Successfully Migrating to Microsoft Teams

Realizing Teams benefits requires an orchestrated, programmatic approach

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Q1 2020

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Executive Summary

Microsoft Teams is rapidly gaining market share thanks to its ability to integrate workflows and collaboration, and to integrate with the Microsoft Office 365 ecosystem. Those adopting Teams also gain access to Microsoft's AI and application capabilities to improve productivity, reduce costs, and increase revenue.

Successfully implementing Teams correctly requires a programmatic approach that includes assessment of goals and needs, gap analysis, and a structured transition strategy that minimizes risk and ensures adequate on-going management. Partners can bring unique value to the table in the form of expertise in assessment, implementation, and transition management, workflow optimizations, and familiarity with emerging Microsoft capabilities.

IT leaders should:
- Evaluate Teams as part of their go-forward Microsoft strategy, especially if still using Skype for Business Online or on-premises
- Develop use cases and personas that can benefit from contextual collaboration and integrated calling, meetings, and messaging
- Assess network infrastructure, especially its ability to support rapidly changing data flows during transition to the cloud
- Plan for a step-by-step migration to Teams that addresses PSTN connectivity as well as on-going operational management
- Leverage partners that can offer value in all of these steps, as well as provide on-going support for adopting emerging Microsoft capabilities and leveraging tools like PowerApps to optimize specific workflows. that can support operations in all necessary geographies

The State of Microsoft Teams

Microsoft Teams is a cloud-based unified communications service, available as part of Office 365, that offers integrated calling, messaging, and meeting features (Please see Figure 1.).
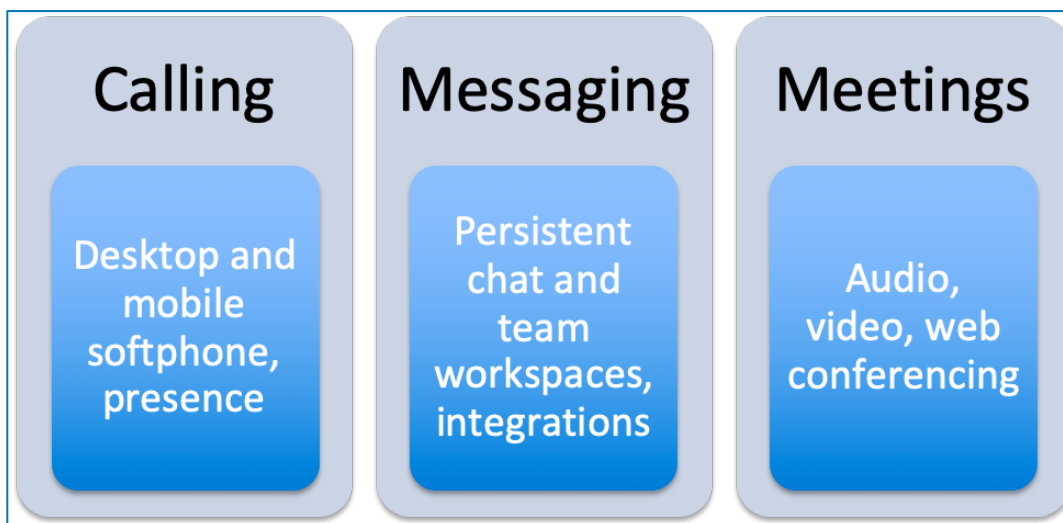

Calling	Messaging	Meetings
Desktop and mobile softphone, presence	Persistent chat and team workspaces, integrations	Audio, video, web conferencing

Figure 1: Microsoft Teams Features

Teams is based on the concept of contextual, or workstream-based, collaboration. In this approach, users create team spaces for members of a specific workgroup, project, or other functional role. Within the team space, they then create channels for required topics (e.g. "general" for general discussion, sales, customer services, project-abc, and so on).

Within each team space, administrators may integrate applications to support specific needs. Examples include project management, file sharing, CRM, task management, and so on. The beauty of the Teams-based approach to workstream management is that it avoids task switching. Message-based conversations, calls, meetings, file development, customer support activities, sales, and essentially any business activity all happen within the context of a team channel rather than in separate, disjoint applications.

Teams represents the core of Microsoft's real-time communications and collaboration strategy going forward. In July of 2019 Microsoft announced end-of-life for Skype for Business Online (available as part of Office 365) in July of 2021. Microsoft continues to support on-premises instances of Skype for Business, but is increasingly focused on the integration of Teams with on-premises Skype for Business, and enabling seamless migration to Teams.

Teams adoption is rapidly growing. In March of 2020, Microsoft reported more than 44 million active Microsoft Teams users, up from 13 million at the end of 2019. Nemertes data shows that of the 51.2% of organizations currently using a team collaboration solution, 55.9% are using Microsoft Teams, significantly more than any other product or service (Please see Figure 2.)
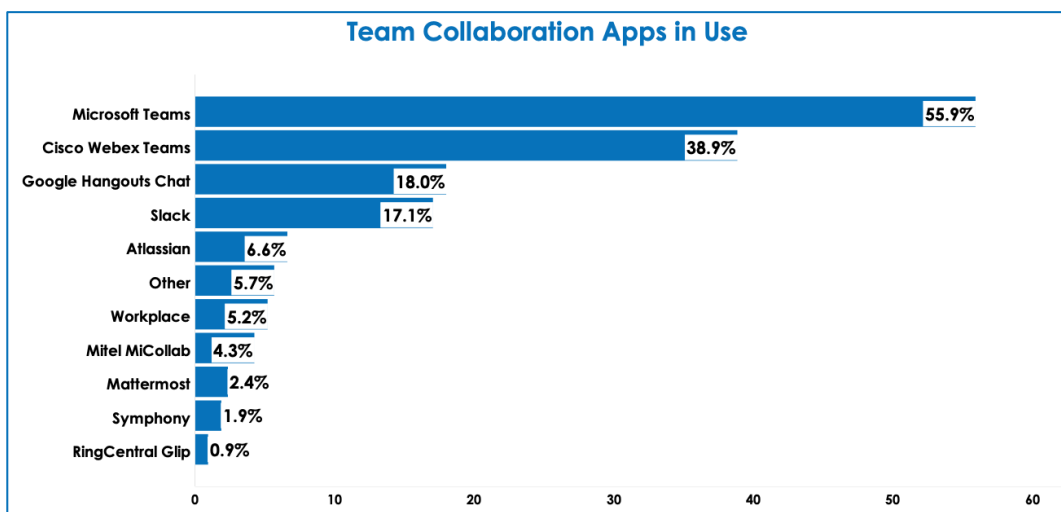
Figure 2: Team Collaboration Apps in Use

Today, most organizations using Teams use it primarily for messaging and meeting services. Using Microsoft Teams for calling requires purchasing Microsoft Phone System, which is available with Office 365 E5 licenses, or at an additional cost for those using E3 licenses. Just 24.5% of organizations using Teams have adopted Teams Phone System. However, 35.2% plan to by the end of 2021, while another 20.8% are evaluating it.

Why Teams?

Teams adoption is largely driven by the opportunity to achieve measurable business benefits including cost savings, revenue gains, and productivity improvements.
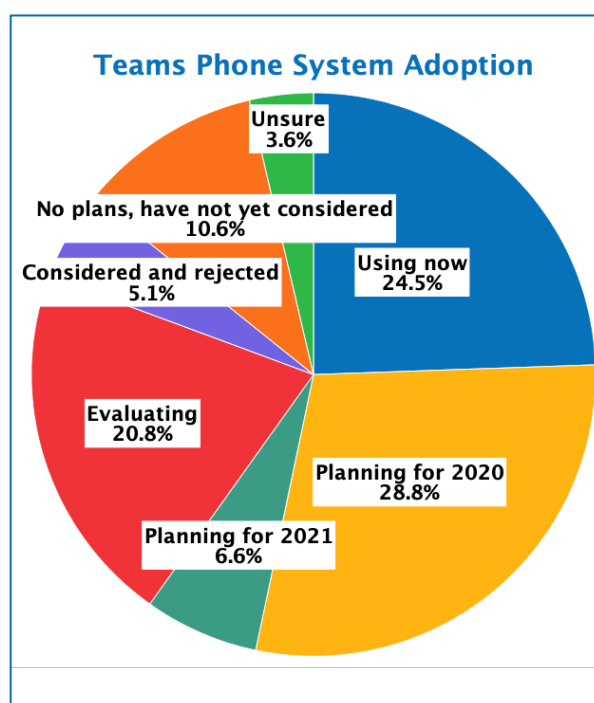
Cost savings opportunities come from eliminating separate phone systems and meeting applications, converging on Teams for all communications needs. This approach may reduce licensing costs, as well as provide for operational savings by eliminating the need to maintain separate platforms.

Nemertes research notes that for those who have adopted team collaboration applications:

- 23.6% have reduced the number of meetings, by an average of 22.8%
- 18.6% have reduced email volume, by an average of 12.2%
- 26.7% have achieved measurable gains in productivity (defined as shortening of repeated task times) by an average of 13%

Revenue gains are often attributed to improvements in internal collaboration that enable improvements in sales and customer support activities. For example, enabling salespersons to easily chat with back-office subject matter experts to quickly get information that will help close a deal. Or, improving the ability of customer service agents to upsell by easily joining a product expert into an existing call.

Factors that correlate with the highest measurable gains include company-wide team collaboration deployment (including to contact center agents) as well as incorporating workflows into team collaboration platforms (versus just using them as a messaging app).

Leveraging the Microsoft Ecosystem

It's important for those considering, or adopting Teams, to understand its role in the overall Microsoft 365 ecosystem. Microsoft, as one of its core differentiators, is infusing its AI capabilities into all of its collaboration and business applications. For example, AI-powered initiatives include real-time translation and transcription. In November of 2019 Microsoft announced Project Cortex, an AI-powered engine for gathering, digesting, and shaping enterprise information. Cortex will leverage information found in apps such as SharePoint and Teams, as well as data from external sources. In addition, Microsoft Azure Synapse Analytics, PowerApps, and Graph provide organizations with the ability to create custom apps and workflows, as well as gather information about conversations and information flows within their workforce. Microsoft customers continuing to rely on on-premises Skype for Business will not be able to take advantage of these capabilities.

Leveraging these capabilities, both now and as they continue to emerge, requires a level of organizational expertise beyond simply provisioning and managing phone and meeting services. It requires development capabiliities, and deep Microsoft capabilities knowledge coupled with insight into business operations and activities.

Getting from Here to There

Implementing Microsoft Teams is not as simple as just pushing out the application and hoping for the best. Success requires a programmatic approach that defines goals, ensures a solid foundation, and provides for a structured transition that minimizes risk of disruption.

Key requirements include:
- **Identify needs, goals, and gaps** – This requires detailed insight into the way that people collaborate today, and how they will need to collaborate tomorrow. Factors to consider include different personas operating within the organization, the location of workers (e.g. home, hoteling, hot-desking locations), the need for B2B and B2C support, systems currently available for collaboration, and demand for

specific technologies such as video conferencing. Once needs and goals are identified, the organization should consider gaps in the ability of current collaboration capabilities to address these needs

- **Network connectivity** – Migrating to the cloud often requires a fundamental rethinking and redesign of the WAN. For many organizations, WAN design is based on optimizing access from branch office to data center. When shifting to the cloud, the WAN must be optimized to support office-to-cloud flows. This may require enabling direct Internet access (on existing or new Internet links) from all office locations, leveraging SD-WAN to minimize WAN cost and to ensure performance and availability, and taking advantage of services like Microsoft Express Route to connect the enterprise WAN directly to the Microsoft Cloud
- **Transition of Phone services** - Microsoft Teams customers who license Phone System have two choices for connecting to the PSTN:
    - **Calling Plan** which provides blocks of local and long-distance calling minutes for a fixed price, with Microsoft provisioning phone numbers
    - **Direct Routing** in which customers provide their own SIP trunking services to connect Teams to the PSTN, with the customer maintaining control over their phone numbers.

    Of those using Phone System, 18.9% are using Calling Plan, with the highest percentage of adopters being those with fewer than 10,000 employees. Often this is due to early deployments and pilots of Microsoft Phone System. Larger organizations, as well as those planning deployments in 2020 and 2021, are more likely to be using or evaluating Direct Routing thanks to its ability to support existing SIP trunking contracts, and to provide lower PSTN access costs compared to Calling Plan.
- **User awareness and adoption initiatives –** Teams represents a new way for workers to collaborate, and even though many of its capabilities can be intuitively understood, getting the full benefit of adoption requires a proactive strategy to train employees, especially in managing channel creation and sprawl, building application and workflow integrations, and limiting interruptions
- **Management –** Organizations must establish the capability not just for managing performance metrics like uptime and voice/video quality, but also for understanding adoption and use. A management strategy must take advantage of analytics available from Microsoft and partners to ensure the ability to understand the impact Teams is having on worker productivity

Leveraging Partners for Success

Those adopting Microsoft Teams can benefit by leveraging the capabilities of partners to speed implementation, ensure adequate network services, support PSTN connectivity, and assist with ongoing support and management, including taking advantage of AI and workflow optimization. The ideal partner will support all of locations, and deliver a broad set of capabilities that are in-line with the organization's needs.

Specifically, partners can assist with

- **Identifying use cases** including specific workgroups, personas, and processes that can most benefit from Teams
- **Gap analysis and assessment** that identifies potential issues in network, security, training, and PSTN connectivity that must be addresses to ensure success
- **Implementation strategy,** to ensure a seamless migration with minimal risk of disruption
- **PSTN connectivity.** delivering capabilities such as migration of existing phone numbers and support for Direct Routing that enables organizations to maintain flexibility for their cloud deployments
- **Application integration** that enables workflow optimization by integrating business applications such as CRM, ERP, project management, and workflow management into Teams
- **Training** of end-users to take full advantage of Teams capabilities as well as managers to obtain actionable insight from analytics
- **On-going management and operations** that minimizes risk of disruption and that allows for rapid isolation and response in the event of a network or security issue

Conclusion

Microsoft Teams is rapidly gaining market share thanks to its ability to integrate workflows and collaboration, and to integrate with the Microsoft Office 365 ecosystem. Those adopting Teams also gain access to Microsoft's AI and application capabilities to improve productivity, reduce costs, and increase revenue.

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About Nemertes: Nemertes is a global research-based advisory and consulting firm that analyzes the business value of emerging technologies. Since 2002, we have provided strategic recommendations based on data-backed operational and business metrics to help enterprise organizations deliver successful technology transformation to employees and customers. Simply put: Nemertes' better data helps clients make better decisions.