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CUSTOMIZE YOUR MICROSOFT TEAMS DEPLOYMENT TO MAXIMIZE BUSINESS VALUE

How to Select a Trusted Partner to Optimize your Cloud Communications Investments

FROST & SULLIVAN VISUAL WHITEPAPER

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Evolving Cloud Services Value Propositions

Cloud services are experiencing rapid adoption as businesses accelerate digital transformation in efforts to return to growth amidst a challenging economic and socio-political environment.

The primary drivers for cloud service adoption are well established:

- **gain faster access** to more advanced capabilities
- **balance OPEX vs. CAPEX** with lower upfront costs and predictable monthly expenses
- **outsource support complexity** to expert providers
- **reduce risk** of vendor lock-in and technology obsolescence
- ability to **work from anywhere**

Adoption drivers and their priority are constantly evolving and shifting in step with workforce demographics, economic, regulatory, and other market conditions.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, **the ability to leverage cloud services for enhanced resiliency and adaptability has surfaced as a critical pillar of business survival**.

The capabilities to quickly deploy, scale, use and centrally manage cloud services shined as key benefits in 2020. These attributes will be imperative going forward.
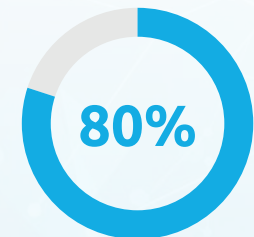
Going forward, lessons learned from the pandemic will **INFLUENCE EXPECTATIONS** of how cloud technology investments can **SUPPORT RAPIDLY CHANGING BUSINESS PRIORITIES**.

ITDM SURVEY STATS

IT decision maker perspectives on cloud:

75%
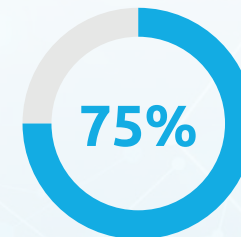
75% say:
"The cloud is the most critical part of our Digital Transformation strategy"
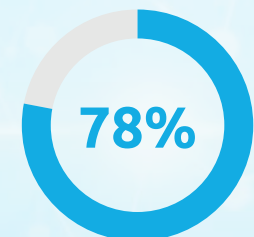
80%

80% say:
"A cloud strategy is essential to remaining competitive in our industry"

In decisions to implement cloud solutions for some or all workloads:

77%
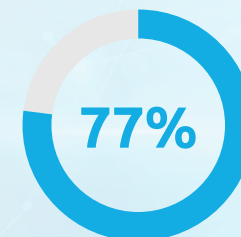
77% say:
"Support my company's Digital Transformation initiatives"

78%

78% say:
"Improve business continuity/disaster recovery"

Source: Frost & Sullivan

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Cloud Communications Adoption on the Rise

Adoption of advanced cloud communications and collaboration services was experiencing healthy growth well before the COVID-19 lockdowns.

Adoption was further accelerated amid the pandemic when cloud-based telephony, multimedia conferencing, instant messaging, team collaboration, and customer contact services were quickly deployed or scaled up to keep an unprecedented number of remote workers connected.
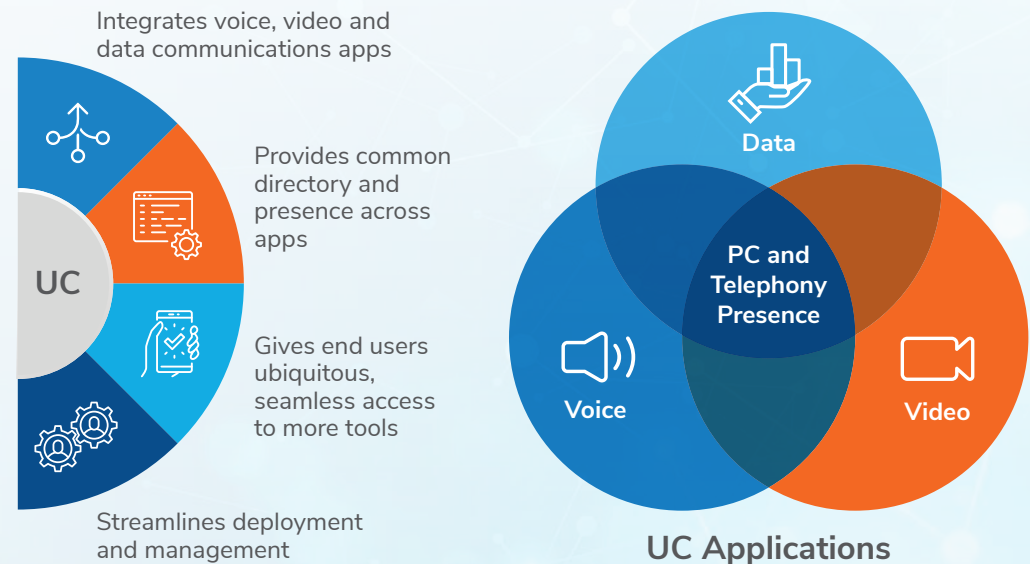
Frost & Sullivan's latest global survey of IT decision makers (ITDM), completed in December 2020, determined that businesses are increasingly deploying communications and collaboration capabilities in the cloud:

- **Enterprise IP Telephony**: 39% have deployed, 38% will do so within two years
- **Video Conferencing**: 54% have deployed, 29% will do so within two years
- **Customer Experience Management**: 42% have deployed, 38% will within two years
- **Instant Messaging & Presence**: 44% have deployed, 35% will within two years
- **Enterprise Content Management**: 38% have deployed, 40% will within two years

However, investing in cloud communications services will not resolve all existing and new business challenges. More must be done.

Many businesses are now evaluating how these mission-critical investments performed for administrators and users in times of great need, where improvements must be made, what should be rationalized and what can be integrated to create a seamless, high-performance unified communications (UC) environment.

UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS DEFINED

Integrates voice, video and data communications apps

Provides common directory and presence across apps

Gives end users ubiquitous, seamless access to more tools

Streamlines deployment and management

UC

Data

PC and Telephony Presence

Voice

Video

UC Applications

In today's fast-evolving global economy, you must have **A HOLISTIC VISION AND STRATEGY** when implementing cloud communications services. Infrastructure, applications, endpoints and workflows **MUST BE INTEGRATED FOR MANAGEABILITY AND USABILITY**, or the inefficiencies and limitations of siloed point solutions will be recreated.

Source: Frost & Sullivan

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Realities of Unintended Complexities

Complicated communications environments have proliferated due to multiple business and technology-related factors. In-house technical support teams face mounting challenges to bring everything together.

Mixed Deployments: Environments comprised of a mix of vendors and technologies (e.g., analog/TDM, H.323 and SIP) are the norm, owing to M&A, point product/service deployments over time, best-of-breed preferences, and cost considerations. Managing, maintaining and securing such deployments is challenging without superior in-house technical staff resources.

Distributed Environments: The prevalence of dispersed organizations also poses significant support challenges, particularly when using disparate, outmoded administration, monitoring, and reporting tools. International expansion and sites chosen for proximity to labor and material resources or for cost or regulatory reasons often require regional and location-specific solutions that must be accommodated.

COVID-19 Artifacts: Responses to COVID-19 further complicated matters. Pervasive work from home, greater awareness of frontline-worker importance, and uncertain future real-estate needs have altered communications deployment strategies. Rapid roll-out of cloud conferencing, team messaging, and other collaboration solutions ensured everyone was connected when working remotely. Often stop-gap in nature, these rollouts created new integration, management, security, and other concerns in many deployments.

OMNI CHANNEL CONTACT CENTER TEAM CONFERENCE ROOMS COLLABORATION MOBILE DEVICES MEETINGS MESSAGING IM/CHAT SMS MULTI CHANNEL VoIP DESK PHONES SOFT CLIENTS INTERNAL & EXTERNAL CALLING HEADSETS VIDEO DEVICES

Businesses and users are **MORE DISTRIBUTED** and use a **MORE DIVERSE** range of communications products and services than ever before. IT decision makers need solutions that dovetail with their investments **WITHOUT COMPROMISING FUNCTIONALITY, SECURITY, COMPLIANCE AND SUPPORT CAPABILITIES.**

Source: Frost & Sullivan

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Mapping Your Cloud Migration Journey

A sustainable UC deployment is a journey. The technology must advance to meet business and user needs as they change over time, and as the organization continually strives to improve efficiencies, agility, and productivity. It is prior to the truly transformational stages that most in-house technical support teams reach the limits of their skills and availability.

Source: Frost & Sullivan
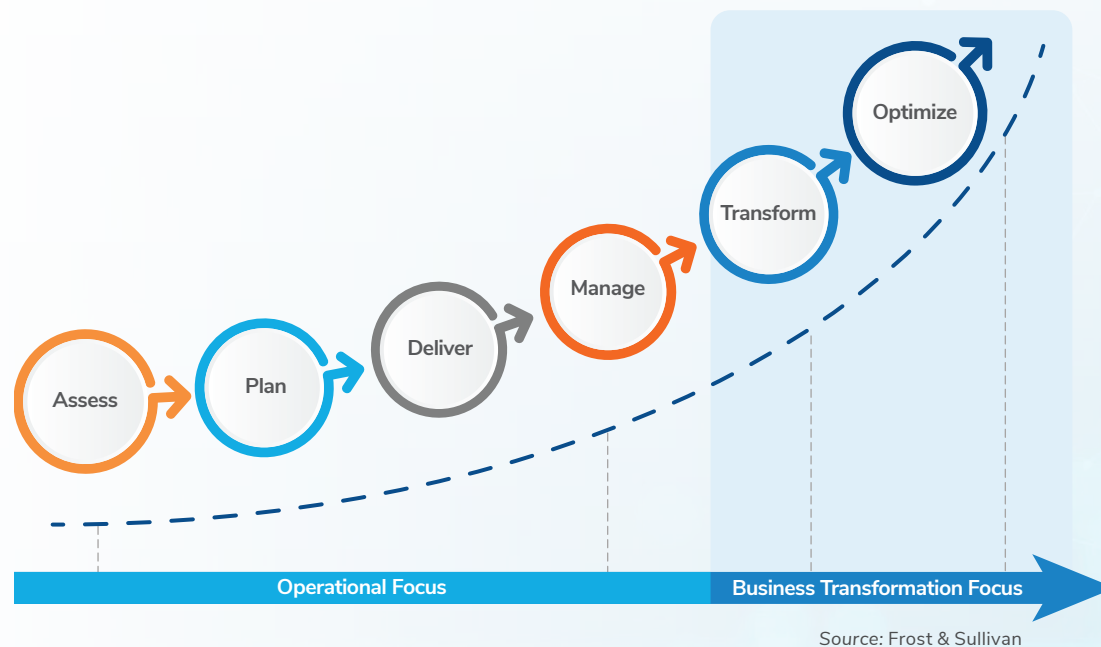
Without a strategic vision and roadmap, unified communications DEPLOYMENTS COMMONLY STAGNATE IN THE TACTICAL MANAGEMENT STAGE, prohibiting businesses from reaching the aspired Transformation and Optimization stages to MAXIMIZE THE RETURN ON THEIR INVESTMENTS.

SUCCESSFUL UC IMPLEMENTATIONS MOST OFTEN TAKE PLACE IN PHASES THAT MAY OVERLAP IN THE SOLUTION LIFECYCLE, AS FOLLOWS:

Assessment takes stock of the current environment spanning technology, workforce demographics, workplace configurations, and business goals on both business-unit and company levels, with regard to key performance indicators (KPIs) such as revenue growth and cost reduction.

Planning comprises strategies created to maximum technology value and enhance business processes. It is an opportunity to envision and design UC as part of broader digital transformation programs and plan each step of the transformation process.

Delivery encompasses solution implementation, provisioning, user and admin training, and initial utilization for select user groups, sites or companywide.

Management spans the ongoing maintenance and administration (e.g., MACDs), and ongoing monitoring to evaluate system performance, cost, utilization, and other attributes.

Transformation leverages the full benefits of next-generation communications technology as a business enablement tool or part of digital transformation initiatives. It aims to deliver tangible business outcomes aligned with the KPIs pre-determined in the Assessment phase.

Optimization is continuous adjustment and fine tuning to ensure sustained or increasing business benefits (e.g., process automation, user productivity, operational efficiencies, and cost reduction) and satisfaction of changing business and user needs.

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Microsoft Teams at the Forefront

With a strong productivity-enhancing value proposition and broad IT, communications, and collaboration functionality, Microsoft Teams has emerged as one of the most widely adopted toolsets enabling business transformation and optimization.

In numerous respects, Microsoft Teams is an immense improvement over hardware-centric on-premises communications deployments as well as over less functionally robust unified communications as a service (UCaaS) offers.

Wide-ranging Teams functionality—from video conferencing and content sharing, to call control, team collaboration, enterprise instant messaging and presence management, business productivity and line-of-business software, mobility, and analytics—all variously packaged in easy to buy, provision, and consume user licenses, is indeed alluring.

Microsoft's ownership of the desktop and **TIGHT INTEGRATION ACROSS THE MICROSOFT STACK** make Teams an attractive option for businesses seeking to **MODERNIZE COMMUNICATIONS** and collaboration environments with cloud-based services.

MICROSOFT TEAMS' STRENGTHS LEAD TO UNPRECEDENTED GROWTH IN 2020

115 million
Teams daily active users (DAU)
(October, up from 13 million in July 2019)

500,000 organizations use Teams, including **91** of **Fortune 100** companies.

2 million Android downloads in November 2020

60 million mobile DAU
as of November 2020

300% increase in weekly Microsoft Teams mobile users
(February 2020 to March 2020)

30 Billion collaboration minutes in a **single day**
(October 2020)

Source: Microsoft

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Fitting Microsoft Teams into Your Communications Strategy

Although offering a broad and strong applications suite, Microsoft Teams does not require an all-or-nothing deployment approach.

Many businesses adopt Teams in conjunction with other solutions as they need the flexibility to:

- **augment missing Teams capabilities** with 3rd-party solutions (e.g., contact center, paging, fax, SMS, and failover support)

- **access best-of-breed functionality** from multiple vendors including, Microsoft, Poly, Five9, Cisco, and other leaders

- **preserve existing communications investments** and associated workflows

- integrate existing assets and **migrate to Teams in a phased approach**

- **avoid the potential risks** of relying on a single vendor or network

- receive **more comprehensive support** than Microsoft directly provides

  - domestic and international managed and professional services

  - support for the hardware, software and connectivity needs of home-based and frontline workers

Requirements such as these can easily overwhelm in-house technical staff. Deployments can quickly become stagnated as management tasks restrain the company's ability to move the needle on operational efficiencies, cost savings, employee productivity, or enhancing workflows.

THE EXPERTISE OF A TRUSTED PARTNER CAN ALLEVIATE PAIN POINTS AND ACCELERATE A BUSINESS ON THE PATH TO LONG-TERM SUCCESS WITH MICROSOFT TEAMS.

Top IT-Related Challenges Over the Next Two Years: Communications and Collaboration, Global, 2020

Challenge	%
Dealing with security concerns	31%
Systems integration; managing multi-vendor solutions	31%
Aligning IT/telecom with business strategies	30%
Ensuring network stability/reliability	30%
Moving to the cloud	29%
Enhancing e-commerce capabilities	27%
Dealing with privacy concerns	25%
Skills shortage; training requirements	25%
Providing an omnichannel customer experience	18%
Lack of budget	18%

A trusted partner is often needed to **STRATEGICALLY ADVANCE UCaaS DEPLOYMENTS** from a daily operational management focus into the more **POWERFUL TRANSFORMATION AND OPTIMIZATION ADOPTION PHASES WHERE NEXT-LEVEL BUSINESS VALUE IS UNLOCKED**.

Source: Frost & Sullivan

Considerations When Selecting Your Cloud Communications Provider

For all of the inherent strengths of Microsoft Teams, **access to Microsoft's technology ecosystem is also a key Teams adoption driver**.

An ideally qualified provider is an active participant in the Microsoft partner ecosystem and has the relationships and skill sets to build and support best-of-breed solutions anchored by Teams, including:

ENDPOINTS:

Support for market-leading range of Teams-certified endpoints to ensure consistent, high performance user and administrator experiences for any endpoint in any environment: working from homes, offices workstations/desktops, meeting rooms or on the go.

- **97%** use meeting room-based video conferencing today or will within two years

- **88%** use desktop video conferencing today or will within two years

- **83%** use desktop or mobile unified communications clients today or will within two years

- **80%** use professional headsets today or will within two years

(Source: Frost & Sullivan)

CALL CONTROL:

A proven track record of supporting 3rd-party call control solutions and integrating them with Microsoft Teams via Direct Routing to support the calling platform and endpoints that each business, location or team requires.

- **28%** rank systems integration as a challenge

(Source: Frost & Sullivan)

- **62%** report using Cisco endpoints and Microsoft Teams

(Source: Mio)

CLOUD CONTACT CENTER:

Expertise in cloud-native omni channel contact center service integrations with Teams and Skype for Business communications and collaboration, Dynamics CRM, and more to satisfy evolving business and customer requirements.

- **31%** rank digital channels and technologies as a top investment focus

- **28%** rank digital channel integration as a priority

- **27%** rate moving customer experience solutions to the cloud as a priority

- **25%** say implementing omni channel customer care is challenging

(Source: Frost & Sullivan)

Your right-fit provider maintains a portfolio and partner ecosystem that **ENABLES DEPLOYMENT OF THE MOST APPROPRIATE COMPONENTS** for your organization and assists with management and migration of your UCaaS solution into a **TRANSFORMATIONAL BUSINESS TOOL SET**.

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Provider Spotlight—CallTower

A well-established Microsoft Gold and Cisco Premier partner, CallTower leverages a longstanding track record of supporting call control environments for end-user organizations across industries and sizes. The provider has a proven track record in managing and customizing communications environments, empowering call handling and administration features from anywhere, at any time.

CALLTOWER DELIVERS A NATIVE TEAMS DIRECT ROUTING TURNKEY BUSINESS SOLUTION

CallTower's Direct Routing utilizes additional platforms for enhanced call control to provide native integration with Microsoft Teams in an architecture that drives network efficiencies, and mitigates performance and quality issues. This empowers businesses to customize Teams to meet the needs of each department—marketing, accounting, customer service, sales and others—with different requirements. Leveraging Microsoft Teams with CallTower delivers those requirements.

Robust cloud-based Five9 contact center services are supported by CallTower with a native integration into Microsoft Teams and over 100 CX integrations, allowing businesses to migrate from on-premises call center platforms to next-generation omni channel solutions with full insights throughout the customer experience journey. CallTower and Five9 also provide a tight integration with Skype for Business and Cisco UC solutions.

A partnership between CallTower and Poly delivers a full portfolio of Teams-certified devices and services that assure performance meets Microsoft's high standards for personal and group communications in offices, meeting rooms, at home, roaming the campus or on the road. Teams device certification delivers value-added capabilities, such as auto-provisioning, advanced analytics, noise cancellation and data-rich reports for any and all endpoints.

Unified communications platforms deployed on CallTower's network enable the provider to fill gaps within the Microsoft Teams calling feature set (e.g., extended features for SIP devices; support for paging, door phones/chimes, fax and credit card machines, CRM integrations, SMS texting, failover, dedicated circuits, SD-WAN and more) that are required for business process continuity and enhancement when migrating to Teams.

CallTower Connect is a web-based portal for multi-vendor management, monitoring and reporting of applications, infrastructure and devices integrated with Microsoft Teams. CT Connect simplifies life for administrators and transforms them from break-fix personnel into orchestrators with the insights to facilitate efficient business operations and user productivity.

CT Cloud Unite CRM App offers a library of over 40 integrations for the non-contact center user. Teams can be quickly and cost-effectively customized for specific vertical, line-of-business, location, or user requirements.

CallTower meets Microsoft's most stringent security and compliance requirements with its ability to support Microsoft 365 GCC High for government contractors that work with the Department of Defense integrating deployments with CallTower voice solutions, demonstrating CallTower's attention and credibility in an area that is a top priority for IT decision makers.

Microsoft Teams Direct Routing for GCC High: CallTower is the only voice provider delivering GCC High Audio Conferencing and PSTN calling via Microsoft Teams Direct Routing through AudioCodes session border controllers (SBCs) for security.

"Franklin reviewed several Direct Routing solutions and were uncomfortable with the limited experience of some vendors and the level of third-party integration that persisted in their architecture. With CallTower, the limitations with voice calling on Microsoft Teams have been eliminated."

—Franklin Sports, Steve King, Managing Partner at AllConnex

"When we considered how to fill the known gap in voice and telephony solutions for GCC High, we knew the solution would be complex; it was essential to have a smart and experienced company as a partner."

—C3 Integrated Solutions, Bill Wootton, President

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Call to Action

You have chosen to implement Microsoft Teams to address your organization's unique requirements.

Keep your expectations high—support your business, workforce and future plans with the best resources available.

Partner with a qualified Microsoft Gold provider to ensure Teams meets all of your needs in an environment tailored for your business.

- ▶ access market-leading Teams conferencing and collaboration services
- ▶ address Teams calling feature gaps
- ▶ benefit from native Teams Direct Routing functionality
- ▶ monitor and manage multivendor environments through a single pane of glass
- ▶ seamlessly integrate communications with business applications and processes
- ▶ migrate to Teams at your own pace
- ▶ rationalize disparate, pandemic-based investments to streamline and simplify your environment
- ▶ align your UC capabilities with your Customer Experience capabilities to meet evolving business requirements
- ▶ white glove implementation team
- ▶ dedicated Client Success Team
- ▶ 24/7/365 US-based support

Rely on partner expertise and resources to transform and optimize your Teams investments.

To learn more about how to take your Microsoft Teams deployments and your business to the next level click here.

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