

8x8



Digital Transformation with 8x8 Voice for Microsoft Teams



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The next era of modern collaboration, UCaaS and workstream collaborations

In recent years, the cloud has become a major investment area for digital transformation for almost every business. From small to large companies, cloud services transform how businesses operate their IT infrastructure, create better services for customers, and help their employees to be more productive. They also provide significant cost savings, giving companies the ability to leverage new innovations faster and helping them optimize their IT and operations footprint.

Key areas of digital transformation are collaboration and communications services. We all want communications to be convenient. In the past, we used separate physical devices for phone calls, email and chat, and video conferencing. Over time, communications consolidated into a single physical form factor—either as a smartphone or a desktop computer—and productivity apps fused all communications channels, giving birth to unified communications (UC).

Unified communications evolved over many years from unified messaging to real-time communications, from on-premises and legacy-based UC to true unified communications as a service (UCaaS). And beyond simple convenience, productivity is key to the adoption and advantages of UC.

Fact check

Industry analysts predict that by 2023, fewer than 33% of digital workers will work in their physical offices. Assuming this trend continues, by 2024, 75% of in-person meetings will convert to online collaboration and remote work.¹

¹ Source: <https://www.gartner.com/document/3975994?ref=solrAll&refval=260388409>



Cloud communications services changing the way we work and collaborate

The cloud has impacted how we communicate and collaborate, how we exchange information and content, and how we engage with other teams, business partners and customers. UCaaS solutions are intended to improve productivity, availability, and flexibility, and enhance business processes that rely on communications and collaboration.

UCaaS solutions facilitate the use of multiple communications methods and channels such as chat/messaging, voice, telephony, video and web conferencing and content. Additionally, most services support integration with business applications and devices.

Replacing legacy telephony systems with more cost efficient, modern cloud voice service is transforming businesses.

Every vendor approaches telephony services differently, varying in functionality, capabilities, pricing, and global availability. This paper explores the differences and advantages of 8x8 Business Phone (Business Voice) and voice interoperability service with Microsoft Teams.

Fact check

By replacing PBX devices, nearly any business can reduce communications costs. Moving telephony into the cloud provides significant ROI advantages, ranging between 25% to 35% on average within a 15 month period.²

² Source: From Telephony to Real Time Communications in the Digital Age: <https://www.packtpub.com/product/microsoft-lync-2013-unified-communications-from-telephony-to-real-time-communication-in-the-digital-age/9781849685061>



From UCaaS to workstream collaborations

UCaaS improves how individuals, groups, and companies interact. Enterprise UCaaS services range from single-vendor, stand-alone suites to integrated applications and platforms from multiple vendors. UCaaS solutions may extend and add functionality to established communications investments.

Workstream collaboration is the next evolution of UCaaS services, focusing on consistent communications tools such as persistent group chat, coordination and execution teamwork, and project-related activities.

Growing demand for intelligence and automation in modern communications services requires a new approach that provides context and information in every communication. This empowers teams to connect and collaborate while integrating critical business apps knowledge workers use daily. Workstream collaboration solutions integrate a wide set of productivity tools, apps, and persistent communications channels into one single user interface.

Workstream collaboration represents the next generation of UCaaS already available from leading cloud communications service providers, such as 8x8.

Fact check

Industry analysts predict workstream collaboration will be the next generation of UCaaS and more commonly deployed by 2022



The shift in remote and distributed work

In recent years, unified communications grew significantly and replacement of legacy communications systems became a priority for most organizations. Additionally, the **current global situation and COVID-19** pandemic has accelerated the digital transformation to a truly mobile and connected workforce. Currently, over **200 million people are estimated to work remotely worldwide**, and analysts predict companies will increase home and **remote office options by 400% in 2021**. According to a recent Gartner CFO survey, **74% of companies plan to permanently shift to more remote work after COVID-19**. Even in areas of the business such as customer care and contact centers, **80% of customer service and support will be transitioned to work from home**.

These changes are significant for IT departments as they quickly change and adopt this new reality. Many companies not only use one productivity tool, but also provide employees a wider choice of productivity apps and unified communications services from various vendors.

Fact check

Remote work is increasingly important for companies and represents a challenge for IT and operations teams. Cloud communications services can reduce the burden for IT departments and make it easier to provide knowledge workers with cloud communications services.

Business voice's advantage over traditional PBXs

Most traditional PBX systems served organizations well over the years - from an accounting perspective, they were already written off. Although this initially seems like a CapEx advantage, there are many reasons to upgrade from a legacy telephony system to a cloud model that provides cloud native, business voice functionality. Analysts predict that by 2022, about 15% of organizations will have moved their communications completely into the cloud, compared to about 2 to 4% today.³

The longer IT departments keep their legacy system, the greater the risks and costs:

- System outages and unplanned downtime can harm business reputation and profitability
- High upgrade costs are associated with keeping server and legacy environments up-to-date
- Losing ground to competitors with superior communications capabilities
- Inability to replace critical components as dated technology reaches end of life
- Attrition of in-house expertise required to maintain legacy infrastructure

Eliminate disjointed, inefficient multi-vendor communications

Legacy communications systems are composed of separate solutions for essential capabilities—often involving multiple vendors.

For example:

- Point solutions offer little cross-platform integration. As a result, business users encounter inconsistent experiences from one solution to the next and often must enter multiple passwords to access different services.
- The siloed, multi-vendor nature of legacy systems introduces complexity at every turn—from deployment to management, and maintenance to troubleshooting.
- Disconnected communications result in slow response times that erode customer satisfaction, diminish sales, and reduce revenues.
- Vendor lock-in for communications infrastructure results in greater costs over time as components become outdated.

³ Source: <https://www.gartner.com/document/3981480?ref=solrAll&refval=260252258>

The role of Microsoft Office 365, Teams and business voice

Microsoft Teams is a workstream collaboration offering and collaboration platform that combines persistent workplace chat, video meetings, file storage, collaboration on files, and integration of various third-party business applications.

Calling with Microsoft Teams

Aside from team messaging or meeting capabilities, Microsoft Teams can also replace legacy telephony and small PBX systems.

Microsoft supports multiple ways to deliver cloud telephony capabilities, for example **Microsoft 365 Teams Calling plans** or **Microsoft Teams Direct Routing**.

Microsoft 365 Teams Calling Plans

With Microsoft calling plans, customers can choose Office 365 E1 or Office 365 E3 licenses and then add the Microsoft Phone System and Microsoft Calling Plan with an additional monthly subscription to their service.

Customers can also purchase Office 365 E5 and add the Microsoft Calling Plan to their service. Either way, businesses have options for integrating telephony and Business Voice services with Microsoft.

Considerations: This option provides the customer with a Microsoft calling plan. The advantage for customers is that these calling plans can be purchased from Microsoft or a licensed business partner and integrator. However, Microsoft Calling Plans have limited global availability, expensive pricing, lack enterprise telephony features, and telephony SLAs.

Microsoft Teams Direct Routing

Microsoft Direct Routing integrates Microsoft Phone Systems for Teams with a telecommunication service of their choice for Business Voice capabilities. The advantage is that customers can keep their phone numbers and do not have to port these number plans into the Microsoft cloud.

Considerations: This option fully embeds telephony inside the Microsoft Teams app, desktop, or mobile through the Microsoft Teams native dialer. It enables native use of features such as ring groups, calling queues, call forwarding, and voicemail. There is no additional end user training with this approach and it is the most cost-effective solution for mid-market organizations and large enterprises.

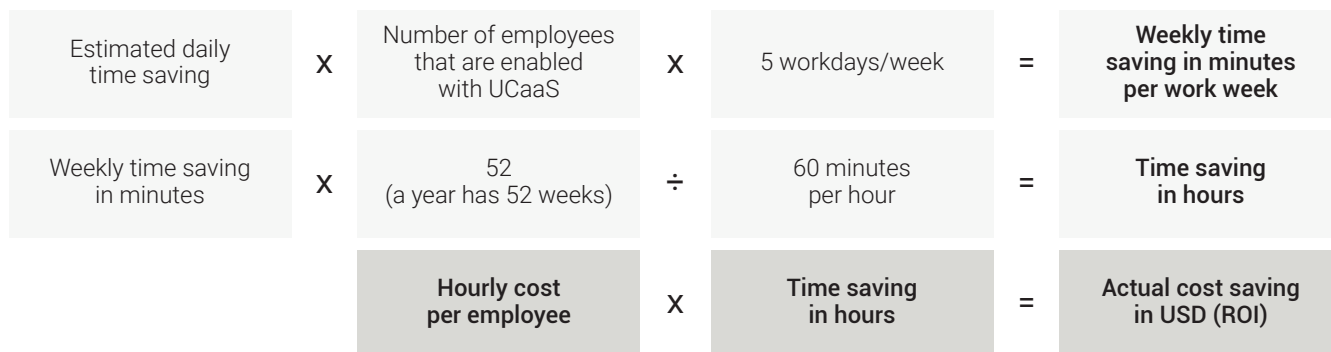
Microsoft Teams and bots

Apps and bots are additional options for calling from Microsoft Teams. These solutions are not recommended since they use an app or bot for outbound calling and require Teams for inbound calling. Additional end user commands must instruct the bot to initiate Teams calls or join meetings with Microsoft Teams, disrupting the regular Teams workflow.

Considerations: This option is not recommended by Microsoft as it impacts the Teams user experience and adds risk and complexity in multiple client-type environments. The end result is confused users and extra IT support desk calls.

Cost saving, TCO and ROI considerations for UCaaS and business voice

The cloud provides a great opportunity for companies to convert from a CapEx to an OpEx model and optimize infrastructure resources and communications services. The total cost of ownership for cloud communications services is demonstrably lower compared with traditional PBX systems. Additionally, UCaaS boosts the efficiency of employees and saves time and effort, resulting in a positive ROI in a matter of months. Companies use this calculation to estimate the ROI of moving to cloud communications:



Of course, the formula above is simplified, but can help organizations establish target cost savings and ROI.

Other considerations to improve TCO and ROI with cloud-based business voice:

OpEx vs. CapEx. An on-premises solution is a CapEx-heavy model, where a large upfront amount is spent to deploy the solution. Even in this approach, there are regular maintenance costs to consider that are paid over multiple years. Costs typically increase as the on-premises telephony services require additional maintenance.

Simpler infrastructure: IT managers no longer need to manage a telecom infrastructure on premises, which typically requires infrastructure investments in SBCs (Session Border Controller) and other equipment and networking services along with retaining specialized resources to implement and manage. Total cost of ownership (TCO) is significantly lower for customers because cloud service providers own and manage all required infrastructure.

Employees save time and effort with UCaaS services. Keeping a remote workforce connected is key and mobile-enabled workers are saving several hours per week with voice calling from their devices and apps. Another factor, improved voice quality, provides an estimated 40 minutes per week additional time from higher call quality.⁴

Improved and integrated voice communication increases efficiency. Cloud Voice helps employees connect more efficiently internally, with customers, and with business partners. This increases sales, reduces time-to-market, and improves decision making. Forrester research estimates that breaking down communication silos leads to additional sales and revenue.

Replacement of legacy systems reduces cost and maintenance. The cloud reduces costs compared with legacy telephony solutions in many areas, including the cost of annual maintenance and support, replacing end-of-life equipment, buying hardware for new offices, and providing IT support.

Scalability. Scalable UCaaS solutions ensure businesses avoid buying unnecessary capacity. Since billing is pay-as-you-go or on a per-user basis, it is easy to adjust for spikes without having to purchase annual licenses. This way, the demand is easily met by adding the right capacity and then scaling down as needed.

Decreased telecommunication usage costs. Global routing capabilities and other cost advantages of UCaaS services reduce the overall cost of domestic and international calling.

⁴ Source: From Telephony to Real Time Communications in the Digital Age: <https://www.packtpub.com/product/microsoft-lync-2013-unified-communications-from-telephony-to-real-time-communication-in-the-digital-age/9781849685061>



Choices for company-wide collaboration and business voice service, the 8x8 X Series

8x8 is an award-winning cloud communications services provider for businesses of all sizes. With over 220 patents and counting, 8x8 is dedicated to developing innovative solutions that help businesses work simply and perform reliably on a global scale.

8x8 offers a wide portfolio of UCaaS services including business voice (8x8 Business Phone), team messaging, meetings, voice conferencing, and more. The 8x8 X Series is the core of 8x8's UCaaS offering and includes a cloud native business voice phone system with a wide set of enterprise telephony features from intelligent call handling and call management to easy administration and advanced analytics.





8x8, better voice communications for Microsoft Teams

When companies standardize employee communications on Microsoft Teams, users can make and receive phone calls directly from the Teams user interface. After all, they already spend a large part of their day in Teams collaborating and getting work done. This can be simple. But like all technology choices, the complexity is in the details.

Here are some key questions to consider when adding voice capabilities for Teams:

1. What kind of telephony coverage is required?
2. How many offices, subsidiaries are required to connect to Business Voice? And what are their geographical locations?
3. Are there any additional requirements regarding regulatory compliance or data privacy? (especially in some geographical regions and vertical industries)
4. How many users will require business voice for Microsoft Teams?
5. Will these users require training?
6. In addition to Microsoft Teams, is there also a contact center in use?

When enterprises standardize on Microsoft Office 365, they should consider optimizing ROI by adopting 8x8 Voice for Microsoft Teams, which enhances Microsoft Teams with enterprise PBX features, 3rd party integrations with popular business applications, and a global PSTN footprint with unlimited calling plans.

The advantage of 8x8 Voice + Microsoft Teams

8x8 Voice for Microsoft Teams is an enterprise-grade cloud-to-cloud direct routing integration specifically for enabling the Microsoft Phone System, providing enterprise-grade telephony and global PSTN connectivity to customers.

Organizations using 8x8 Voice for Microsoft Teams benefit from:

- **Global PSTN access for your Microsoft Teams** users without changing the user experience
- **Full PSTN access for Microsoft Teams** in 41 countries, toll free & DID numbers in 120+ countries
- **Unlimited calling plans** in up to 47 countries
- **A native contact center** solution that integrates with Microsoft Teams: With 8x8, there is no need to look for a separate contact center solution. Contact center agents can make and receive calls within Microsoft Teams while leveraging all of 8x8's Contact Center capabilities including omni-channel interactions, workforce engagement management, and robust analytics.
- **Native business application integrations:** 8x8 has native integrations with 25+ business applications, including several CRM applications such as Salesforce.
- **Analytics:** 8x8 analytics provides key insights into Microsoft Teams calls made on the 8x8 platform, identifies key trends across employees, teams, and the company, understands call patterns and customer behavior with speech analytics, makes instant, impactful changes using real-time data to drive decisions and evaluate and playback all business calls using one comprehensive analytics suite.

Unlike other vendors, 8x8 allows your Teams users to make and receive calls without altering their user experience in any way and by continuing to use the same Teams apps, whether they are web, desktop or mobile. The integration is simple: customers select licensing bundles from Microsoft and 8x8 with just a few clicks, enabling Microsoft Teams for cloud telephony and dialing using the 8x8 cloud communications platform.



Figure 1 The 8x8 Business Phone integration, including 8x8 service portfolio for Microsoft Teams

8x8 provides an integrated administrative interface for all configurations. The configuration for Teams users can be easily accomplished in the 8x8 admin portal and requires only a few easy steps - meaning Teams users can begin taking calls on the 8x8 network without a complex setup.

Licensing Requirements for 8x8 Voice for Microsoft Teams

To enable the calling feature in Microsoft Teams, companies need one of the following SKUs in addition to their existing Office 365 license:

- Microsoft E1/E3 or A1/A3 license with Phone System add-on
- Microsoft E5 license (no add-on required)
- Microsoft 365 Business Voice (without calling plan)⁵

To enable the 8x8 Business Phone integration with MS Teams, users need an 8x8 X series license

As an add-on SKU to Microsoft Teams, companies must have a valid 8x8 X Series user subscription package and enable every user to retain all the features and capabilities of the underlying X Series package.

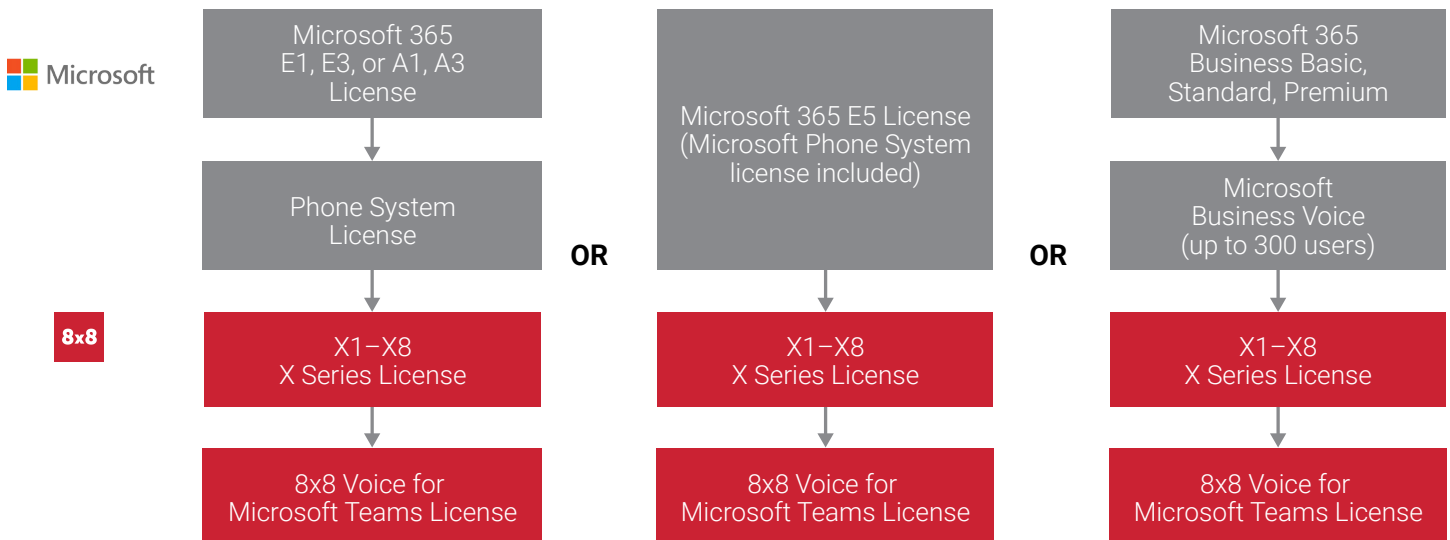


Figure 2 Microsoft 365 and 8x8 Licenses

⁵ *Microsoft 365 Business Voice SKU is typically sold to SMB customers



Conclusion

Telephony is a business-critical tool, especially in today's uncertain environment. IT pros need to accelerate PSTN calling to Teams users while ensuring the deployment is de-risked.

However, direct routing with Microsoft Teams can get complicated, depending on your preferred approach. Deploying 8x8 Voice for Microsoft Teams takes less than two days with no Teams service interruption.

Allocating limited IT resources to port phone numbers or even replace old phones is no longer necessary. Admins assign 8x8 calling abilities to users, either through bulk upload or individually from a simple interface, making the entire PSTN call provisioning process for Teams quick and easy.

8x8 Voice for Microsoft Teams gives IT pros everything needed to enable global PSTN calling from Teams.

It is a risk-free solution driving deeper Teams adoption and removing the ongoing management complexities of a direct routing communications infrastructure.

For more information, call **1.866.879.8647** or visit **8x8.com**.

8x8

8x8, Inc. (NYSE: EGHT) is transforming the future of business communications as a leading Software-as-a-Service provider of voice, video, chat, contact center and enterprise-class API solutions powered by one global cloud communications platform. 8x8 empowers workforces worldwide to connect individuals and teams so they can collaborate faster and work smarter. Real-time analytics and intelligence provide businesses unique insights across all interactions and channels so they can delight end-customers and accelerate their business. For additional information, visit www.8x8.com, or follow 8x8 on LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook.

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