RingCentral

EBOOK

Bringing better telephony into Microsoft Teams

Why three organisations chose to integrate UCaaS telephony into MS Teams
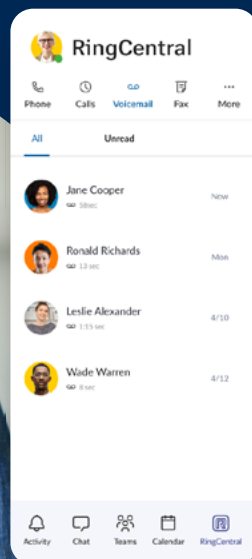
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The missing feature in Microsoft Teams

Now used by over 280 million[1] people globally every month, Microsoft Teams has changed how entire organisations collaborate and has become vital to their productivity and connections.

Despite its popularity, though, Microsoft Teams still lacks a mission-critical feature: enterprise-grade telephony. The built-in telephony isn't included in most Teams packages, and even when purchased as a separate add-on, it comes with a number of limitations in geographic coverage, PBX functionality, and feature set.

To overcome these issues, many organisations turn to telephony offered by Unified Communications as a Service (UCaaS) providers, which can be integrated into Microsoft Teams. In fact, more than 80% of Microsoft Teams' users who have telephony enabled, use third-party solutions.[2]
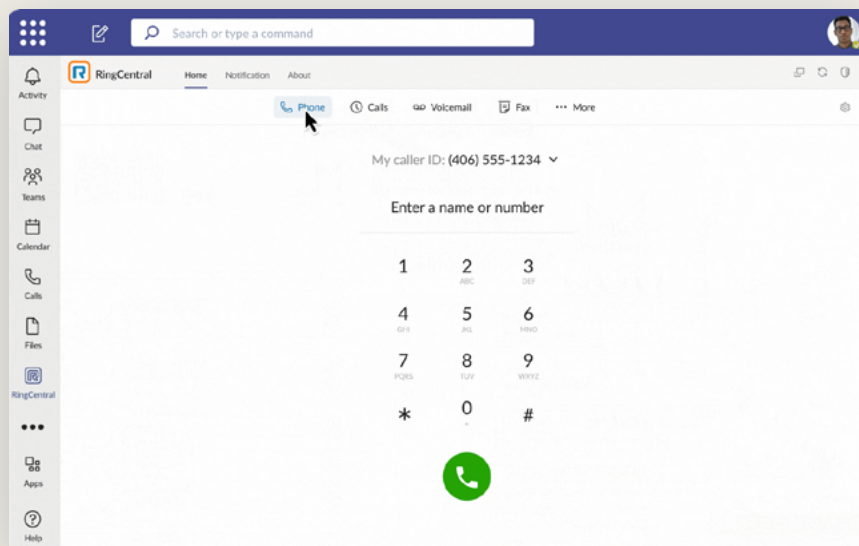
[1] HTTPS://WWW.UCTODAY.COM/UNIFIED-COMMUNICATIONS/MICROSOFT-TEAMS-MONTHLY-USERS-HITS-280-MILLION
[2] CAVELL REPORT: WHY THIRD-PARTY TEAMS TELEPHONY SOLUTIONS LEAD THE MARKET, 2023

Why choose a UCaaS provider?

By integrating Microsoft Teams with a dedicated UCaaS provider, you can maintain your existing UCaaS services, while allowing users to place calls through the Microsoft Teams app. Typically, this involves using a Microsoft Teams plug-in that routes PSTN calls through the UCaaS provider, and gives users access to a full set of UCaaS features.

Research by Metrigy[3] surveyed 396 end-user organisations in North America, Europe, Asia and Australia, to find out the benefits of this approach. Here's what they found:

Lower costs

It costs companies less to use a UCaaS provider for integrated Teams calling. On average, the Teams phone system costs £1,139 per-user, per-year for things like licences, end-user support and training, compared to the industry average of £910 for a UCaaS provider. It's easy to see how the savings quickly add up.

Greater reliability

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Communications expertise

Research by Cavell Group[4] highlighted Microsoft's lack of communications expertise as another disadvantage of using Teams telephony. Microsoft doesn't have a background in the communications industry, so has had to bring in outside help to manage customer requirements that fall outside the

firm's traditional business units. As a result, it's only recently started offering capabilities like number porting, provisioning, and management as part of its support. Consequently, many organisations prefer to get help from UCaaS providers who specialise in telephony capabilities.

Intuitive Teams experience

By integrating UCaaS natively into Teams, employees can enjoy the same Teams interface they've been using with no additional downloads, plugins or training required. You get the best of Teams and your dedicated UCaaS platform in one app, improving productivity and making adoption simple.

App integrations

If you only use the Teams phone system, you may find that you have to rewrite any custom integrations with apps like your CRM (e.g. Salesforce), your help desk and other business apps. By contrast, UCaaS providers can often accommodate custom integrations with no problem.

Global coverage

Teams currently only provides full carrier capabilities for 33 countries, whereas UCaaS providers typically offer support for more than 40 countries and also offer broader global support for freephone calling.

Innovative calling features

UCaaS providers often include more calling features than Teams, including:

- Fax services
- Call controls
- Integrated voice response (IVR)
- Call handling
- Automatic call recording
- Call queues
- Advanced reporting and analytics
- Integrations with third-party CRM and IT service management apps to enable click-to-call and automated updating of records.

Advanced analytics

UCaaS providers usually have advanced analytics built-in, which allow IT and business leaders to gain insights into call performance and use of apps. In contrast, to get the same business intelligence in Teams, you may need to invest in third-party integrations.

Integrated call centre services

Microsoft offers call centre integration with its Dynamics 365 CRM platform, but that's it. If you want or need more, you will have to rely on third-party integrations. However, most UCaaS providers offer fully integrated call centre capabilities for inbound and outbound calls, omnichannel customer support, and even artificial intelligence (AI) for optimised call routing and customer interactions.

Read on to discover how three very different organisations realised some of these benefits by integrating UCaaS telephony into Teams.

Howard Kennedy goes from seven apps to one

BUSINESS TYPE:

Legal

EMPLOYEES:

400

LOCATION:

London, UK

WEBSITE:

howardkennedy.com

About Howard Kennedy

Having been a trusted provider of legal services in England for a century, Howard Kennedy has built up one of the industry's most wide-ranging practices. It offers expertise in everything from real estate and corporate law, to entertainment legal counsel. The firm advises on projects all over the world, and in recent years has gone through a rapid expansion phase, growing its staff to over 400.

Bottom line

Howard Kennedy's ailing on-premises telephony system was a barrier to productive remote working. Despite trying to improve things by adding a softphone to this solution, major issues remained. Implementing Microsoft Teams during the pandemic improved online collaboration but didn't resolve problems with calling, so the firm opted to add RingCentral Cloud PBX for Teams. It now has a more resilient communications solution, and employees have everything they need in one place.

Challenge

One of Howard Kennedy's key objectives was to ensure staff could work from anywhere as it grew. But this wasn't feasible with its existing on-premises telephony system. Despite introducing a softphone to its initial solution, this only connected calls to company-issued laptops and not to employees' mobiles. Staff had to manually forward calls and regularly call to check their voicemail. Those that didn't have a company-issued mobile had to expose their mobile numbers

(which could have become a privacy nightmare.)

Soon after the global pandemic, the firm rolled-out Microsoft Teams to support newly remote workers. While Teams met their immediate needs in terms of online collaboration, the telephony capabilities left many pre-existing needs unaddressed. Applications were everywhere. Employees had one for voicemail, another for conferencing and even one for fax-to-email services. This meant that workers were switching between up to seven different applications.

Solution

Howard Kennedy's IT team worked closely with their IT service and solutions partner Bytes, to find the right solution for their firm – and the verdict was clear:

"We looked at the leading providers in the industry, and RingCentral presented the strongest overall offering," says Jonathan Freedman, Chief Information Security & Technology Officer for Howard Kennedy. "RingCentral Cloud PBX for Teams integrated effortlessly into our Microsoft Teams environment. On top of this, RingCentral had 99.999% availability and a solid reputation for business telephony."

"But what really made the difference for us was that we could finally consolidate all of our communication solutions... audio conferencing, video calls, fax, phone... into one platform that enabled our colleagues to work from anywhere. RingCentral gave us everything we needed in one place."

Howard Kennedy's senior leadership team is thrilled to see their staff now able to communicate and collaborate with clients and each other from a single, user-friendly platform that works from anywhere. And as Jonathan points out, RingCentral is providing many operational benefits:

"For the first time, our employees are able to use the same number for phone and fax," he explains. "That was a huge win because it makes things so much more convenient for our staff and clients than having to maintain separate numbers."

The firm also now has a highly resilient communications backup solution for the first time. "With RingCentral, we don't need to worry about a problem with a PBX taking down phone service to the whole firm or manual business continuity processes," Jonathan explains. "Even if our Microsoft Teams environment goes down, colleagues can easily switch to the RingCentral apps on their company issued laptops or mobile devices."
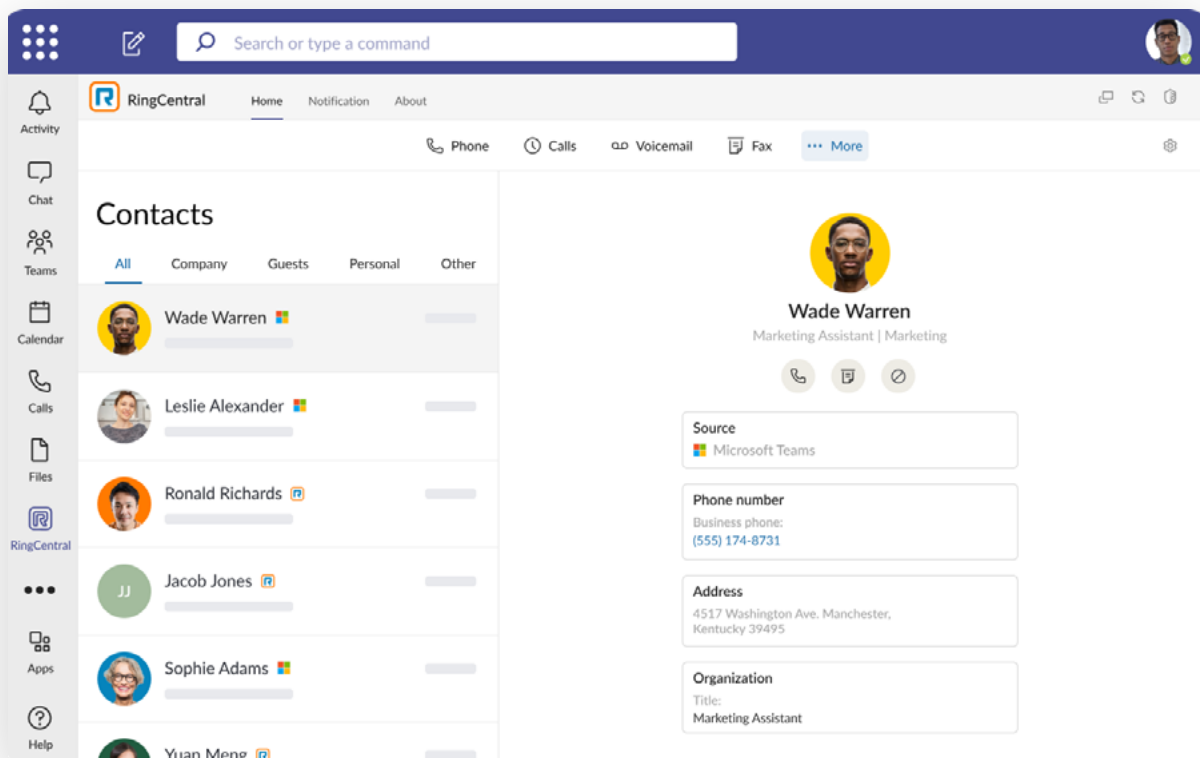
Haysmacintyre simplifies workflows

haysmacintyre

BUSINESS TYPE:

Accounting

EMPLOYEES:

420

LOCATION:

London, UK

WEBSITE:

haysmacintyre.com

About Haysmacintyre

Haysmacintyre is a multi-award-winning full-service firm of chartered accountants and tax advisors. Accountancy Age ranked it 24th on its list of the Top 50 accounting practices in the UK based on total UK fee income.

Bottom line

As an early adopter of Microsoft Teams, haysmacintyre's remote teams were collaborating well through meetings, messaging and internal dialling. But for external calling, the firm was still reliant on a legacy phone system and this frustrated staff. By switching to RingCentral Cloud PBX for Teams, the business has improved workflows and enhanced the reliability and flexibility of its communications tools.

Challenge

Haysmacintyre had always taken a forward-looking approach to technology and moved its old systems to Microsoft Teams long before the pandemic. While Teams was great for most things (meetings, messaging and internal dialling) it wasn't hitting the spot for external phone calls.

"Everyone had to deal with two communications platforms: Teams and the legacy telephony system," explains Simon Bulleyment, CIO at haysmacintyre. "I knew this was frustrating for our staff because I kept hearing, 'Simon, when are we going to be able to do external calling in Teams?'"

Solution

Haysmacintyre's long-time IT partner, CDW, recommended embedding RingCentral's cloud-phone functionality directly into the Microsoft Teams environment. Simon recalls what attracted them to RingCentral:

"We did our own research and quickly understood why RingCentral would be the best fit. The company has huge-name corporate customers all over the world and everything we heard and read suggested RingCentral has outstanding support and truly treats its customers like partners. Plus RingCentral tops the Gartner Magic Quadrant for unified communications and provides the industry's highest SLA – 99.999%".

Haysmacintyre rolled out RingCentral Cloud PBX for Microsoft Teams which let employees make and receive business phone calls using the normal Teams 'calls' functionality. This has enhanced productivity:

"Now it's all in our Teams apps: cloud phone service, messaging and meetings. We can even retrieve voicemail within the Teams environment, so it really is fully integrated, and it's making everyone's lives much easier," Simon explains.

The firm also created additional workflow improvements using an integration with RingCentral partner, Bridge Communications. "When our clients call, we prefer they reach a real person, not an automated menu," explains Simon. "So, we added the Bridge Operator Console, which helps a great deal with intelligent call routing."

"The app bolts in beautifully with RingCentral and Teams. When our receptionist is speaking with a client and needs to route the call, she's already in Teams, so she can see everyone's availability status. Even better, if an employee is out, she can see that person's out-of-office message, which often has details about the right colleagues to speak with if they're away."

Overall, RingCentral Cloud PBX for Microsoft Teams has given haysmacintyre the flexibility and reliability that it's never had before, as Simon explains:

"With RingCentral integrated into our Teams environment, we finally have a true SaaS telephony solution that our staff can use anywhere... and that we have to worry about precisely never."
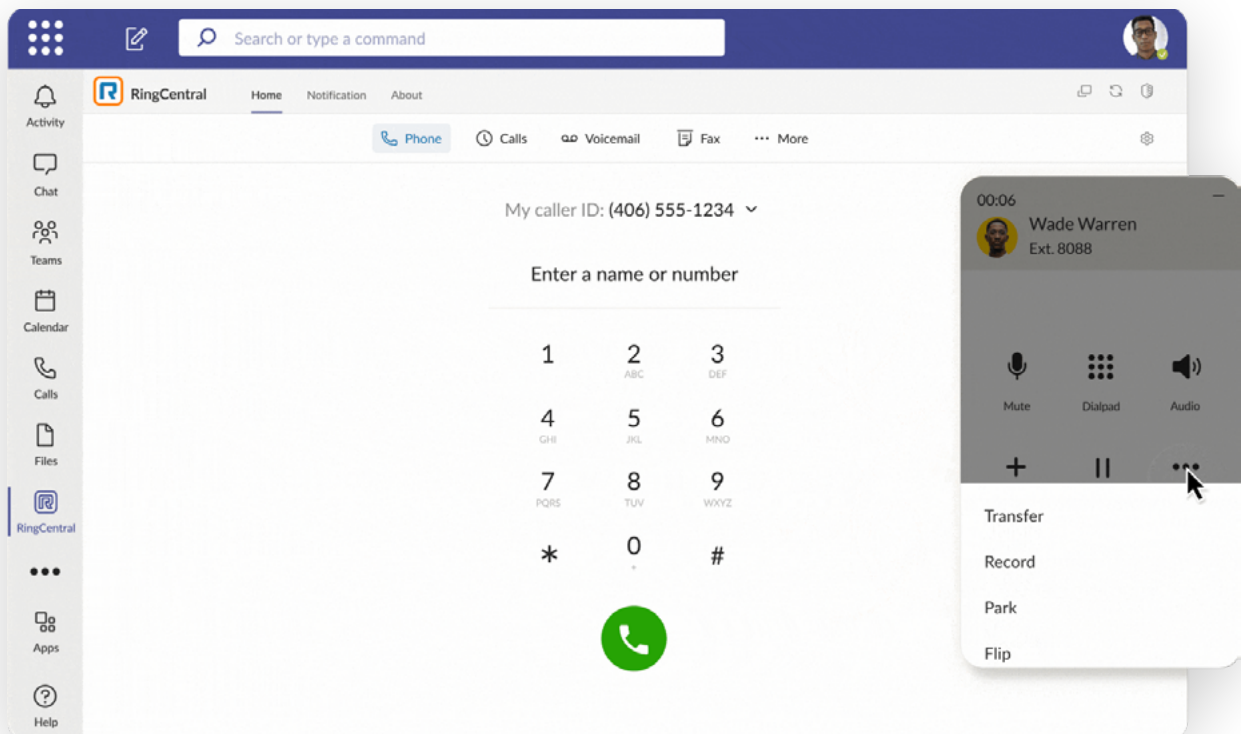
FE fundinfo rationalises systems and saves money

FE fundinfo

BUSINESS TYPE:	**LOCATION:**
Financial services	London, UK
EMPLOYEES:	**WEBSITE:**
900+	FEfundinfo.com

About FE fundinfo

FE fundinfo is a multi-award-winning financial data and technology company. Through its intelligent investment research software and centralised, global information marketplace, it provides reliable fund data to financial advisers, asset managers, banks and insurance firms.

Bottom line

Having inherited multiple legacy phone systems and costly service contracts with telecoms carriers all over the world, FE fundinfo needed to rationalise its systems and better connect its global workforce. Microsoft Teams took the firm so far, but didn't meet its requirements for international calling and intelligent IVR. By adding the RingCentral Cloud PBX integration for Microsoft Teams, FE fundinfo now has a single telephony provider and has saved money on carrier fees and international calling.

Challenge

Following a merger in 2019, which brought together teams from all over the world, FE fundinfo didn't have the means to connect its offices or enable employees to communicate with clients simply.

This was a problem because thousands of its customers rely on its tools and information marketplace to make smart investment decisions for their clients every day. On top of this, the firm inherited legacy phone systems and service contracts with local telecom carriers everywhere. This was racking up costs because they were serving small local satellite offices.

When the pandemic hit, the goal to connect the firm's global workforce became more urgent and so it quickly adopted Microsoft Teams to enable messaging and simple collaboration across territories. However, the team still needed a solution for international phone services and capabilities like an intelligent IVR. With a large presence in India, the business also needed a provider to support them in this market.

Solution

After thoroughly researching the industry, FE fundinfo discovered RingCentral Cloud PBX for Microsoft Teams. The benefits it brought were significant, as Thomas Fuhrmann, Head of Infrastructure Projects at FE fundinfo explains:

"We know having that local presence in each country makes calling more reliable, and we also can see the cost savings we are making on international calling. We've consolidated all our phone systems down to a single provider, we're no longer paying crazy carrier fees to deliver phone service to smaller offices, and we know exactly how much it's going to cost us to add a new user."

Because the solution integrated into an existing, familiar app, the onboarding process was simple and meant that employees adopted it quickly: "people just popped open their Teams app and started using the RingCentral widget for their calls", says Thomas. He says it will also make setting up the telecoms for any new offices straightforward too: "We can manage it all from the cloud."

Finally, Thomas notes that having RingCentral available to the company's staff all over the world is also helping each department improve their telephony operations.
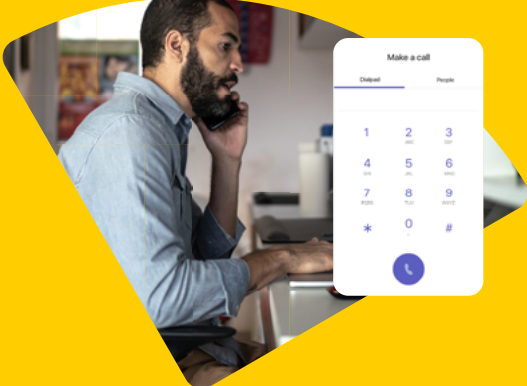
"It's so easy for a manager in any department to configure and update their automated phone menu or call queue through the online portal, without having to wait for IT. That's allowing each group to customise their own phone system, which means providing a better customer experience."

Making the right call

If your organisation is using Microsoft Teams but finding that its phone capabilities are falling short, don't panic – there are plenty of options out there. Integrating UCaaS telephony into Teams can be a good way to go, because you can benefit from lower costs, greater reliability and global coverage – without having to leave the familiar Teams interface.

With RingCentral for Microsoft Teams, here's a snapshot of what you'll get:

- Simplified administration (a three-step process) which enables you to push the integration to all, or some, of your users. No downloads or separate desktop apps required.

- Powerful phone capabilities without the need for a Teams calling licence, including call queues, easy call handling and forwarding, automatic or on-demand call recordings.

- Unmatched reliability. Our 99.999% uptime guarantee equates to less than 6 minutes of downtime per year. And even if Teams is down, you will still be able to access RingCentral phone through a browser or the RingCentral app.

- Insights with no added cost. RingCentral Analytics is an industry-leading UCaaS analytics solution, with real-time quality-of-service reporting, customisable templates, and easy sharing. It's easy to set up and you don't need any additional licences.

- Integrations and APIs to simplify workflows. RingCentral's app integrations and developer platform offer no-code, low-code, and pro-code options to customise your RingCentral experience.

See RingCentral for Microsoft Teams in action.

About RingCentral

RingCentral, Inc. (NYSE: RNG) is a leading provider of business cloud communications and contact centre solutions based on its Message Video Phone™ (MVP™) global platform. More flexible and cost effective than the on-premises PBX and video conferencing systems it replaces, RingCentral helps employees communicate across devices from wherever they are. RingCentral offers three key products. RingCentral MVP™ combines team messaging, video meetings, internet phone and other functionalities in a single interface. RingCentral Video™, along with its team messaging feature, enables Smart Video Meetings™. RingCentral Contact Centre™ gives companies the tools they need to connect with customers across channels. These are available on an open platform that integrates with hundreds of third-party apps and makes it simple to customise workflows. RingCentral is headquartered in Belmont, California, USA, and has offices around the world.

For more information, please contact one of our solution experts. Visit ringcentral.com/gb/en/ or call 0800 098 8136.