



Devices and hardware for Microsoft Teams Calling

What are your options and what will work best for you?

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The way people work is changing. As businesses move away from traditional on-premises PBX hardware to the flexibility of cloud-based phone systems such as Microsoft Teams Calling, their device and hardware requirements are also evolving. This paper will help you plan your device strategy when updating to Microsoft Teams Calling.

Introduction

While some people may still associate phone calls with picking up a receiver and dialing a number, those days are on the way out. With systems such as Teams telephony, you don't even need a handset to make a call, and phone numbers are no longer tied to a specific phone, they are linked to a Teams user.

The expectation for reliable, robust and flexible ways to communicate have never been greater. With this in mind, organizations will need to consider what personal devices they need to provide for staff (such as headsets and desk phones) and what shared devices they will need for meeting rooms and common areas such as hotdesking rooms or breakout spaces.

Factors such as user profile and preference as well as organizational set-up will come into play. Innovative devices that have yet to come into mainstream use could soon become widely adopted. Engagement with – and education of – users, in terms of what options are available, what they really need and how to use new types of devices, may be required, because this is as much a cultural shift as it is an operational one.

What devices and hardware can I use with Teams telephony?

1. Personal devices

When it comes to personal devices to be used by individual employees, a key consideration is whether to provide headsets that can pair with users' PCs through which calls are made via the Teams app, or to provide Teams-compatible desk phones. A user will not typically need both.

Given the boom in remote working and video conferencing, more and more people are using headsets to improve audio quality, cut out background noise and give them greater hands-free mobility during calls. However, a substantial proportion of workers still like to make and receive calls the "traditional" way by having a phone physically located on their desk. Attitudes may shift over time, so it may be worth engaging with workers to weigh up user preferences and requirements against business' current and future needs and unit costs.

Headsets

Headsets are no longer the preserve of call centre operatives – it's as likely now for a CEO or a senior partner to use a headset for phone calls. As headsets have become more common, there is a vast array of options available on the market to suit every need.



When choosing headsets for staff, there are several factors to consider, including:

- [The user experience from a smartphone](#)

In terms of quality, there are three main tiers of headsets for business use:

- Mid-level standard headsets – robust and reliable wired headsets for general office staff which “plug and play” into phones and PCs with a simple USB connection, with no set-up requirements. Typical cost £30-40
- Wireless headsets which offer similar standard functionality but allow greater freedom and flexibility by pairing to a PC via a dongle and to a phone via Bluetooth. Typical cost £150-160
- Premium headsets which offer enhanced comfort and battery life plus superior audio quality alongside wireless connectivity. Typical cost £200-220

To determine your specific requirements, it can be beneficial to analyze how staff will use their headsets, including how much time they spend on calls each day, whether they are just using headsets for phone calls or for other purposes too, and how much mobility they need to have while they are on calls. All businesses have different needs, but as a general rule of thumb, it’s reasonable to assume that 70% of the workforce will use mid-level headsets, 20% will use wireless units and 10% (probably senior executives) will use premium devices.

- [Minimizing background noise and interference](#)

If too many people are using wireless headsets, you risk experiencing interference from wireless overload, but some headset vendors offer site surveys after which they can recommend specialist wireless equipment to help manage this issue. It’s worth noting that there are two types of wireless headsets: Bluetooth (suitable for most uses) and “DECT” (Digital Enhanced Cordless Telecommunications) headsets, which are most appropriate for call centre use, due to the better range, quality and battery life.

There are also two kinds of noise-suppression headsets: those that cancel out background noise for the user and those that also reduce the background noise that the other person on the call can hear. While the user experience is doubtless important, the audio quality experienced by customers, colleagues and other contacts on the other end is also a key consideration, so choosing options with both active and passive noise cancellation may be sensible.

Headsets can be single or double-ear. There is very little cost or quality difference between the two, so the choice may come down to personal preference and how noisy the background environment is where the caller is working. For example, people who want to be able to hear their own voice when they speak are likely to prefer a single-ear headset.



- **The case for Microsoft-certified headsets**

For optimal connectivity and call quality, choose Microsoft-certified headsets which are designed specifically for use with Teams telephony.

Not only does this enhance the audio for each participant in the call, these headsets will automatically be configured as your default device by Teams software. This means there's no need for users or IT teams to set them up manually, saving time and resources and ensuring everything works correctly straight away. Teams-certified headsets also include helpful buttons to answer/end calls, check voicemail or mute, making them easier to use.

- **Should businesses encourage staff to "bring your own devices"?**

Some users may have already invested in their own personal headsets or earbuds which could be used for Teams calling, but are they suitable for business use and should organizations encourage staff to "bring your own devices"? There's no right answer here: a device may work fine or it may not, however organizations won't have any control what is being used or whether it is fit for purpose – and if it is not, audio quality or compatibility issues could arise.

In our view, while it may be worth engaging in dialogue with employees about their preferences and giving them a degree of choice, it's still important to provide people with devices that have been specifically chosen to suit their needs and to deliver optimal audio.

If everyone is issued with suitable equipment, outcomes will be improved, professionalism will be increased, complexity reduced and the support burden on IT eased.

Workers should only need one device for remote and on-site working, however if headsets are regularly being carried in laptop bags for example, options that are foldable or have protective carry cases are available.

 **Desk phones**

To make a Teams call all that an employee needs is a PC or smartphone, so there is no real need to go to the expense of having desk phones on every employee's desk. However, evaluation of requirements and an assessment of new devices on the market could help to challenge assumptions and traditional ways of doing things, so that you can decide whether (and which) workers really need one.

It's also possible to carry on using some types of desk phones that you may already have in place – notably Skype for Business phones. Additionally, Microsoft has announced that it is developing a service which will enable SIP phones (a standard protocol used for calling over the internet) to be used with Teams, although this would only allow for basic calling functionality rather than the full suite of Teams features, and few details about this have been made public yet.



Where you do need new desk phones, today there are several different Microsoft-certified types available, such as:

- **Native touch phone**

The “gold-standard” Teams phone, these devices run a version of the Teams client provided by Microsoft which ensures that they are always compatible with the latest platform features. Essentially, this gives you the Teams experience designed into a SIP phone-like unit running on the Android operating system. It has a touch screen that displays contacts, recent calls and calendars, enables you to join meetings and see whether contacts are busy or available to speak.

- **Video calling phone**

This is an extension of the Teams native touch phone: the only difference being that it also incorporates a webcam. This may be more suitable as a basic device for small meeting rooms, rather than something to deploy on individual desks on any scale, as most people will use their computers for video calling.

- **Teams display**

These are companion devices designed to be used alongside your main computer. Similar to a Teams video calling phone, but often with a larger screen and speaker (like a tablet), they incorporate a camera, and the screen can list everything that is happening in Teams, from chats and shared documents, to calendars. Users can also use it to join meetings.

It also has advanced functionality such as the ability for colleagues to leave digital “post-it notes” on the screen or record video messages when you are away from your desk. This kind of high-level display device may be most suitable for senior executives.

- **Core calling phone**

This essentially works like a standard phone, providing a handset, a dial pad with physical buttons and dial tone but without any further Teams functionality. As with all the devices listed above, it just needs its own network connection and it will automatically be signed into Teams.

- **USB handsets**

This device looks like a traditional phone, with a handset and a button-based dial-pad. It plugs into your PC or laptop rather than having its own internet connection, meaning that it won’t work when the computer is off. This type of device may be useful for employees who are uncomfortable or have difficulties with headsets as it is cheaper than a core calling phone or a native touch phone because it does not require its own internal capabilities in order to work.

- **Mobile stations**

This is not technically a phone at all – it is a base station on which a mobile phone can be docked. Once the mobile is inserted, it starts charging and pairs with the headset which comes incorporated into the unit. That “package” then becomes your phone for the day, driven through your mobile and using the headset for audio and voice.



2. Shared devices

As well as allocating personal devices to individual employees, organizations will need to deploy a number of shared devices throughout their premises too, notably in reception areas, communal areas such as corridors, landings or kitchens, meeting or breakout rooms and hotdesking areas.

Meeting rooms

There are three main types of meeting room devices for use with Teams, depending on the requirements of the room:

- *Audio-only* - In small meeting rooms, where video calling is not required, Teams native versions of standard meeting room speaker phones which connect to the internet (often referred to as “spider” or “star phones” due to their shape) can be used.
- *Basic video capabilities* - For small to medium-sized meeting or collaboration rooms (for 5-10 people) where video is required, you will need a Microsoft Teams Rooms on Android device. These look like a speaker bar with a camera embedded, and they let you run Teams meetings for voice and video without being connected to any other hardware: they simply require an internet connection. Content sharing can either be accomplished through the Teams meeting itself, or there is an HDMI cable provided so you can connect up a laptop without needing to join the Teams meeting.

A remote control/management console is provided to control the meeting at a touch. They are not suitable for larger spaces as they may not be powerful enough

to pick up all the audio and they may not have a wide enough video range.

- *Advanced meeting capabilities* - For advanced meeting needs such as enabling presentations or for large meetings in big spaces, the next step up is to run a Microsoft Teams Rooms system.

In Microsoft Teams Rooms, Windows 10 PCs power a wide variety of audio and/or video device choices, such as soundbars and microphones, operated by a touch control panel. Innovative hardware such as the Microsoft Surface Hub (and similar options from other brands) act as a large screen or whiteboard on which people can write using digital pens and presentations can be displayed.

Microsoft Teams Rooms systems allow users to join Zoom or Webex meetings as well as Teams meetings.

Reception and communal areas

Although many receptionists now wear high quality headsets, you may want to have desk phones in the reception area too, so that other staff can answer calls when receptionists are unavailable, or for emergency use. For similar reasons, handsets should be made available in common areas – perhaps four to five per floor, depending on the size of the space.

Core calling phones may be most suitable for general communal areas like corridors and landings or warehouses, while USB or native touch phones would be the standard option for reception areas. For hotdesk spaces, USB phones or mobile stations may work best (see details above).

Selecting the right devices for your needs

Top tips

Don't feel you have to replicate the traditional one phone per desk set-up – this could prove costly and unnecessary

But do determine the appropriate device requirements for all employees and shared spaces. It is helpful to ensure the equipment is provided and users are comfortable with it before Teams telephony is deployed

Carry out a comprehensive audit of business needs and user requirements, broken down by user type, volume and frequency of use, mobility needs and the office environment they operate in

Then consider allocating different devices to different users – not everyone needs the most expensive, premium headsets. A variation on a 70% mid-level/20% Wi-Fi/10% premium split should meet most business' needs

Engage with staff to get buy-in before you invest, to find out about user preferences

And be aware that education and training around new options like headsets is essential for a successful roll-out. Offer a range of formats to meet different needs, such as live, interactive training sessions, online tutorials and how-to guidance, and even a helpdesk or virtual chatbot

Don't rely on staff to invest in their own headsets and earbuds – this could be a false economy if they don't work optimally, making it hard to communicate easily and professionally with clients, customers and colleagues

Use Microsoft-certified devices where possible to optimize call quality and ensure seamless configuration with Teams



Summary

Moving to Teams Calling can be transformational for your business, reducing costs, improving processes and helping staff be more productive and flexible by having all the communications channels they need in one place, accessible from anywhere.

To get the most out of it you need the right suite of devices – and it's not simply a case of replacing old with new. Updating work practices requires a rethink of traditional norms and an understanding of the new types of hardware available to achieve optimal results. Choose wisely and you can ensure performance will be supported and the upfront outlay can be kept as contained as possible.

We're experts at helping businesses think through what their requirements are depending on their organisational requirements and their workforce profile. We can help you work out what devices you need and help you get employees set up on them, with the right level of training and support.

Contact us at sales@loopup.com to find out more about getting the most out of your communication systems.

Our whitepaper series

The case for Microsoft Teams Calling is compelling, but the journey can be complex. Our whitepaper series takes IT leaders through key steps in the process - from evaluating whether Teams Calling is the right solution for your business, through to optimising your corporate network and planning your device strategy.

All of our whitepapers are free and easily accessible at our website. Click [here](#) for more.

About LoopUp

LoopUp provides a global solution for secure, reliable cloud communications using cloud voice with Microsoft Teams and Direct Routing.

We include an integrated best-in-class remote meeting solution for premium remote meetings.

Our fully managed voice network was built for the high demands of professional services. It uses 15 carefully chosen Tier 1 carriers, and features auto-failover, PESQ scoring on all routings and real time carrier redundancy. We choose the optimal carrier to connect each call. This improves audio quality and resilience, and reduces costs.

We are Microsoft Certified Gold Partners and have been a Microsoft voice partner since 2010.

Our expertise is in the modern workplace, including security and compliance. We provide consultancy services and support from our modern workplace advisory consultants.

We offer bespoke solutions for contact centre and call recording.

We combine all this with consultancy for Microsoft-based Unified Communications, Collaboration, and Telephony using Teams. Our services include network analysis and performance, transition design and management, enablement, training, adoption and support.

We are the trusted partner to more than 5,000 enterprises, including 20 of the world's top law firms.

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