



Microsoft Teams Phone Buyer's Guide

How to choose the right external communications
integrations for Microsoft Teams

About this guide

If you're reading this guide, your organization probably relies on Microsoft Teams as a central hub for collaboration and communication. You may be evaluating how to replace a legacy phone system or extend Teams into your contact center. Regardless of where you are in your Teams journey, it's important to understand the full range of options for enabling enterprise calling with Teams Phone. Many organizations exploring Teams telephony are still unfamiliar with the different public switched telephone network (PSTN) connectivity paths available.

This concise guide breaks down the PSTN integration options for Microsoft Teams. It gives you the pros and cons of each choice, helping you stay focused on the goal: adding voice to Microsoft Teams in a way that scales with your business. Since voice services are mission-critical, it pays to plan ahead and choose a partner that can help you navigate the complexity and build for the long term.

What's inside

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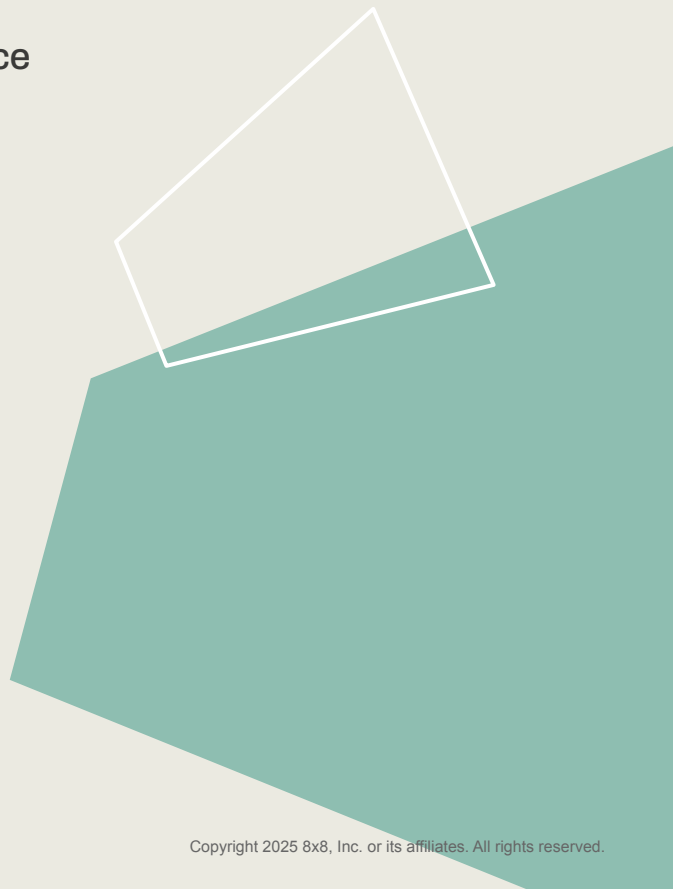
PSTN Calling with Microsoft Teams

Keep employees connected to customers and colleagues from one place

Many organizations overlook PSTN calling when evaluating Microsoft Teams.

It allows employees and contact center agents to stay connected by placing and receiving calls directly in Teams, without switching apps.

Since many employees already spend most of their day in Teams, enabling voice inside the same workspace helps reduce friction and keep conversations flowing with customers and coworkers outside the organization.



Microsoft Teams dominates collaboration, but telephony adoption lags

According to the *Cavell 2024 Q4 Microsoft Report for Service Providers*, Microsoft Teams has ~**320 million global users**, yet only ~20 million have enabled telephony via Calling Plans, Direct Routing, Operator Connect, or Teams Phone Mobile.

Why Teams Phone adoption remains limited

Many organizations hesitate to deploy Teams Phone due to **complexity, cost, and deployment flexibility**.

- **Limited Adoption:** Fewer than 1 in 10 Teams users have enabled PSTN calling.
- **Shifting Deployment Models:** Direct Routing still dominates, but Operator Connect is gaining ground fast.
- **Operator Connect Momentum:** Expected to lead new deployments in mature markets by 2027-2028.

Key considerations for IT buyers

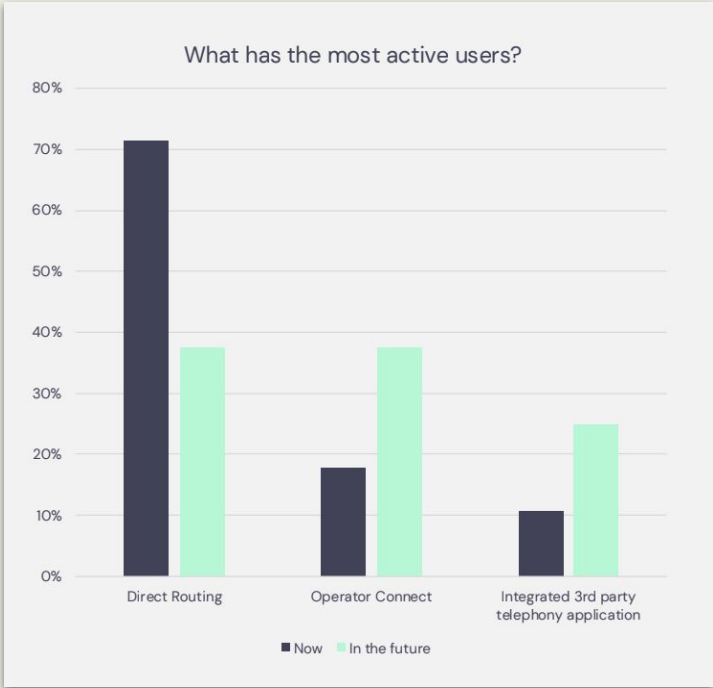
- **Simplicity vs. Control:** Operator Connect streamlines provisioning; Direct Routing offers more customization.
- **Global Coverage:** Not all PSTN options support full international reach.
- **Future-Proofing:** A hybrid of Direct Routing and Operator Connect balances automation with flexibility.

Opportunity

Microsoft Teams is a leader in collaboration, but the majority of its users still lack native telephony. Integrating PSTN into Teams represents a major business opportunity. - Cavell

Microsoft Teams Phone Connectivity Trends

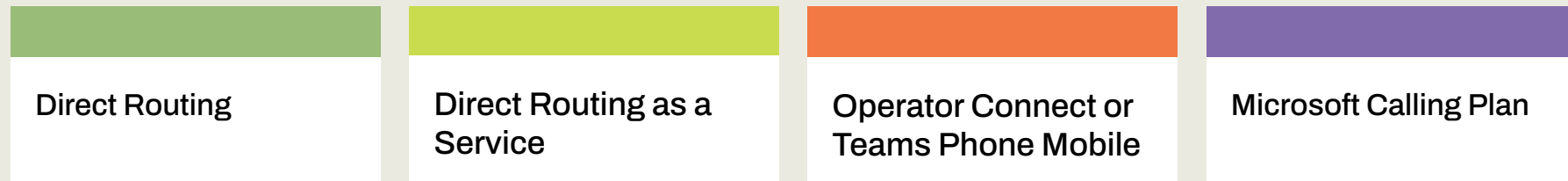
Direct Routing remains the most common deployment method today per the Cavell.



Know your options

Multiple choices for specific scenarios

Microsoft Teams provides flexible options for deploying PSTN voice calling. For a fully integrated and native Microsoft Teams Phone experience, each user must be licensed for Microsoft Teams Phone Standard and provisioned with a calling service.



Direct Routing

**Direct Routing as a
Service**

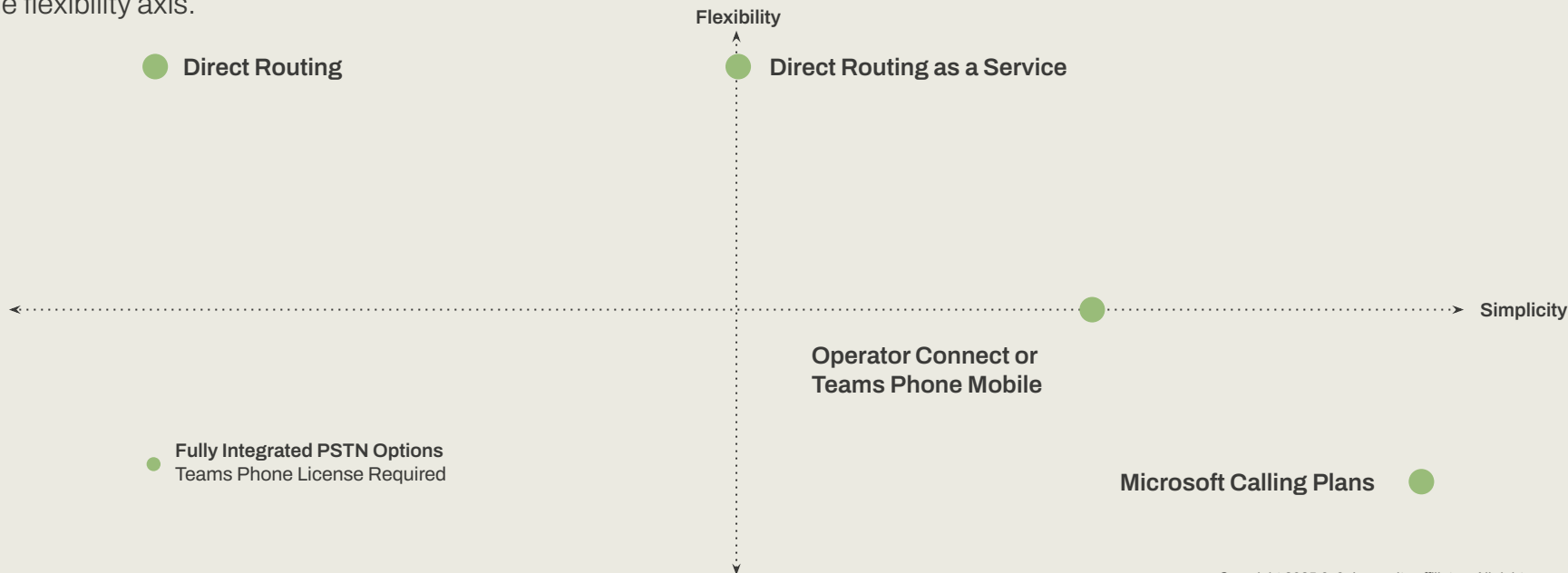
**Operator Connect or
Teams Phone Mobile**

Microsoft Calling Plan

Simplicity vs. Flexibility for Microsoft Teams PSTN Integration

If you map PSTN integration options on a chart with Simplicity on the X-axis and Flexibility on the Y-axis, Microsoft Calling Plans appear in the lower-right quadrant, while Direct Routing lands in the upper-left.

In between, you'll find Operator Connect and Teams Phone Mobile, with Direct Routing as a Service positioned slightly higher on the flexibility axis.



Fully Integrated Microsoft Teams Phone Options

Direct Routing is ideal for organizations requiring customizable telephony or complex deployments that can use existing on-premises PSTN infrastructure or co-exist across data centers. The additional hardware, software, and services require more involvement for setup, configuration, and management. This option is the most flexible and can be cost-effective but also tends to be more complicated.

Direct Routing as a Service combines the flexibility of Direct Routing with the simplicity of Operator Connect. This gives you the freedom to choose your own telephony provider and access additional unified communications as a service (UCaaS) functions such as SMS/MMS (in supported countries), fax, compliance call recording, advanced auto attendants, and Contact Centers certified for Microsoft Teams, making it the most widely adopted option today. Each provider offers different calling plans and geographies, providing the flexibility and cost-effectiveness of Direct Routing without the burden of managing additional hardware and software.

Operator Connect or Teams Phone Mobile allows organizations to add basic PSTN calling from a list of Microsoft-certified carriers, but still requires effort outside of the Microsoft Teams admin center for contracts, provisioning, and support. Each provider offers different calling plans and regional availability, providing more flexibility than Microsoft Calling Plans, but less than Direct Routing. Note: Teams Phone Mobile is sometimes referred to as a separate option from Operator Connect, but both methods have similar attributes for simplicity and flexibility, and therefore are grouped together for this guide.

Microsoft Calling Plans are ideal for organizations that have simple PSTN calling requirements and need to be activated quickly, which can justify the additional cost. This provides basic Unified Communications as a Service (UCaaS) capabilities, is fully managed through the Microsoft Teams admin center, and can be more limited on calling plans and geographies. This option is the simplest but is also the least flexible.

How do Microsoft Teams PSTN Integrations Compare?

	Teams Phone Standard Required		
	Direct Routing	Direct Routing as a Service	Operator Connect
Dial Calls Via Native Teams Dial Pad	▪	▪	▪
Calls Ring And Happen Inside Teams	▪	▪	▪
Status Shows “In A Call” User Presence	▪	▪	▪
No Additional Desktop/Mobile Apps	▪	▪	▪
Fully Compatible With Teams Phone Features	▪	▪	▪
Value-Added UCaaS Capabilities	Limited	▪	Limited
IT Training & Support Requirements	High	Moderate/Low	Low
IT Deployment & Maintenance Level	High	Moderate/Low	Low
Business Continuity Resilience	Low	High	Low
Overall Cost	Moderate	Moderate/Low	Low
Overall Teams User Experience	Best	Best	Best
Full PSTN Replacement Countries	Per Vendor	55+	20+
		8x8 Voice for Microsoft Teams	8x8 Operator Connect for Microsoft Teams

Key questions to ask

Upfront steps to help you decide

The previous table shows that there are many options available from different providers. The best fit depends on your business priorities, including how much importance you place on connection method (Operator Connect, Direct Routing), regional availability, calling plans, reliability, and required features.

The good news is that you do not have to choose just one. Providers with a complete portfolio can help you combine the right mix of components to support knowledge workers, first-line employees, executives, and contact center agents across your organization.



Questions to ask your vendor

Integration Services Type

- ☐ What type of integration service do you offer?
- ☐ Is the service fully managed, or does my IT team need to administer it?
- ☐ Will we need to purchase and maintain any on-premises SBCs or hardware?
- ☐ Will we need to deploy and support additional software?

Calling Plans

- ☐ Do you offer local or global calling plans?
- ☐ In which countries are your calling plans available?
- ☐ Are full PSTN replacement services available in those countries?
- ☐ Do the plans include bundled minutes or offer unlimited calling?

Pricing

- ☐ How do you price your calling plans?
- ☐ What does the monthly price include?
- ☐ Are there additional costs for emergency calling options like Nomadic 911 and Caller ID services or number porting?
- ☐ In how many countries do you offer toll-free and non-geographic numbers?

User Management

- ☐ Can you switch users from one plan to another?
- ☐ Is there a portal to manage/add/change/delete my users?
- ☐ Can I keep my phone numbers or do I need to buy new DIDs (phone numbers)?

Additional Questions to ask your vendor

User Experience

- ☐ Does your solution change the Teams user experience?
- ☐ Do I need to install additional apps for my Teams users to use the service?
- ☐ Does the service provide a consistent user experience across Teams apps and Teams devices?
- ☐ Does it also support desktop IP phones and analog devices like door access systems, elevator or lift phones, or fax machines?

International Support

- ☐ Can we have a single global invoice for all deployments?
- ☐ Do you assign a single point of contact for global accounts?
- ☐ Can you provide support in local languages for international deployments?

Service Level Agreement (SLA)

- ☐ How is your availability SLA better than your competitors?
- ☐ Do your SLAs include both uptime and call quality guarantees?
- ☐ What is your service uptime over the past 12 months?

Contact Center for Microsoft Teams

- ☐ Do you offer a Microsoft Teams-certified contact center solution?
- ☐ Is your Microsoft Teams-certified contact center solution on the same platform as your telephony offering or is it a solution from a third-party provider?
- ☐ Which functionality does your Microsoft Teams Contact Center support?
- ☐ How does your Microsoft Teams Contact Center support regulatory compliance?

Security Accreditations

- ☐ Which security and compliance certifications do you hold?
- ☐ How do you maintain and validate your security and compliance certifications?
- ☐ How do you support data privacy directives in specific jurisdictions like the US, Canada, UK, Germany, Australia, and Hong Kong?

Accelerate your Microsoft Teams Voice Calling Success

Why 8x8 is your perfect Partner

Each organization has unique requirements, which can often be complex. Over **550,000** Teams users rely on 8x8 to deliver voice services reliably in Microsoft Teams. 8x8 for Microsoft Teams connects a single cloud platform with advanced contact center and telephony capabilities with Microsoft, including purpose-built solutions for Teams Phone.

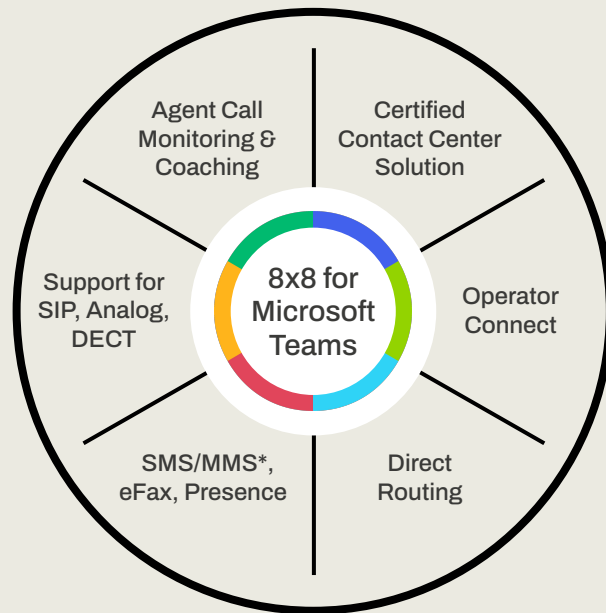
8x8 is the only **13-time** Gartner® UCaaS Magic Quadrant Leader with a **10-time** Gartner-recognized CCaaS solution certified for Microsoft Teams.



In the [2023 Magic Quadrant for Unified Communications as a Service](#), Gartner reported, “8x8 is well-positioned to deliver UCaaS and CCaaS to organizations that have already adopted Microsoft Teams for messaging and meetings, but require advanced telephony features. 8x8 is still one of very few UCaaS vendors to currently offer a natively integrated Microsoft Teams contact center solution.”

8x8 for Microsoft Teams offers a complete portfolio of integration products designed to meet the unique business needs of each organization, empower employees, reduce configuration complexity, and optimize spending. This portfolio includes:

- 8x8 Voice for Microsoft Teams
- 8x8 Operator Connect for Microsoft Teams
- 8x8 Contact Center for Microsoft Teams



*SMS/MMS available in select markets.

8x8 Voice for Microsoft Teams: An Azure-based Direct Routing as a Service solution that enables native Teams PSTN calling in over 55 countries with advanced communications capabilities and flexible deployment options.

- **Simple:** Removes the administrative complexities of setting up on-premises SBC equipment, configuring SIP trunks, installing end-user software, or deploying through PowerShell scripting.
- **Flexible:** Calling plan options for geography and usage, additional UCaaS functionality such as SMS/MMS, eFax, automated compliance call recording, rich analytics, and contact center “light” functionality for coaching such as barge, monitor, and whisper.

8x8 Operator Connect for Microsoft Teams: A purpose-built and Microsoft-certified solution to quickly enable native calling through Teams Phone.

- **Native:** Calls happen where Microsoft users expect them, natively within Microsoft Teams. Teams admins can manage their Teams Phone users directly from the Microsoft Teams admin center.

- **Reliable:** Fully compliant with the Operator Connect framework by directly peering through Microsoft Azure to ensure optimal network configuration with shared support and SLAs with Microsoft to minimize risks.

8x8 Contact Center for Microsoft Teams: A Microsoft Teams-certified contact center solution with omnichannel handling, skills-based routing, and free on-net transfers.

- **Integrated:** Elevation with calling managed through Microsoft Teams keeps agents connected to internal experts with real-time status to expedite resolution times.
- **Intelligent:** Leverage intelligent AI-powered self-service, Quality Management, and Interaction Analytics to improve CX and agent efficiency.

8x8 for Microsoft Teams gives your organization all the benefits of a global enterprise communication solution, saving you time and money without the hassle of managing a communications infrastructure or complicating the Teams user experience.

Customer success stories

Discover all the ways companies succeed with 8x8 for Microsoft Teams

"Once we started integrating 8x8 with Microsoft Teams, it was huge. Our employees loved it."

Chris Geryol
Director of IT and Operations



"From the technical side, our migration from our previous provider to 8x8 was very smooth. We signed the contract in September and were live by November."

AJ Tasker
Vice President and Director of
Information Technology



"Everyone now has a single form of communication across the company. This has improved our efficiency and ensures we can provide the best level of service to our clients at all times."

Paul Wilson
Practice Manager



"8x8 has the best Microsoft Teams integration, better than all the other vendors we evaluated. From making and receiving calls to user administration, 8x8's integration is seamless."

John Cielo
Systems Administrator



Find these customer stories and more at 8x8.com/teams.

Ready for what comes next?

Maximize the value of Microsoft Teams

Adding PSTN services to Teams Phone is easy, so your employees can communicate easily and efficiently. You can even equip your contact center agents with Teams to exceed first-call resolution targets, which means happier customers and happier agents.

There is no one-size-fits-all for integrating PSTN voice service to Teams. But using a premier integrated telephony solution from a cloud communications leader gives you the flexibility to tailor your requirements with the right combination of convenience, cost, country coverage, and capabilities as part of an inclusive package from a single provider.

To learn how 8x8 can supercharge your Teams deployment with global enterprise voice services, visit 8x8.com/teams or speak to a member of our specialist sales team.





8x8 for Microsoft Teams

Learn more at 8x8.com/teams