

# Market Guide for Microsoft Skype for Business Contact Center Partners

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Microsoft Skype for Business does not offer its own contact center solution. This Market Guide provides planners with a review of the options and leading partner solutions for delivering this capability.

## Key Findings

- Although Microsoft Skype for Business (SfB) does not offer its own contact center solution, this functionality can be obtained through contact center partners.
- There are three distinct architectural approaches to integrating contact center functionality with Skype for Business Server (SfBS) — "native," "integrated" and "connected." Each has distinct strengths and weaknesses.
- Skype for Business Online (SfBO) does not offer the APIs necessary to enable a native architectural approach, but there are other ways to obtain contact center integrations with SfBO.

## Recommendations

For planners:

- Recognize that some of the SfB contact center architectural approaches are new to market and, in such cases, the current total number of deployments is limited.
- Choose either a native or an integrated architectural approach if you wish to leverage SfB for your agent telephony access but do not expect customers to access via Skype clients.
- Consider the connected architecture if you wish to keep the contact center operation separate from your Skype deployment.
- Reduce the risks and improve the overall quality of your Skype contact center deployment by properly leveraging experienced partners that offer hosting services, system integration, managed services and network monitoring.

For contact centers supporting users that are often on Skype clients:

- Consider a native architectural approach as it will enable some advanced capabilities — for instance, supporting omnichannel communications with media escalation for customers who use Skype consumer clients, for employees on Skype, or for working with federated partners who are also using Skype.

## Strategic Planning Assumption

By 2020, 20% of new U.S. contact center agent seats will be based on Skype for Business contact center environments.

## Market Definition

This document was revised on 10 August 2016. The document you are viewing is the corrected version. For more information, see the [Corrections](#) page on gartner.com.

Skype for Business (SfB) is attracting enterprise market share and is emerging as an important option for enterprise unified communications (UC). Microsoft is currently a top three North American telephony provider (Note 1). SfB functionality includes telephony, instant messaging (IM), presence, video calling and support for audio, web and video meetings. Microsoft does not offer a customer service solution itself, but provides a catalog of [Skype for Business application partners](#). Microsoft recently reopened its certification program for partner contact center solutions, which is also contained in this catalog.

This Market Guide provides an overview of the SfB contact center market, the key characteristics of the different approaches and an overview of some leading partner solutions. Gartner has identified three distinct architectural approaches to integrating contact center functionality with Skype for Business Server (SfBS) — native, integrated and connected. Table 1 provides an overview of the three integration approaches in the market. The strengths and weaknesses of each are described in a separate Skype for Business Architecture Options section, further below.

Additional detail on the general contact center infrastructure market is available in the document "Magic Quadrant for Contact Center Infrastructure, Worldwide."

Table 1. Three Approaches to Integrating Contact Center Functionality With Skype for Business Server

Solution Type	Design Approach	Overview
Native	Trusted application model	Media flow primarily stays within the Skype server. Media routing is controlled by a separate trusted contact center application via Unified Communications Managed APIs (UCMAs).
Integrated	User model	Media flow primarily stays within a separate contact center application. Agents on Skype can receive or make calls or sessions. Control of agent endpoints is usually via the SfB client software development kit (SDK) or the User API — the Unified Communications Web API (UCWA).
Connected	Interop model	Call center application is separate from SfB and only interoperates with SfB using standard voice model (e.g., SIP trunks). Agents are reached via Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) or direct inward dialing (DID).

Source: Gartner (August 2016)

## Market Direction

As Skype for Business use increases, and in particular its use for telephony increases, the demand for integrated contact center and customer support capabilities also increases. While SfB telephony and video are still at an early stage of maturity overall, some of the contact center partner solutions are quite mature. There are two primary reasons for this contact center partner maturity:

- First, because many of the vendors were already in the market previous to Skype's introduction with products based on non-Skype communications infrastructure.
- Second, because Microsoft strongly encouraged third-party solutions since the launch of Office Communications Server 2007 after having decided not to introduce its own contact center solution.

Contact centers are used for many different purposes. Below we outline the major high-level environments for contact centers in general, and then information specific to SfB contact centers. In some cases, SfB offers some unique capabilities, and enterprises often use their contact center investments for more than one of these purposes.

**Service desk** is primarily an IT service intended to provide a single point of contact to assist users and IT staff with problems or needs. Examples include desktop assistance, new employee onboarding help, password resetting and help with applications.

*SfB contact-center-specific comments* — In cases where employees are users of SfB, contact center solutions can be particularly effective. For instance, employees can easily share their screen with agents, who can then take control and show users how to resolve a problem. Some enterprises have used the SfB Server Response Group function to address basic service desk routing requirements.

**Outbound services** generate outbound calls or notifications to customers or individuals. Applications can include telemarketing, sales or fundraising, surveys and verification services. Increasingly, outbound calling is being replaced with email and SMS notifications, sometimes coupled with a URL or number to contact for follow-up should it be needed.

*SfB contact-center-specific comments* — In cases where the individuals being reached are SfB users or users of the Skype consumer client, they can be reached via a Skype call; this "session" can include video, chat and (in SfB-only environments) screen sharing. A session can also keep a chat open for an extended period, which can be useful for certain types of interactions. SfB-based outbound calling can be a useful option when the sales or support organization uses Microsoft tools such as Microsoft Dynamics. However, in many other cases, outbound dialing to a PSTN number from a SfB solution does not offer any specific differentiation from a traditional outbound dialing platform.

**Inbound services** primarily handle inbound calls and requests initiated by external customers or partners. Applications can include customer service and support requests, billing and account inquiries, and requests for product information or details.

*SfB contact-center-specific comments* — In cases where the request is from a SfB user or a Skype for consumer (SfC) user, the caller can initiate the request via different media, including voice, video or chat. When initiated via text chat, the session can enable a chat bot (Note 2) to assist clients and then subsequently direct them to agents as needed on the media best suited. Websites that have a chat option can also leverage the chat interface to SfB agents. However, Microsoft does not currently support WebRTC, so in order to support SfB rich-media interactions via browser, a plug-in is required.

**Meeting, persistent meeting and web portal-based interactions** are emerging forms of customer service that enable a relationship to be maintained across media and across time. For instance, when a customer has a new request, a persistent meeting that supports chat, voice, video and document sharing is created. The information persists; so when a customer or an agent returns for subsequent interactions, all the history, previous conversations and documents are still present. When in the meeting, the presence of key participants can be verified.

*SfB contact-center-specific comments* — The native architecture allows each session to be a meeting. A SfB meeting is not persistent but it does support multiple participants and media, and it can be kept active for an extended period. Additionally, a meeting can be "refreshed" at a later point if the context needs to be restored. In these scenarios, it is also sometimes useful to display the presence of agents or subject matter experts (SMEs) as part of the meeting. An example of how this might work within a SfB environment is shown in Note 3.

Gartner has identified three distinct families of SfB contact center and customer support infrastructure partners:

1. Contact center specialists that typically had pre-existing PBX/ACD-focused contact center solutions, which have now been integrated with SfBS via APIs (Note 3A). In some cases, the solutions have been significantly rearchitected to take advantage of SfB-specific functions.

These solutions support telephone-based interactions as well as SfB to SfB and SfB to SfC interactions. This family of solutions is the focus of this report.

2. Social-network-focused contact solutions that integrate social networks with SfB. While this is a promising approach to customer service, it is not commonly deployed and is not the focus of this report (Note 4.)
3. Vertically focused contact solutions that target particular needs and are often integrated with a specific vertical application and sold to targeted markets (Note 5).

## Skype for Business Architecture Options

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As outlined in Table 1 earlier, Gartner has identified three distinct architectural approaches to integrating contact center functionality with SfBS — native, integrated and connected. Each has distinct strengths and weaknesses, which we review in detail below.

### Native

This approach uses Microsoft's trusted application model. A detailed description of its capabilities and call interaction model is reviewed at [UCMA 5.0 business scenarios](#). In this approach, all communications and interactions stay on the SfB server while a separate contact center application controls the flow of communications via the UCMA's. While the application is located in a separate trusted server, typically it must be in close proximity to the SfB servers for performance reasons.

In this approach, a SfB conference is created by the separate contact center application for each customer session. The SfB APIs enable the contact center application to "join" resources to that conference; for instance, to join interactive voice response (IVR) or call recording to the session. The separate contact center application also uses the APIs to manage what agent or agents are joined to the conference based on skills and other routing rules. By leveraging the SfB communication modalities, this approach supports voice, web, IM, video and screen and application sharing. Resources that can be "joined" to the meeting include a call center agent, a supervisor, audio, video and text recording services, music on hold, an SME, or a text chat bot. The APIs enable granular controls over communications; for example, enabling silent observe functionality for supervisor coaching, or the ability to keep participant IDs and names anonymous (agent or customer), which is required for many contact centers.

Some native SfB integrations also use the SfB desktop client as the agent console. In this approach, the contact center application leverages the Skype for Business Conversation Windows Extension (CWE) feature, which allows agents to embed their own agent console into the SfB client. By doing this, agents can use the SfB client that they already have installed and know how to use. This client provides them with all of the contact center call controls needed during a contact center call, such as warm and cold transfers, consult and conference SMEs, or transfer to a third-party group outside of their organization.

Many contact centers perceive the use of the SfB CWE client as an advantage over dedicated desktop agent clients when considering the installation, upgrade, troubleshooting and training requirements. This approach also eliminates the need for agents to switch between windows from a

separate dedicated desktop agent client. Another advantage is that this facilitates contact center use by remote agents. It should be noted, however, that the CWE does not work on Mac and some other client platforms, and some users report it does not work well through an Edge server.

- The key advantage of the native SfB integration approach is that it enables rich interactions — SfB handles the media and all SfB media options are available in a single session. This has the added advantage of allowing SfB federation access to agents and customers, so agents can be located in other companies or on SfBO. Finally, this approach enables the use of the SfB CWE feature.
- The key caution regarding this approach is that the enterprise must commit to operating its contact center and all the media entirely on SfB.

### Integrated

In this approach, the contact center application operates separately from the SfB server and controls the interactions with SfB from the agent endpoints, usually by integrating with the SfB Client SDK or the User API (UCWA) (Note 3A). This enables the contact center to manage agent interactions and groups, to monitor the presence of agents, and to set up conferences.

- The key advantage of this approach is that it relies on a separate independent solution, which, if needed, can operate independently from SfB. However optionally, the agents can be located on SfB and have the calls routed to them on their SfB client. A secondary advantage is that enterprise investments in SfB can be more fully leveraged.
- The key cautions regarding this approach is that it does not leverage SfB's rich media options, requires duplicate telephony investment, and can be more complex to manage.

### Connected

In this configuration, there is limited interaction with SfB. The contact center application operates independently. SfB simply provides trunks to the external public switched telephone network (PSTN) and/or trunks for conversations with agents. Vendor support for this model is not reviewed in this report.

- The key advantage of this approach is that it enables the contact center to operate entirely separately from SfB. This might be useful if a contact center were already operating and did not wish to change its operations while other parts of the organization migrates to SfB. Users also cite the advantage of having the enterprise users and contact center agents on the same telephony system, making it easier to include SMEs on a call. In those cases, the enterprise can still use Skype for IM/presence but not for telephony.
- The key caution regarding this approach is that it does not leverage SfB's rich media options and has no way of knowing the status of agents or support staff located on SfB.

## Costs

Costs for native and integrated solutions vary. The general cost range for per-agent/per-month licensing of a native solution is \$55 to \$85. This cost excludes Microsoft SfB licensing costs, deployment costs, any equipment, network services, supervisor seats, installation or trunks. Additionally, services such as IVR, computer-telephony integration (CTI), reporting, recording and workforce management may be separately charged. The purpose of providing this general cost range is to offer high-level budgetary guidelines.

## Skype for Business Online (SfBO)

SfBO does not yet offer the APIs available for SfBS, so the native integration is not currently an option. However, Microsoft has stated plans to deliver the Skype for Business Trusted Services API to enable contact center vendors to integrate natively to SfBO. Alternative approaches include using a SfB hybrid deployment (Note 6) or using the integrated approach.

## Representative Vendors

*The vendors listed in this Market Guide do not imply an exhaustive list. This section is intended to provide more understanding of the market and its offerings.*

### Microsoft Contact Center Partners

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Below, we provide an overview of some illustrative Skype for Business contact center solutions (see Table 2 to Table 8). A more complete list of SfB applications, including contact center solutions, is available on [Skype for Business Apps](#).

### Clarity Connect

[connect.claritycon.com](https://connect.claritycon.com)

Clarity is a privately held company headquartered in Chicago, Illinois, with offices in Seattle, Washington, and Europe. Clarity Connect offers a native SfB integration that can be cloud or premises based. Clarity sells direct as well as through significant partnerships, including service providers.

Gartner considers Clarity Connect a mature SfB contact center product with significant experience and deployments. Gartner believes that Clarity Connect has one of the most significant installed bases of native SfB deployments among the SfB contact center partner ecosystem. The company is a Microsoft Gold Certified Communications and Application Development Partner. Their solution is available globally via partners and has been selected as the Skype contact center solution by several carriers and service providers.

Table 2. Vendor Questions and Responses

Vendor Question	Vendor Response
SfB contact center product name(s)	Clarity Connect
Regions where offer is available	North America and Europe
Key partners	CDW, Arkadin, Interoute, Logicalis, Enabling Technologies, CallTower
Percentage of deployments sold direct vs via partners?	Direct: 30% Partners: 70%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Is a native deployment model supported?</li> <li>■ Is a trusted server model supported?</li> <li>■ Is SfB CWE supported and deployed?</li> <li>■ Do you offer your own stand-alone, dedicated agent client?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Yes</li> <li>■ No</li> <li>■ Yes</li> <li>■ No</li> </ul>
Percentage of total contact center site installations over last 12 months that are Skype contact center based?	100%
Total number of Skype installations installed that are using your SfB contact center offer for contact center routing where the agents are on Skype (sites & agents total preferred)?	<i>No information provided</i>
Of these Skype sites installed, what percentage of customer data centers are on-premises, cloud-based or some other configuration (this total should add up to 100%)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ On-premises: 65%</li> <li>■ Cloud: 35%</li> <li>■ Other configuration: 0%</li> </ul>
Average size of Skype contact center deployed? Average size of top three largest centers?	90 seats 600 seats
Number of vendor employees supporting Skype globally?	35
Public case studies of Skype-based deployments	<a href="#">Microsoft Travel</a> (corporate travel) <a href="#">Marquette University</a> (education) <a href="#">Preston City Council</a> (U.K., public sector) <a href="#">Blount International</a> (global, manufacturing)
The information in this table was provided by the vendor. CWE = Conversation Window Extension; SfB = Skype for Business	

Source: Gartner (August 2016)



ComputerTalk is a privately held company, founded in 1987 and headquartered in Richmond Hill, Canada. It has offices in Montreal, Chicago, Houston, the U.K. and France. The ComputerTalk ice Contact Center for Skype for Business solution offers a native skype integration. The solution is offered as either a hosted or an on-premises deployment. While current Skype contact center deployments are in the 10-300 seat range, ComputerTalk reports that it is now seeing bid requests for significantly larger sizes, especially in multisite configurations.

Gartner considers ComputerTalk a mature Skype contact center integrator with significant experience and deployments. It is a Microsoft Gold Certified Communications and Application Development Partner.

Table 3. Vendor Questions and Responses

Vendor Question	Vendor Response
Skype contact center product name(s)	<a href="#">ice Contact Center for Skype for Business</a>
Regions where offer is available	North America, South America, EMEA, APAC
Key partners	Microsoft, Allstream, AT&T, Atrion, AudioCodes, Avanade, Bell, Cerner, Comparex, CompuCom, Concurrency, Dell, Emergent Networks, Enabling Technologies, Exaprobe, Ignify, LexConsult, Long View, NeWay, SIT, Telus, West Monroe Partners
Percentage of deployments sold direct vs via partners?	Direct: 24% Partners: 76%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Is a native deployment model supported?</li> <li>■ Is a trusted application integration model supported?</li> <li>■ Is SfB CWE supported and deployed?</li> <li>■ Do you offer your own stand-alone, dedicated agent client?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ ice Contact Center supports a native deployment model.</li> <li>■ ice is a native SfB solution that is PBX-agnostic. It supports both SfB enterprise voice agents as well as users on connected PBX handsets or endpoints.</li> <li>■ ice does not use CWEs</li> <li>■ Yes, ComputerTalk offers our own stand-alone, dedicated agent client called iceBar. Agents perform basic call handling using either iceBar or the SfB client. Advanced call control or contact-center-specific interactions, such as screen pop, are handled using iceBar.</li> </ul>
Percentage of total contact center site installations over last 12 months that are Skype contact center based?	90%
Total number of Skype installations installed that are using your SfB contact center offer for contact routing where the agents are on Skype (sites & agents total preferred)?	Sites: 63 Agents: 1,891
Of these Skype sites installed, what percentage of customer data centers are on-premises, cloud-based or some other configuration (this total should add up to 100%)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ On-premises: 30%</li> <li>■ Cloud: 70%</li> <li>■ Other configuration: none</li> </ul>
Average size of Skype contact center deployed? Average size of top three largest centers?	30 seats 180 seats
Number of vendor employees supporting Skype globally?	80

Vendor Question	Vendor Response
Public case studies of Skype-based deployments	<a href="#">T.D. Williamson</a> <a href="#">PDX</a>
<p>The information in this table was provided by the vendor. CWE = Conversation Window Extension; SfB = Skype for Business</p>	

Source: Gartner (August 2016)

## Enghouse Interactive

[www.enghouseinteractive.com](http://www.enghouseinteractive.com)

Enghouse Interactive is a Canada-headquartered public company, with shares traded on the Toronto Stock Exchange. Enghouse Interactive has several distinct contact center offerings — the primary Skype offer is based on the Enghouse Interactive Communications Center solution, which targets small to midsize contact centers that are generally less than 500 agents, but scale up to 1,000 agents.

Gartner considers Enghouse a mature Skype contact center integrator with significant experience and deployments. Gartner believes that Enghouse has one of the most significant installed bases of native SfB deployments among the SfB contact center partner ecosystem. Enghouse is a Microsoft Gold Certified Communications and Application Development Partner with Skype for Business Certifications for Communications Center and Attendant Console. Enghouse is also a well-established global contact center vendor and is included as a Challenger in the Gartner "Magic Quadrant for Contact Center Infrastructure, Worldwide" report.

Table 4. Vendor Questions and Responses

Vendor Question	Vendor Response
Skype contact center product name(s)	Communications Center <a href="#">Info at Contact Center for Business</a>
Regions where offer is available	North America, EMEA, Asia/Pacific Customers Seats APAC 122 3,068 EMEA 136 3,196 NA 87 3,908
Key partners	SoftwareONE, Carousel, ConvergeOne, SPS, Arrow Systems Integration, Dimension Data, Enabling Technologies
Percentage of deployments sold direct vs via partners	Direct: 5% Partners: 95%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Is a native deployment model supported?</li> <li>■ Is a trusted server model supported?</li> <li>■ Is Skype CWE supported and deployed?</li> <li>■ Do you offer your own stand-alone, dedicated agent client?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Yes</li> <li>■ Yes</li> <li>■ No, but Enghouse native client integrates with SfB client to ensure state synchronization</li> <li>■ Yes</li> </ul>
Percentage of total contact center site installations over last 12 months that are Skype contact center based?	24% of Communications Center customers are SfB based over the last 12 months
Total number of Skype installations installed that are using your SfB contact center offer for contact routing where the agents are on Skype (sites & agents total preferred)?	(Figures below exclude SfB console and other products that integrate to SfB): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 345 customers deployed using Communications Center in SfB</li> <li>■ 10,172 seats within those customers</li> </ul>
Of these Skype sites installed, what percentage of customer data centers are on-premises, cloud-based or some other configuration (this total should add up to 100%)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ On-premises: 95%</li> <li>■ Cloud: 5%</li> <li>■ Other configuration: None</li> </ul>
Average size of Skype contact center deployed?	29.5 seats deployed on average
Average size of top three largest centers?	340 seats, on average, for the top three customers using Enghouse cctr in SfB
Number of employees supporting Skype globally?	250+
Public case studies of Skype-based deployments	<a href="#">Helly Hansen</a> <a href="#">Spotless Group</a>

Vendor Question	Vendor Response
	Scottish Borders Council
<p>The information in this table was provided by the vendor. CWE = Conversation Window Extension; SfB = Skype for Business</p>	

Source: Gartner (August 2016)

## Genesys

[www.genesys.com](http://www.genesys.com)

Genesys is a privately held company with headquarters in the U.S. and major private equity investment from Permira. Genesys supports three primary offerings on its Customer Experience Platform, addressing cloud, smaller enterprise and enterprise. Genesys is considered capable of handling the most complex of contact center requirements and is a market leading contact center vendor.

Genesys has been selected by Microsoft as the partner for its own significant internal contact center operation. Genesys has also been identified by Microsoft as a key Skype contact center solutions partner and is in the process of porting its solution to Azure. While Genesys has several large Skype-based contact center integration projects underway in the U.S. and EMEA, it does not currently have completed reference deployments (as of publication of this document).

Enterprises with complex contact center requirements and a desire to move to a Skype-based solution can consider Genesys as a potential longer-term solution. Enterprises with near-term and simpler requirements wishing to consider Genesys should wait until it has proven its Skype integration and has references. Genesys is included as a Leader in the Gartner "Magic Quadrant for Contact Center Infrastructure, Worldwide" report and as a Visionary in the Gartner "Magic Quadrant for Contact Center as a Service, North America."

Table 5. Vendor Questions and Responses

Vendor Question	Vendor Response
Skype contact center product name(s)	<a href="#">Multimedia Connector for Skype for Business</a> <a href="#">Genesys and Microsoft Extend Collaboration to Support Omnichannel Customer Service</a>
Regions where offer is available	EMEA, North America, AsiaPac (Australia/New Zealand and Japan), and Latin America
Key partners	Orange Business Services, Dimension Data, Hewlett Packard Enterprise, Swisscom, AT&T, Verizon, Softel
Percentage of deployments sold direct vs via partners?	Direct: 20% Partners: 80%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Is a native deployment model supported?</li> <li>■ Is a trusted server model supported?</li> <li>■ Is Skype CWE supported and deployed?</li> <li>■ Do you offer your own stand-alone, dedicated agent client?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Yes</li> <li>■ Yes</li> <li>■ Yes</li> <li>■ Yes. We integrate the voice, chat and video channels of Skype for Business into Workspace, the Genesys omnichannel agent desktop, enabling agents to handle contacts from all sources in one unified desktop.</li> </ul>
Percentage of total contact center site installations over the last 12 months that are Skype contact center based?	Very small as it is still in the early adopter phase.
Total number of Skype installations installed that are using your SfB contact center offer for contact routing where the agents are on Skype (sites & agents total preferred)?	5
Of these Skype sites installed, what percentage of customer data centers are on-premises, cloud-based or some other configuration (this total should add up to 100%)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ On-premises: 60%</li> <li>■ Cloud: 40%</li> <li>■ Other configuration: None</li> </ul>
Average size of Skype contact center deployed? Average size of top three largest centers?	100 agents 200 agents
Number of vendor employees supporting Skype globally?	<p>People have a specialized technical role related to SfB:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Five Tier 3 customer care (services)</li> <li>■ Five professional services consultants</li> <li>■ Five architects</li> </ul> <p>We are in the final steps of the process to get gold certification.</p>

Vendor Question	Vendor Response
	Our SfB integration is based on a platform where many of the competencies are shared between solutions and products (e.g., agent desktop, T-server, cCIM). This applies across many organizations (professional services, customer care, R&D, solution consultants). Therefore, many more people are involved in the success of our SfB commercialization.
Public case studies of Skype-based deployments	Cegeka
The information in this table was provided by the vendor. CWE = Conversation Window Extension; SfB = Skype for Business	

Source: Gartner (August 2016)

## Interactive Intelligence

[www.inin.com](http://www.inin.com)

Interactive Intelligence is a U.S.-headquartered public company, with shares traded on the Nasdaq stock exchange. Interactive Intelligence's Skype integration is based on its Customer Interaction Center (CIC), which provides an all-in-one suite of contact center applications across a wide range of scalability requirements. CIC uses a trusted server approach to Skype integration and generally targets midsize contact centers, which have usually less than 500 agents.

Gartner considers Interactive Intelligence a mature Skype contact center integrator with significant experience and deployments. It is a Microsoft Gold Certified Communications and Application Development Partner. Interactive Intelligence is included as a Leader in the Gartner "Magic Quadrant for Contact Center Infrastructure, Worldwide" report and as a Leader in the Gartner "Magic Quadrant for Contact Center as a Service, North America."

Table 6. Vendor Questions and Responses

Vendor Question	Vendor Response
Skype contact center product name(s)	<a href="#">IC Integration with Microsoft Skype for Business</a>
Regions where offer is available	North America, EMEA, APAC, Latin America
Key partners	Avtex, Cincinnati Bell Technology Solutions
Percentage of deployments sold direct vs via partners?	Direct: 37% Partners: 63%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is a native deployment model supported?</li> <li>Is a trusted server model supported?</li> <li>Is Skype CWE supported and deployed?</li> <li>Do you offer your own stand-alone, dedicated agent client?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No</li> <li>Yes</li> <li>No</li> <li>Yes</li> </ul>
Percentage of total contact center site installations over the last 12 months that are Skype contact center based?	<i>Information not available</i>
Total number of Skype installations installed that are using your SfB contact center offer for contact routing where the agents are on Skype (sites & agents total preferred)?	180 sites 34,000 agents (approx.)
Of these Skype sites installed, what percentage of customer data centers are on-premises, cloud-based or some other configuration (this total should add up to 100%)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On-premises: 95%</li> <li>Cloud: 5%</li> <li>Other configuration: None</li> </ul>
Average size of Skype contact center deployed? Average size of top three largest centers?	189 agents 1,918 agents
Number of vendor employees supporting Skype globally?	This is a standard part of our product offering and is supported by our support organization of 305 employees
Public case studies of Skype-based deployments	Bentley Systems — <a href="#">video case study</a> and <a href="#">written case study</a> <a href="#">AFAS Software case study</a>
The information in this table was provided by the vendor. CWE = Conversation Window Extension; SfB = Skype for Business	

Source: Gartner (August 2016)

Luware

[www.luware.com](http://www.luware.com)



Luware is a privately held company located in Zurich, Switzerland. The Luware contact center solution, Lucs, is a Native Skype integration specifically developed to work with Lync and Skype. It was designed to give the agent the same work experience as a standard SfB user. Agents are able to perform 95% of their daily work within the Skype client. It supports on-premises and hybrid configurations, so agents can be on Skype for Business Online or on externally federated SfB servers.

Gartner considers Luware a highly competent, though small, emerging provider with significant Skype contact center experience. They have deployments in Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, U.K. and Kuwait. They operate offices in Switzerland, U.K., Dubai, Spain and New York and they are a Microsoft Gold Certified Communications and Application Development Partner.

Enterprises wishing to deploy a Skype centric contact center solution should consider the Luware offer. However they should also ensure that needed service and support will be available.

Table 7. Vendor Questions and Responses

Vendor Question	Vendor Response
Skype contact center product name(s)	<a href="#">Lucs</a>
Regions where offer is available	Offices in: Switzerland, U.K., Dubai, Spain and New York
Key partners	Luware Partner, Dimension Data, Swisscom, BT
Percentage of deployments sold direct vs via partners?	Direct: 50% Partners: 50%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Is a native deployment model supported?</li> <li>■ Is a trusted server model supported?</li> <li>■ Is Skype CWE supported and deployed?</li> <li>■ Do you offer your own stand-alone, dedicated agent client?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Yes</li> <li>■ No</li> <li>■ Yes</li> <li>■ No</li> </ul>
Percentage of total contact center site installations over the last 12 months that are Skype contact center based?	100%
Total number of Skype installations installed that are using your SfB contact center offer for contact routing where the agents are on Skype (sites & agents total preferred)?	Total sites: 30 Total agents: 1,100
Of these Skype sites installed, what percentage of customer data centers are on-premises, cloud-based or some other configuration (this total should add up to 100%)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ On-premises: 70%</li> <li>■ Cloud: 30%</li> <li>■ Other configuration: 0%</li> </ul>
Average size of Skype contact center deployed? Average size of top three largest centers?	Average size: 40 agents Larger deployment average: 150 agents
Number of vendor employees supporting Skype globally?	All: 43 employees
Public case studies of Skype-based deployments	<a href="#">Luware References</a>
The information in this table was provided by the vendor. CWE = Conversation Window Extension; SfB = Skype for Business	

Source: Gartner (August 2016)

Mitel

[www.mitel.com](http://www.mitel.com)

Mitel is a public company headquartered in Canada, with shares traded on the Nasdaq and Toronto stock markets. Mitel offers a Skype integration for its MiContact Center Business Edition, a prepackaged application set targeting deployments with fewer than 200 agents.

Gartner considers Mitel a mature Skype contact center integrator with significant experience and deployments. It is a Microsoft Gold Certified Communications and Application Development Partner. Mitel is also a global contact center vendor and is included as a Leader in the Gartner "Magic Quadrant for Unified Communications."

Table 8. Vendor Questions and Responses

Vendor Question	Vendor Response
Skype contact center product name(s)	<a href="#">MiContact Center for Microsoft Lync</a>
Regions where offer is available	All
Key partners	Advantacom, Enabling Technologies
Percentage of deployments sold direct vs via partners?	Direct: Partners: 100%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is a native deployment model supported?</li> <li>Is a trusted server model supported?</li> <li>Is Skype CWE supported and deployed?</li> <li>Do you offer your own, stand-alone, dedicated agent client?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes</li> <li>Second half of 2016</li> <li>No</li> <li>Yes</li> </ul>
Percentage of total contact center site installations over the last 12 months that are Skype contact center based?	<1%
Total number of Skype installations installed that are using your SfB Contact Center offer for contact routing where the agents are on Skype (sites & agents total preferred)?	51 sites 1,512 agents
Of these Skype sites installed, what percentage of customer data centers are on-premises, cloud-based or some other configuration (this total should add up to 100%)?	On-premises: 96% Cloud: 4% Other configuration: 0%
Average size of Skype contact center deployed? Average size of top three largest centers?	30 agents 50 agents
Number of vendor employees supporting Skype globally?	20
Public case studies of Skype-based deployments	<a href="#">Case Study: Subaru Canada</a> <a href="#">Case Study: The Weiss Group</a> <a href="#">SalusCare Leverages Mitel's Lync Advantage, Improves Customer Experience</a>
The information in this table was provided by the vendor. CWE = Conversation Window Extension; SfB = Skype for Business	

Source: Gartner (August 2016)

## Market Recommendations

The majority of the considerations when deploying a contact center based on SfBS are the same as the considerations for deploying contact centers on other UC environments. General considerations

are discussed in the existing Gartner contact center and contact center as a service reports highlighted in the Recommended Reading section below.

SfB-based contact center solutions can offer unique benefits under certain conditions, notably when:

- A significant number of the customers are on a SfB client
- Agents and SMEs are using SfB for their primary UC solution
- The SfB CWE feature can be leveraged

In situations where the agent and the customer can interact with screen share or video, or where the agent can take control of the customer's PC (as is common in service desk support), the SfB to SfB interaction is particularly advantageous. Using IM as a user interface for chat can also offer benefits; in some cases, text chat can be combined with chat bots (Note 2) to facilitate self-service and routing. In other scenarios, a customer may be on a mobile device, thus facilitating some support processes such as insurance claims and equipment repair.

While SfB contact center deployments are often highly effective, when problems are reported the root cause is often due to underlying network-related quality issues. For this reason, successful deployments often require an investment in a network health monitoring solution. It is also recommended that voice and video traffic be routed over managed networks. It should be noted that many enterprises will have already deployed network monitoring as part of their initial SfB deployment, and so this same tool can be leveraged for SfB contact center monitoring too. These issues are more fully outlined in the Gartner report "The Strategic Implications of Microsoft's Skype for Business Options."

Finally, because many elements of the SfB contact center ecosystem are relatively new, some functionality may not be as mature as with established solutions. As a result, planners should verify that all required functionality is available and suitably mature before committing to a solution.

## Gartner Recommended Reading

*Some documents may not be available as part of your current Gartner subscription.*

"The Strategic Implications of Microsoft's Skype for Business Options"

"Magic Quadrant for Contact Center Infrastructure, Worldwide"

"Magic Quadrant for Unified Communications"

"Magic Quadrant for Unified Communications as a Service, Worldwide"

"Use Performance Monitoring to Improve Microsoft Lync Quality"

"Optimize UC Adoption With These Best Practices"

"Magic Quadrant for Contact Center as a Service, Western Europe"

"Magic Quadrant for Contact Center as a Service, North America"

"Market Share: Enterprise Telephony Equipment, Worldwide, 2014"

"UC: The Battle of the Megabundles Versus the Best-of-Breeds"

### Evidence

This report is based on information collected from vendor interviews, questionnaires and references, including those requested specifically for this report, as well as those collected while researching the Magic Quadrants and Critical Capabilities reports related to UC, UCaaS, contact centers and CCaaS. This research also leverages information obtained from discussions with more than 250 enterprises and system integrator clients during 2015 and 2016, as well as information obtained from discussions with users at Gartner and other industry events. The contents of this paper blend these sources of information with specialist analyst views as to the best-practice approaches in developing a sustainable and successful UC solution.

### Note 1 Skype for Business Telephony Market Share

"Market Share Analysis: Enterprise Telephony Equipment, Worldwide, 2014"

### Note 2 Chat Bot

Short for chat robot, a computer program that simulates human conversation, or chat, through artificial intelligence. Chat bots used with SfB typically are limited to conversations regarding a specialized purpose and not for the entire range of human conversation.

Information on building chat bots on SfB are available at [Skype Developer Platform](#). A SfB-specific example of a chat bot is at the following URL. The chat bot portion of the demonstration starts at 3m:30s into the video: "[Skype for Business: Building a Modern Contact Center and User Entry Portal](#)."

### Note 3 Portal-Based User Interaction

A SfB-specific example of a portal used for customer support is at the following URL. The portal discussion starts at 2m:05s into the video: "[Skype for Business: Building a Modern Contact Center and User Entry Portal](#)."

### Note 3A Skype for Business APIs

Additional information on Microsoft SfB APIs at [Skype Developer Platform](#).

#### Note 4 Social-Network-Focused SfB Contact Center Solutions

For an example of this type of solution based on Clarity Connect, see: "[Clarity Adds Support for Facebook Messenger in the Clarity Connect Contact Center, Which Is Native to Skype for Business.](#)" Contact Centre News. 7 March 2016.

#### Note 5 Vertically-Focused Contact Solutions

An example of this type of solution based on MDLive, which uses the solution to facilitate patient-physician video visits, is available at "[MDLive Moves to Skype for Its Patient-Physician Video Visits Service.](#)"

#### Note 6 Skype for Business Hybrid Configuration

Skype for Business Hybrid is a partitioned deployment where some of the enterprise users are on an SfBS solution while others are on SfBO. All users are part of the same tenancy. Additional information is available at [What's New in Skype for Business Server 2015](#). This topic is also covered at a high-level in the Gartner document "The Strategic Implications of Microsoft's Skype for Business Options."

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