



The Ultimate Microsoft Teams Calling and Direct Routing Buyer's Guide

Introduction

There are several options available to enhance the end-user experience when connecting Teams to a PBX (phone system) or calling platform through direct routing. You may wish to:

- ✓ Do it yourself—by hosting SBCs and connecting to your carrier
- ✓ Use a cloud service that provides SBCs, support and carrier connectivity
- ✓ Use Microsoft Calling plans natively in Teams (integrated Direct Routing)

The question then becomes: which is the right option for your business?

This buyer's guide will help you determine the best solution for your organization—by looking at key factors including pricing, service availability, ease of management, and support.



Benefits of Using Direct Routing in Microsoft Teams

When you use Direct Routing in Teams, your business can enjoy multiple benefits including:

- ✓ An excellent user experience in which users can make and receive calls directly from the Teams client on their computer, mobile or desk phone
- ✓ The ability to bring your own carrier, leveraging existing contracts for SIP trunks or PRI circuits under contract
- ✓ MS Team PBX offers standard (less advanced) telephony features with the capability to add 3rd-party integrations for your specific needs such as call recording, SMS or faxing
- ✓ No cross-launch of 3rd-party UC Clients
- ✓ Easy integration to your existing PBX—giving you advanced telephony features and an intuitive, integrated client experience*

** Requires every user to have the Microsoft Phone System or E5 license, potentially adding costs to your UC licensing*

Overview of Microsoft Teams

There are many advantages to using Microsoft Teams. This section highlights those advantages, as well as a few limitations.

Pros	Cons
✓ Includes full integration to Office suite, enabling collaboration on documents (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) directly within the Teams client	✗ Not all administrative functions can be done directly through the Admin interface; some require using PowerShell, which is not simple for less-advanced administrators
✓ Integration to SharePoint and OneDrive enables easy sharing and storage of working documents directly in your Teams chats and channels	✗ Microsoft Calling plans are not competitively priced*
✓ Microsoft Phone System provides all the basics of telephony without the added complexity; advanced features currently in use should be evaluated to see if they are still necessary or nice-to-haves**	✗ Not as feature-rich as other PBX systems, and does not have a native contact center solution***

* As such, if you require PSTN, then setting up your own infrastructure or buying from a hassle-free provider like Stack8 is a must.

** Clients may opt for a hybrid environment where users with basic telephony needs are on Microsoft Teams, while advanced telephony users could be on another UCaaS solution.

***A 3rd-party CCaaS solution would be necessary for advanced requirements.

Calling Plans

Calling plans are needed to make or receive calls to your Teams client or telephone from someone outside your organization (if they are not using Teams).

However, Microsoft Calling plans are expensive and not competitive for businesses with more than a small number of users. For example, organizations with more than 100 users will find it difficult to justify the cost. Moreover, Microsoft does not provide numbers for all countries and regions.

If you do invest in a Microsoft Calling plan, please note:

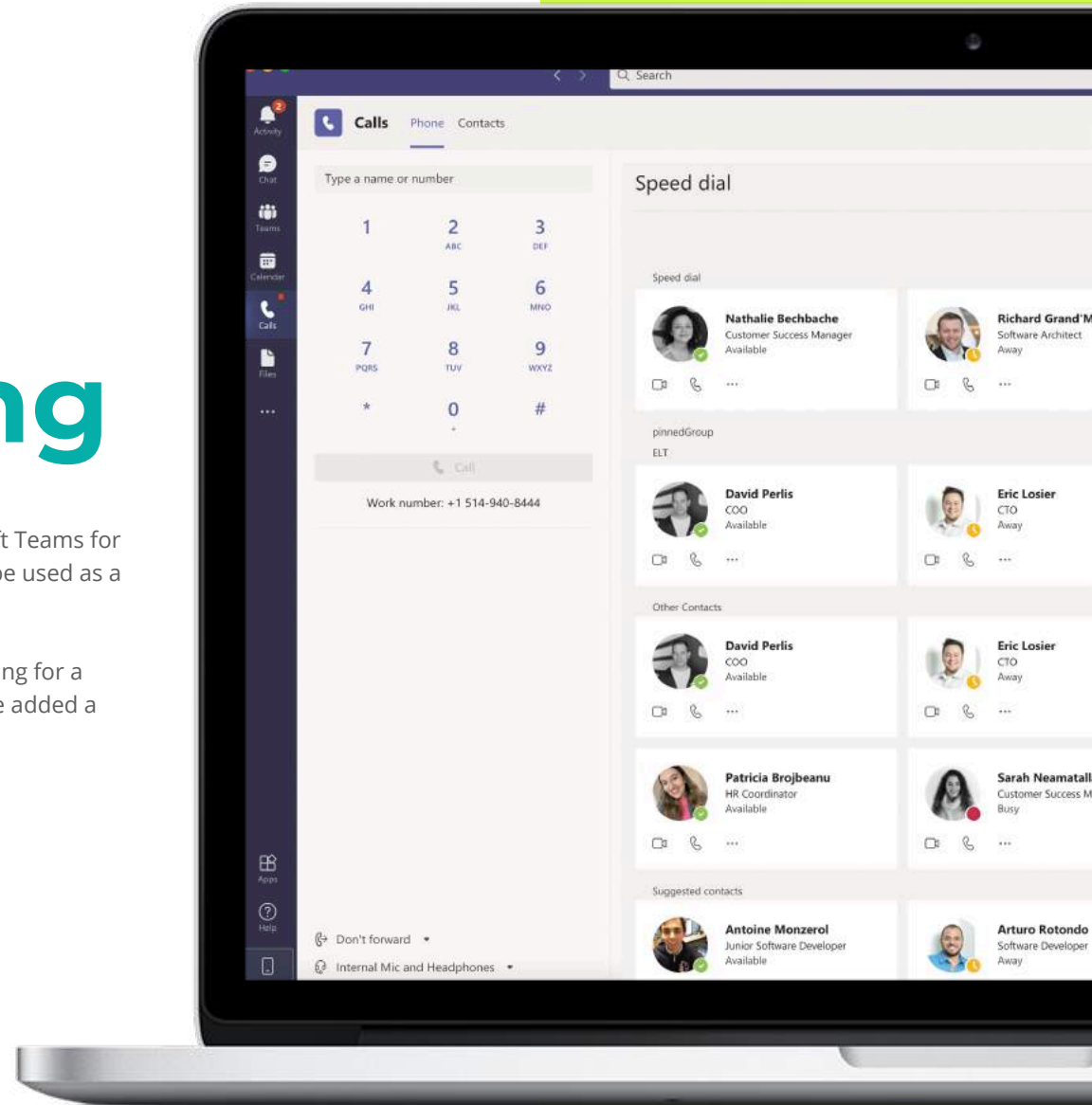
- ▶ You need to buy the same E5 or Phone System license when using Microsoft Calling plans or Direct Routing to another service.
- ▶ You do not need to acquire or support your own SBC (the device that controls your Phone System signaling). However, that will only make financial sense for deployments of about 50 users or less. It will quickly become more costly for larger deployments.
- ▶ Native DID management does not exist within a Microsoft Phone System or many 3rd-party offers, leaving customers to figure out how to manage vast phone number lists across multiple users and locations. This presents an incredibly challenging task.



Direct Routing

Direct Routing allows for an enhanced user experience within Microsoft Teams for PSTN Calling (the ability to make and receive outside calls). It can also be used as a method to enable your Microsoft Phone System to make PSTN calls.

You need the same E5 or Phone System license for Direct Routing if using for a better user experience with Calling through another PBX, or if you have added a phone plan or carrier to Microsoft Teams.



Recommendations for Various Deployments

What type of deployment is best for your organization?

Here are a few use cases, including pros and cons to help guide your decision.

Deployment Type	Description	Pros	Cons
Microsoft Calling Plans	Best suited for SMBs	✓ Simple solution without the need to invest in SBCs or carrier contracts	✗ Offers limited functionality, not cost-effective
Direct connect from a carrier	Certain carriers have partnered with Microsoft to offer easy setup within your Office 365 tenant	✓ Simple administration and ability to add carrier quickly	✗ Limited to select carriers, so there is limited choice and functionality
Build your own	Create your own infrastructure, setup your SBCs and carrier connections	✓ Flexibility and ability to take advantage of SBC advanced functionality	✗ Requires 24/7 support staff with experience in SBC management, carrier contracts, and management; and is less user-friendly for IT admins
Buy packaged solutions	Buy solutions including SBC, PSTN connectivity and ideally a tool for administrative tasks	✓ Costs can be lower than doing it yourself due to scale and no hassles; added bonus if the provider offers a tool for managing users and numbers	✗ You may need to switch carriers, which can be a hassle if not handled by the new provider

Conclusion

Microsoft has become a real player in the cloud communications space—and through Microsoft Teams, you have numerous ways to enable your users to make and receive calls.

Direct Routing offers the best end-user experience from the desktop, but has some limitations compared to other UCaaS providers.

Your organization should evaluate your actual needs versus the features you have used in the past, to validate whether this option can be used for all or even a subset of your users.

Once a decision to use Microsoft has been made, your business must then decide if you want a hassle-free solution managed by a 3rd-party provider, or if you have the expertise to build your own solution. Regardless, ensure you fully evaluate your needs and ongoing support and maintenance costs before proceeding with your decision.

References

<https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoftteams/calling-plans-for-office-365>

<https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoftteams/direct-routing-plan>

<https://techcommunity.microsoft.com/t5/microsoft-teams-blog/introducing-operator-connect-and-more-teams-calling-updates/ba-p/2176398>





Unified Communications without the hassle

info@stack8.com | +1 888 940 1480