

McLaren: Building better customer communication with LoopUp

How a leading construction company improved communication with customers by migrating to Microsoft Teams and implementing cloud telephony with LoopUp



Established in 2001, the McLaren group of companies operates in construction, property investment and development in the UK and UAE. McLaren's core markets include commercial offices, mixed-use buildings, residential, retail, education, distribution and logistics, hotels and leisure. With over 700 employees across five offices, having the right technology for effective internal and external communication is essential to McLaren.

McLaren moves to Skype for Business in 2017

Gwyn Secombe is the IT Service Manager at McLaren. His responsibilities include user support, planning and project management. In 2017, McLaren were using Microsoft Lync as their unified communications solution. The business decided to undertake a digital transformation project that would move on-premises data centers into Microsoft Azure's cloud computing platform and migrate emails from on-premises Exchange server to Office 365. As part of the project, McLaren would migrate from Microsoft Lync to Skype for Business.

The McLaren IT management team realized that a project this size would require an external partner to manage the transition, so they put out a tender to various parties. "Our IT team is relatively small," explained Gwyn. "We have eight people in total, so that's nearly one IT person for every 100 employees. I realized that we would need to work with a partner that offered a fully managed service."

LoopUp was recommended to McLaren by one of their other IT suppliers. The McLaren IT management team met with LoopUp's project management team. "After a few discussions, we realized that the set-up worked for us," said Gwyn. "LoopUp had the knowledge, expertise and infrastructure to support us. They also provided us with a full adoption programme which involved a consultant coming in to advise us on user adoption. This is something that LoopUp had over other providers." McLaren selected LoopUp's hosted Skype for Business solution and it was deployed across all their offices.

McLaren migrates to Microsoft Teams in 2020

After three years of using Skype for Business for internal collaboration and business telephony, McLaren decided to migrate to Microsoft Teams. McLaren employees already had Teams available as part of their Office 365 license and small pockets of users had begun experimenting with the tool for internal chat or file sharing. "Everyone already had the tool set up on their computer and could use it, but it was used for internal collaboration, not telephony," explained Gwyn. "So, we started to think about moving everything across to a single solution."

Microsoft's Phone System turns Teams into a full enterprise telephony solution. Users can make and receive external calls directly from Teams on any device that has the Teams app or a web browser and is connected to the internet. Teams also offers a wider range of features than Skype

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for Business. This includes group messaging, document sharing, file storage and app integration in addition to voice calling and video conferencing.

Although Microsoft offer their own Calling Plans, McLaren decided to use Direct Routing with LoopUp as the managed service provider. Larger global organizations typically opt for Direct Routing as it offers greater flexibility, wider geographic coverage, lower rates and increased levels of support. “We decided to stay with LoopUp as our partner because of our long-standing relationship and experience with them,” said Gwyn. “We were confident in the support we would get. Over the previous three years, the LoopUp team had always been there for us and had responded to our questions and requests very quickly. We also didn’t look at any other products because we are a real Microsoft house so it would be a natural progression for us to go from Skype to Teams.”

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck and McLaren employees were forced to work remotely, McLaren’s IT management team decided to accelerate the migration. “We were also aware that Skype for Business was becoming end-of-life the following year, so that alongside the pandemic pushed us to move quicker,” said Gwyn. “We realized our staff would become very reliant on the technology over the next few months, especially the telephony part, so we needed to make sure it was up and running.”

Designing the migration

The full migration took three weeks. The first part involved a consultation and design phase. LoopUp worked with McLaren’s IT team to decide which Skype for Business features would be accessible in Teams. McLaren were using the Group Call Pickup feature in Skype for Business which enables users to answer incoming calls from their colleagues from their own phones. LoopUp identified the individual ring groups and set them up in Teams. McLaren were also using auto-attendants. These are voice menu systems that allow callers to be transferred to an extension

without going through a receptionist. LoopUp analyzed the configuration and routing of these in order to create them in Teams. Next, timescales were set and each stage of the migration was mapped out.

The testing phase

The first step was to transition McLaren’s IT team over. “We thought it made sense to move IT over first because we could test everything before we moved everyone else,” explained Gwyn. “We also have an auto-attendant for the IT service desk, so it was a good opportunity to trial that as well.”

The testing phase consisted of two parts: system acceptance and user acceptance. LoopUp tested all parts of the software system in different environments to ensure it met all functional, performance and security requirements. The McLaren IT team tested all the features in Teams – meetings, file sharing, cloud voice and calling groups – to assess whether the system could support day-to-day business and user scenarios.

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Deployment across offices

After a successful testing phase, LoopUp proceeded to deploy Teams across the business, starting with the London office. “We chose to do London first because IT is based there so we can physically walk over to help someone if they need it,” said Gwyn. Microsoft’s Phone System was connected to the public switched telephone network (PSTN) using Direct Routing over LoopUp’s premium voice network. Call transfer, forwarding and voicemail were set up and all existing telephone numbers were migrated over to the Teams environment.

“The migration of the London office went so smoothly that we were confident it would go well for the rest of the business,” explained Gwyn. “And it did. It is one of the best migrations we have had at McLaren. We have had no negative user feedback or support issues. Telephony was key to our business during the pandemic, so we were very grateful to LoopUp for ensuring such a successful transition during this period.”

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Microsoft Teams Direct Routing was introduced for all of McLaren's UK locations. Users in these offices can make and receive telephone calls external to their organization from Teams. At McLaren's UAE office, where local regulation currently prevents the use of VoIP calling, Teams accounts were set up for users and the existing carrier was retained for telephony. “Having Teams set up across the business means we can still communicate with our UAE team via Teams Meetings or Chat,” explained Gwyn.

LoopUp provided in-person training and materials to McLaren's IT department. “Our business wouldn't watch a training video or have an external trainer come in,” said Gwyn. “We do all the training internally, so it was really helpful to have LoopUp train the trainers.”

Adoption of Teams telephony grows rapidly

Once the migration was complete, adoption of Teams grew rapidly. “Everyone is using Teams for voice calls, video meetings and file sharing,” explained Gwyn. “When conducting meetings with clients we need to ensure the audio is stable on every call and LoopUp's premium voice network guarantees that it always is.”

LoopUp uses 13 carefully chosen Tier 1 carriers, and features auto-failover, PESQ scoring on all routings and real time carrier redundancy. LoopUp choose the optimal carrier to connect each call. This improves audio quality and resilience, and reduces costs. “We have a whole spectrum of set-ups at McLaren,” explains Gwyn, “from people working in cabins in the middle of nowhere to people working in our offices, but with LoopUp's voice network the audio quality is always high.”

Getting the most out of Teams with the right partner

Whether it's keeping clients updated on projects or managing contractors, effective communication is critical to every construction company. After several years of using Skype for Business, McLaren decided to migrate to Teams because of the added functionality it offered. McLaren were impressed with the levels of support they had previously received with LoopUp and selected them as a partner. LoopUp deployed the software across the business and implemented cloud telephony for Teams, allowing users to make and receive external calls from Teams on any device that has the app or a web browser and is connected to the internet. The migration was a success and McLaren uses Teams for both internal collaboration and external voice calls with clients.

“We would definitely recommend LoopUp to other businesses who are looking to adopt cloud telephony,” said Gwyn. “When you are looking for a partner, you want someone that you can trust will do the best for you. We know that LoopUp always will. If we have any questions, we know that they will be there to support us. LoopUp have a very good understanding of our business and take a proactive approach in trying to resolve some of our challenges. They are always improving what they can do for us. There is so much that Teams offers and so many things you can do with it, so it's important to work with a partner that can help you get the most out of it.”

To learn more about how LoopUp can move your business telephony into the cloud with Microsoft Teams, visit loopup.com and **arrange a free consultation.**

Case Study | McLaren | November 2020



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