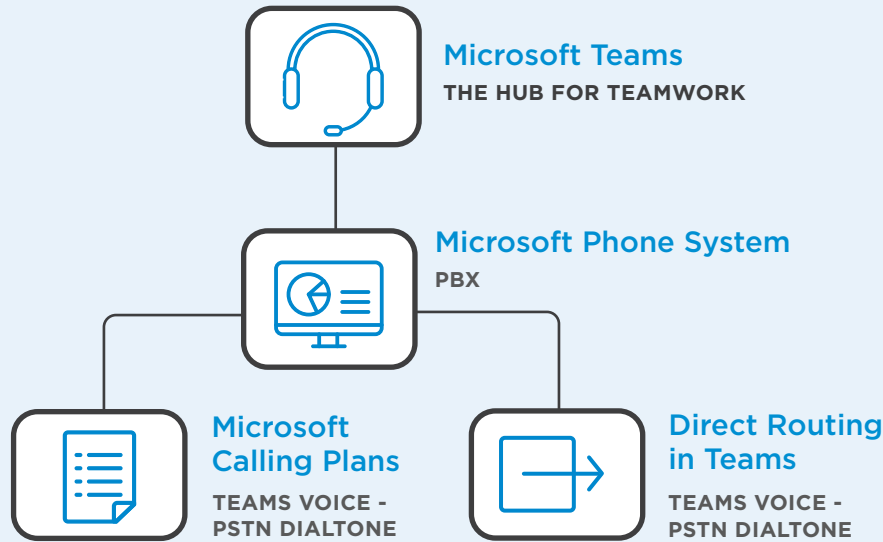
Microsoft Calling Plans

Microsoft Calling Plans are a Microsoft option for Teams Voice that offer basic calling features and provides access to the Microsoft network, currently available in 16 countries. No additional PSTN carrier contract is needed, and the plan is a per-user license, regardless of concurrent usage. Domestic and international plans are available, and minutes are bundled.

Calling Plans work best for organizations that do not need complex functionalities like phone trees, shared lines and other office phone system features. The Calling Plan simply connects an individual phone line to the Teams client, allowing the worker to receive and make voice calls through Teams.



Microsoft 365



Microsoft Phone System, when paired with Microsoft Calling Plans and/or Direct Routing, provides a full enterprise calling experience for Microsoft 365 users in Teams on a global scale

There are more restricted integration options within Calling Plans, and these plans can suffer from limited failover capabilities. Additionally, because Calling Plans aren't available in every country, office lines that are located outside of the 16 countries currently supported by Microsoft may be subject to expensive international toll rates.

Microsoft Calling Plans are a simple way to connect a PSTN line to Teams, without any CAPEX investment and without any additional monitoring and management. They are a wise choice for organizations that are smaller in size, global footprint and companies that don't need a multi-faceted office phone system.

Direct Routing

Direct routing is a solution that utilizes an SBC (session border controller) to connect PSTN calls through Microsoft Teams. Direct routing allows organizations to leverage an existing telecom provider service or to move to a different carrier when desired, and because it is not tied to a per-user plan, it works on a concurrent session model. It also permits more advanced enterprise phone system features such as call forwarding and shared lines, and it provides interoperability with third-party systems such as call centers, paging systems and Analog Telephony Adopters (ATA) to preserve existing investments. Direct routing is available in every country, but availability is subject to the Service Provider.

Microsoft Calling Plans vs. Direct routing in a side-by-side comparison

Calling Plans

Best for small businesses and straightforward calling

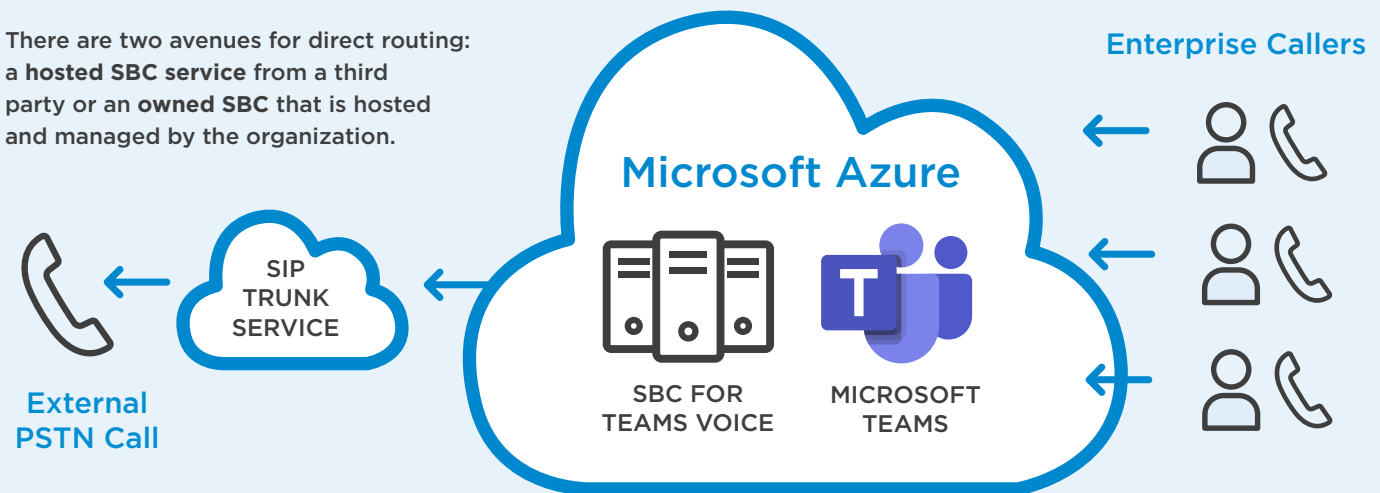
- Per user license basis
- Available in 16 countries
- No additional PSTN carrier contract
- Number of minute bundles are per plan, per country

Direct Routing

Best for businesses with robust phone system features

- Can be implemented within existing voice architecture
- Leverage owned SBC or subscribe to hosted SBC service
- Leverage existing telecom provider SIP trunk or use SIP trunk from provider
- Interoperability with 3rd party systems
- Voice optimization
- Maintain existing global footprint
- Deployment flexibility
- Phone system features like phone trees, shared lines, call forwarding
- Requires a solution that can accommodate a multinational organization and/or highly distributed workforce.

There are two avenues for direct routing: a hosted SBC service from a third party or an owned SBC that is hosted and managed by the organization.



Hosted SBC: Many organizations choose to work with a Service Provider that hosts the SBC and offers full management for the entire direct routing service. This approach is the most flexible and provides interoperability, requires no additional ongoing maintenance resources or expense for the organization, is more cost-effective and is an OPEX instead of a CAPEX expenditure. It also provides access to many additional third-party systems and hardware that do not have to be purchased by the organization.

The most efficient form of direct routing is with an SBC that is hosted by the provider in the Microsoft Azure cloud. As Microsoft Teams is also in Azure, in this case the entire collaboration experience remains within the Microsoft global network, giving a “zero hops experience.” This creates the shortest and highest quality path to Teams and gives improved lip sync, low latency and high through-put, resulting in a high audio fidelity call and an improved End User Experience.

Owned SBC: Some organizations implement direct routing using an owned SBC, without a Service Provider, and host, install, maintain and support the service internally. This requires upfront capital expenditure and typically additional management and helpdesk support personnel. The organization itself determines how the SBC fits into the existing infrastructure, what specific hardware and configurations are needed and the quantities required to meet the needs of redundancy and size limits, and it completes the configuration, testing and deployment. This may involve additional service contracts and/or software updates and investments in ongoing training of support teams for day-to-day running and issue resolution. An owned SBC is only advisable if the organization already has the SBC and support personnel and would like to move forward with Teams Voice.

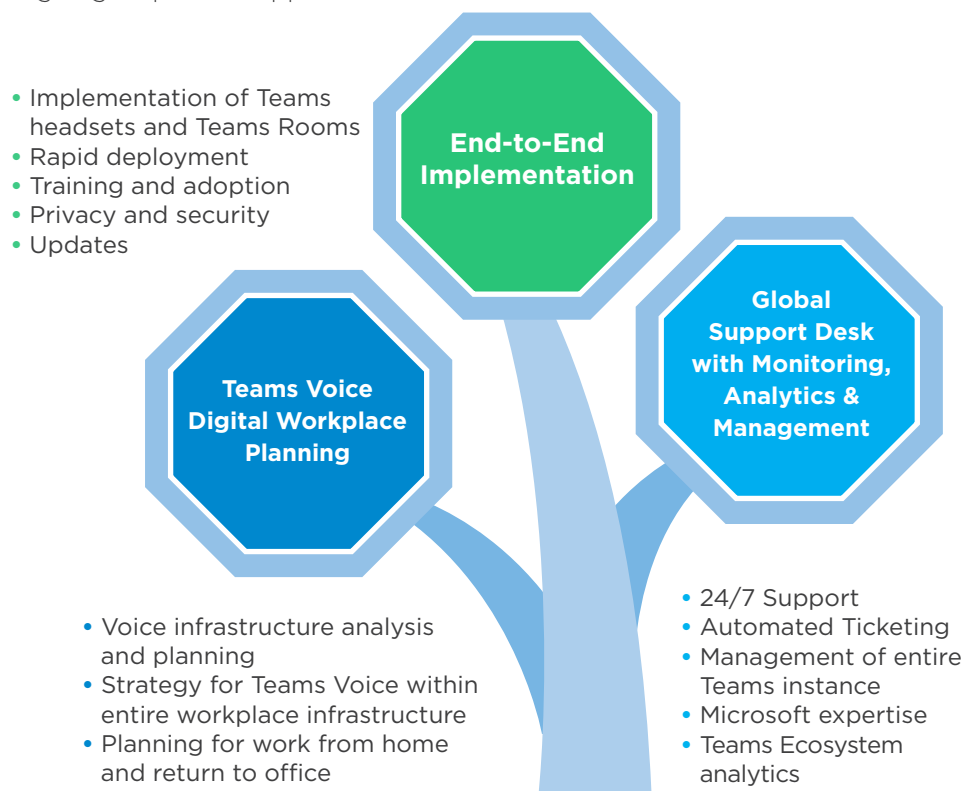
Questions to Ask When Considering A Microsoft Teams Calling Solution

- What phone system capabilities are needed?
- In which countries are your workers located?
- To what extent is the solution being managed?
- Is it a CAPEX or OPEX expense?
- How flexible is the calling plan?
- Do you have SME’s to guide, decide, architect, implement a solution?
- Do you have the ability to monitor the service for availability and reliability?
- Do you have a support desk to provide troubleshooting and root cause analysis?
- What will migration and integration look like?
- Does the provider understand the entire Microsoft Teams ecosystem?
- How will this fit within our overall Digital Workplace Transformation strategy?

What to Look for in a Microsoft Teams Calling Provider

Most organizations employ a service provider to help implement Teams Voice, and many work with Managed Service Providers (MSPs) that offer monitoring and management services. Smaller businesses that are interested in Microsoft Calling Plans may work with an MSP to gain the most efficient service and to have voice managed within their entire digital workplace. Businesses with larger teams and more robust needs who are interested in direct routing may work with MSPs because of the flexibility, resources and management they provide.

The most valuable MSPs monitor and manage every aspect of a voice solution from end-to-end. This may include agile deployment, privacy, security and redundancy capabilities, robust monitoring, analytics and reporting, and ongoing help desk support.



The best MSP for Teams Voice is one well versed in the Microsoft and Microsoft Teams ecosystem, with a deep understanding of voice, video and productivity within the entire workflow. A Teams-savvy MSP will be able to handle an interruption in service that has farther-reaching implications than just a phone call and will address the entire Teams infrastructure as a whole.

MSPs should work with an organization’s digital workplace strategy and consider both remote and on-premise environments. This includes how to implement Teams Voice within an existing voice infrastructure, as well as managing workspaces with elements like Teams conference rooms, Teams-compatible headsets, phones and other devices. In essence, a qualified MSP is capable of driving an organization’s overall communications, collaboration and digital workplace forward.

“Yorktel is focused on enabling the Modern Worker — that means facilitating work wherever and whenever it happens, be it on the road or at home (WFH) or post pandemic back in the office (WFO). Key to enabling a Modern Worker’s communication and collaboration experience is to ensure they have maximum productivity with the tools they use such as Microsoft Teams Calling. We leverage our 35 years of Managed Services experience to maintain Availability and Reliability of the Microsoft Teams experience.”

– Vishal Brown, SVP Enterprise Products, Yorktel

Why Yorktel for Microsoft Teams Calling?

With vast UC experience and a deep understanding of Microsoft Teams, not only for Voice, but Video and Workflows, Yorktel removes the complexities of deploying Teams Voice and simplifies your User Experience. Bringing together Yorktel's proven skills and expertise in Managed Services, individual and group communication, collaboration and productivity as a shared experience, whether employees are work-from-home (WFH), work-from-office (WFO) or hybrid, with our Microsoft practice, make us an integral part of the Digital Workplace Strategy. We consider the Modern Workplace, the Modern Worker, Intelligent Communications tools and Workplace Intelligence to fully harness the trifecta of UC, AV and IoT. Our end-to-end service architecture, and Teams services from migration to deployment of Communication, Collaboration and Productivity Workflows, including monitoring and management capabilities are flexible enough to accommodate all use cases, while maintaining privacy and security.

Contact us at LearnMore@yorktel.com for more information on Yorktel's Microsoft Teams Calling capabilities.

A Future for Voice

In today's world, organizations need a digital transformation strategy that reaches all corners of the workplace and services all aspects of their teams' workflow. This includes synchronous and asynchronous voice, video, chat, file sharing and productivity, as well as security, data reporting, IoT and AI, networks, IT and workspaces. As a longstanding and foundational aspect of work — especially for remote teams — voice is an essential piece of this puzzle and must be considered a key component in every digital workplace transformation. While organizations move into the future with Teams Voice, it's important to note they need not retire legacy systems all at once. It is possible, with the right provider, to leverage existing investments and replace voice infrastructure simultaneously, as organizations work to create a more productive future for their Modern Workers and Workplace.

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About Yorktel

Yorktel (www.yorktel.com) is a leading global provider of cloud and managed services for healthcare, large enterprise, and federal government customers. Founded in 1985 and with offices throughout the US and EMEA, Yorktel enables customers to successfully integrate secure and reliable communications into their operations — from telemedicine and organizational collaboration to consulting and managed services. Yorktel designs, integrates and manages system-wide communications solutions. For more information, visit Yorktel online at <http://www.yorktel.com> or email learnmore@yorktel.com. Follow Yorktel on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/yorktelcorp>, LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/yorktel>



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