



SHIFT + RIGHT →
MICROSOFT'S NAVIGATION
FROM UCAAS TO CCAAS

Teams in/as a Contact Centre

Introduction

Digital disruption is transforming the way customers buy products or access service from enterprises. A key aspect of successful CX digital transformation is around contact centres. Contact Centres act as a gateway between a brand and its customers, it stands to reason that customer satisfaction and loyalty would rank as the top indicators of success.

However, in this digital age, there is an increasing gap between (rising customer) expectations and reality (contact centre employee challenges to deliver on customer expectations).

Most of the digital-savvy customers (>90%) don't want to wait for longer duration for issue resolution. And they are ready to drop brands with one negative customer service experience. They would like to interact with knowledgeable agents on the channels of their choice and don't want to repeat the same information while transitioning between channels.

From an agents' point of view, employees (>90%) highlighted that disjointed communications technologies are negatively impacting workflow and job satisfaction. These disjointed systems led to agents toggling between applications to effectively address customer concerns. Not to mention, this leads to wasted time (or increasing hold time), which in turn impacts customer satisfaction.

To address these, Incumbent contact centre service providers are convinced that existing contact centre offerings, in their stand-alone form, may not be sufficient to provide that level of experience that customers are looking forward to. They started integrating workforce management tools with Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning that is in turn helping their teams proactively identify key customer pain points and route them to the relevant functional experts (SMEs) within their Enterprise.

But, for the end customer, what matters is a resolution from the first channel or first engagement that they choose. While enterprises are strengthening their contact centers with the latest tools/ technologies, there has not been a strong correlation between these investments and customer satisfaction. In fact, customers continue to say that they expect an unpleasant experience from the contact centre.

In this backdrop, we try to explore if Microsoft Teams, one of the most successful Unified Collaboration tools, can transform into a full-fledged contact centre offering. What are the possible ways in which Enterprises leverage Microsoft stack for adding value to their contact centre portfolio?

The Journey of Contact Centres

The invention of ACD (Automatic Call Distributor) technology and the subsequent introduction of 0800 toll free numbers have propelled the growth of call centres in their early growth phase (Refer Illustration 1)

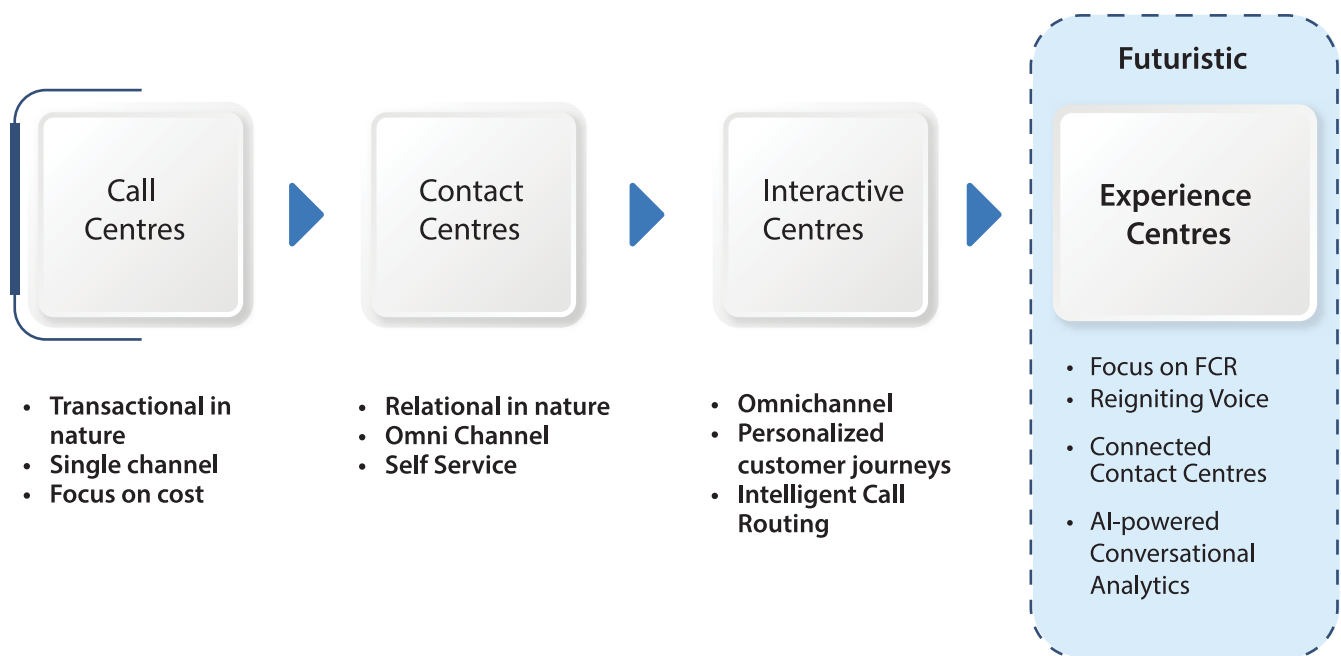


Illustration 1: Call Center Transformation Over the Years

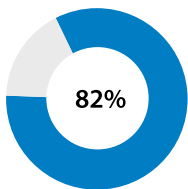
Below are the most defining stages/ phases that helped transform call centres into contact centres over the years

- Agent response time to problem resolution time – It is not about how fast an agent answers the call but how fast they are able to resolve customer issue
- Single channel to Omnichannel – From a siloed set-up to an integrated interface covering phone, mail, chat, bot, and web
- ACD to SBR – From people availability to skill availability
- IVRs to Smart choices – Poorly designed IVRs to self-service tools
- Data-driven to Analytics-led decision-making – From periodic analysis and follow-ups to Real-time analysis and recommendation

Fast forward to 2023: The relevance of Contact Centres in 2023 has only increased.

Contact centres are the focal point in redefining customer experience in enterprises. Their prominence only got reinforced in the post pandemic era.

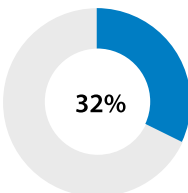
Don't Hold the Call But the Customer



Restoring to Pre pandemic Levels
Percentage of customers reaching out to contact centres



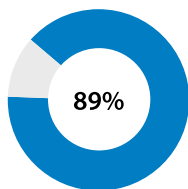
Brands with Leading CX rankings for 3+ years
Shareholder returns in the following decade



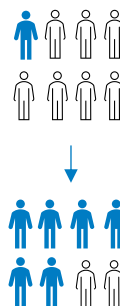
Impact of Bad Experience
Percentage of customers who will stop dealing with a brand after one bad experience



Customer Retention
Customer's likeliness to stick with a brand if the problems are resolved quickly



Customer Word of Mouth
Percentage of customers who will share their poor support experience with others



Customer Advocacy
Growth in Share of customers who are willing to recommend a brand that delivers simple experiences (2018 - 2022)

Illustration 2: Growing Influence of Contact centres in the post pandemic era

To address this demand, service providers have added new layers to existing systems to deliver a personalized experience for the end customer (for e.g., Sentiment Analysis using AI/ML, anywhere anytime support using Chatbots that are configured to work across devices).

As CX technologies continue to advance, service providers are looking for more innovative ways to further enhance value to the customer interactions. Few trends that are expected to drive the future include:

Future trends

- Meeting in Metaverse**
 - Customer and the service agent interacting with each other in a virtual environment
- Beyond Omnichannel**
 - Integrating CCaaS and CRM to build actionable insights based on customer intent & sentiment
- Focus Inward Excel Outward**
 - Integrating Workforce Management and Engagement tools with CCaaS systems
- AI becomes mainstream**
 - Multiple applications of AI - From automating operations, to more personalized forms of service
- Micro Video**
 - Short-form, user generated content
 - For e.g., Use case of Micro Video for Learning and Communication
- LCNC hyper growth trajectory**
 - Drive digital ex without developer dependency
 - Contionous evolution of offerings, Faster GTM
- Entry of Non-traditional players**
 - Zoom (CC)
 - Google (CC A)
 - Twilio (Flex)

Easy to “Hold the Call” but Difficult to “Hold the Customer”

It was observed that contact center agents of key vendors ran into the need for outside assistance on one out of every five calls. “I’ll put you on hold” and “let me call you back” are phrases that do not necessarily lead to a pleasant experience. To address this, CCaaS players are constantly exploring ways in which they can help agents gain access to instant messaging, can see which subject matter experts are available, and collaborate in a shared space. Even with the customer, these agents should be able to share documents, videos to address customer concerns.

CCaaS players are relying on technology partners and existing collaboration service providers to deliver the depth of solutions that customers demand. For example, prominent vendors like NICE, Genesys, Anywhere 365, Five9 have already integrated Microsoft Teams into their CCaaS portfolio.

Market Opportunity (from a future growth perspective)

The below illustration summarizes the current market scenario. While most of the vendors have a strong foothold either on the far left (CCaaS) or the far right (UCaaS), it is the convergence zone that has a great potential in terms of future growth. A strong foothold in this zone indicates that the vendor has the capability to provide an end-to-end service that includes seamless collaboration between internal users, contact centre employees and customers. Apart from 8*8, Zoom is another market player who realized the potential of “Shift-left” strategy by offering contact centre services.

CCaaS

UCaaS

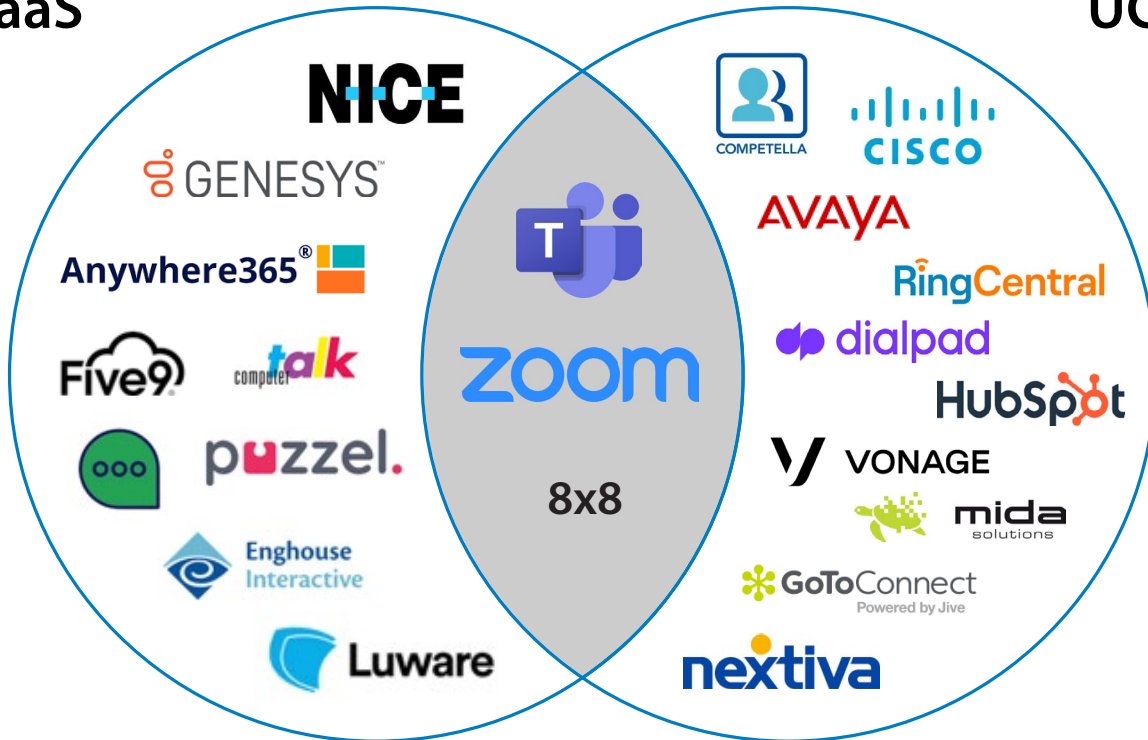


Illustration 3: Creating a Winning Strategy by tapping the grey area (Indicative list, not exhaustive)

While Enterprise workforce (comprising both contact centre and non-contact centre) that rely on effective communication and collaboration to get the job done may not always interact with each other, the technology tools that they use should interact. Through Workplace collaboration (a result of bundling UCaaS and CCaaS), organizations get the best of both tools from a single service provider. In addition to the obvious benefits of fewer hardware installation, Enterprises can benefit from –

- Stronger Office and Contact Centre Collaboration
- Enhanced Customer Experience
- Optimized CRM Integration
- Reduced cost of communication

The features of an integrated Solution

While there is no end to the most “ideal” feature, below is the “a-la-carte” features that service providers are offering in the market today (not exhaustive). Depending on the maturity, vendors are positioning their offerings in the market.



CCaaS Features

1. Call Logging
2. Call Recording
3. Call Monitoring
4. Alerts/ Escalation
5. Reporting/ Analytics
6. Call Routing
7. Queue Management
8. Computer Telephony Integration
9. IVR/ Voice Recognition
10. Predictive Dialer
11. Blended Call Centre
12. Call Transfer
13. Campaign Management
14. Call Scripting
15. Automatic Call Distribution
16. Chat/ Messaging
17. Inbound Call Centre
18. Outbound Call Centre
19. Manual Dialer
20. Progressive Dialer

UCaaS Features

1. Video Conferencing
2. Calendar Management
3. Project Management
4. Contact Management
5. Document Management
6. Task Management
7. Discussions/ Forums
8. Version Control
9. Brainstorming
10. Content Management
11. Real-time Editing

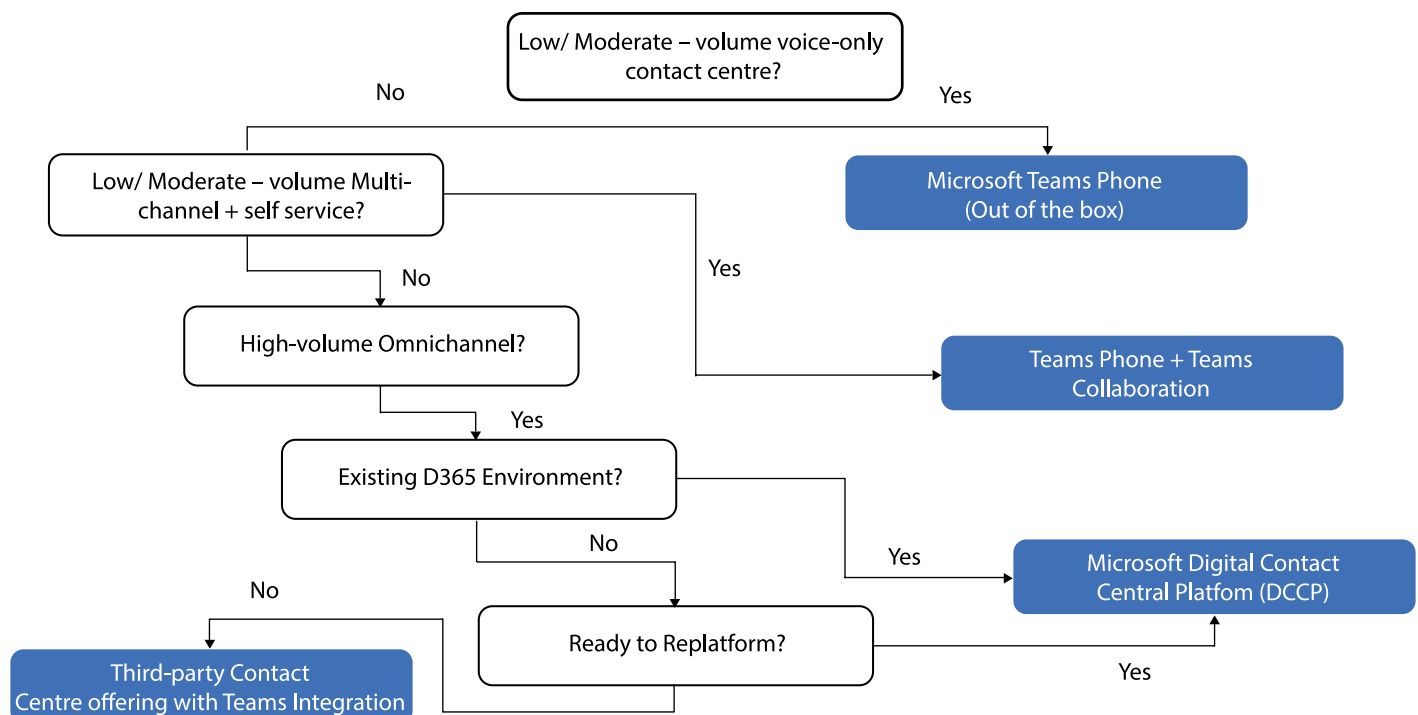
This is precisely the market positioning that Microsoft is tapping into. One area where Microsoft has a significant advantage over other UCaaS vendors is its dominant presence in the Enterprise segment – by way of Unified collaboration services using Teams.

Microsoft Teams' Applicability

As Microsoft Teams' adoption increases, and in particular its use for voice and telephony services, so too does the demand for its integration into contact center and customer support capabilities. As the use of Teams Phone for enterprise telephony gains increased interest among clients, we will list down possible scenarios that Enterprises can leverage Microsoft Teams as a contact center platform.

Out of the box, Teams gives employees the ability to make VoIP calls. Enterprises have the option to upgrade their existing plan/ tier if they are looking for advanced features (for e.g., call queues, auto attendants) that are not offered in the base tier. But even these add-on plans may not be enough if Enterprises are looking to have Teams as a full-fledged Customer Communications channel.

Below is a simple flowchart that depicts where Teams can add value to Enterprises' contact centre solution.



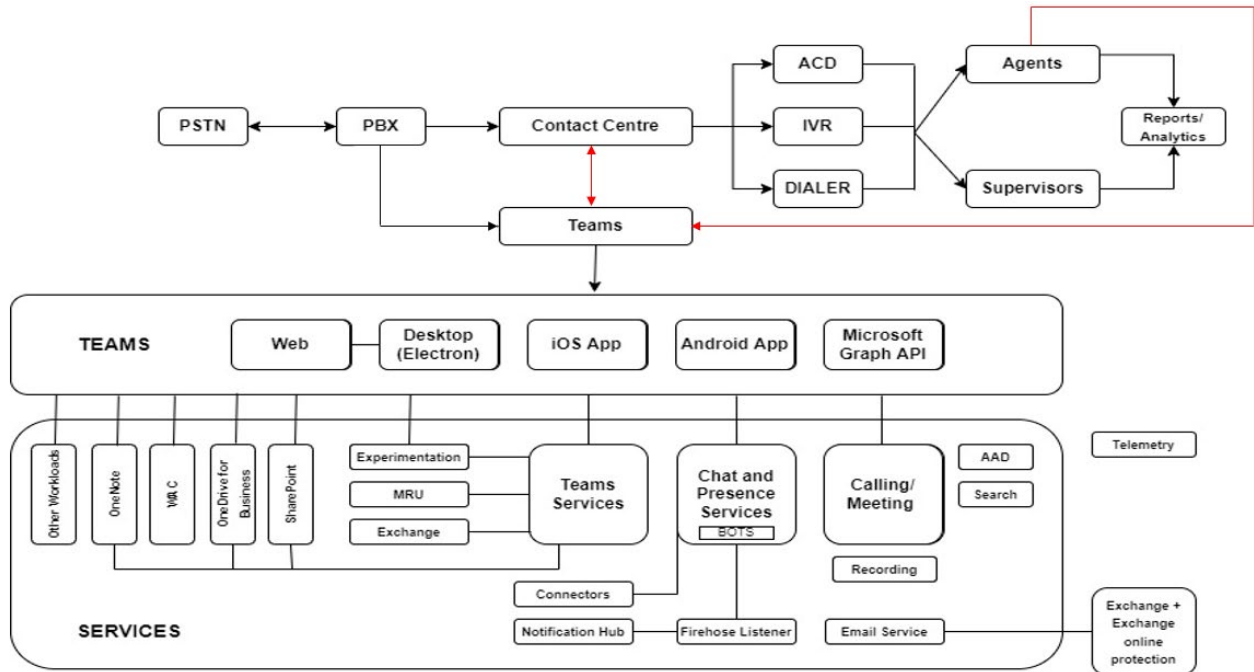
We will now explore these options in detail.

Low/ Moderate Voice-only – Teams Phone

Subscription	Teams Phone
Inclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Calls between Teams apps (one user to another) - Make/ Receive calls from Mobile/ Landline
Add-ons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teams Phone Standard - Teams Phone with Calling Plan
Other advanced features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Auto attendant - Call Queues - Voice enabled channels - Screen-pop

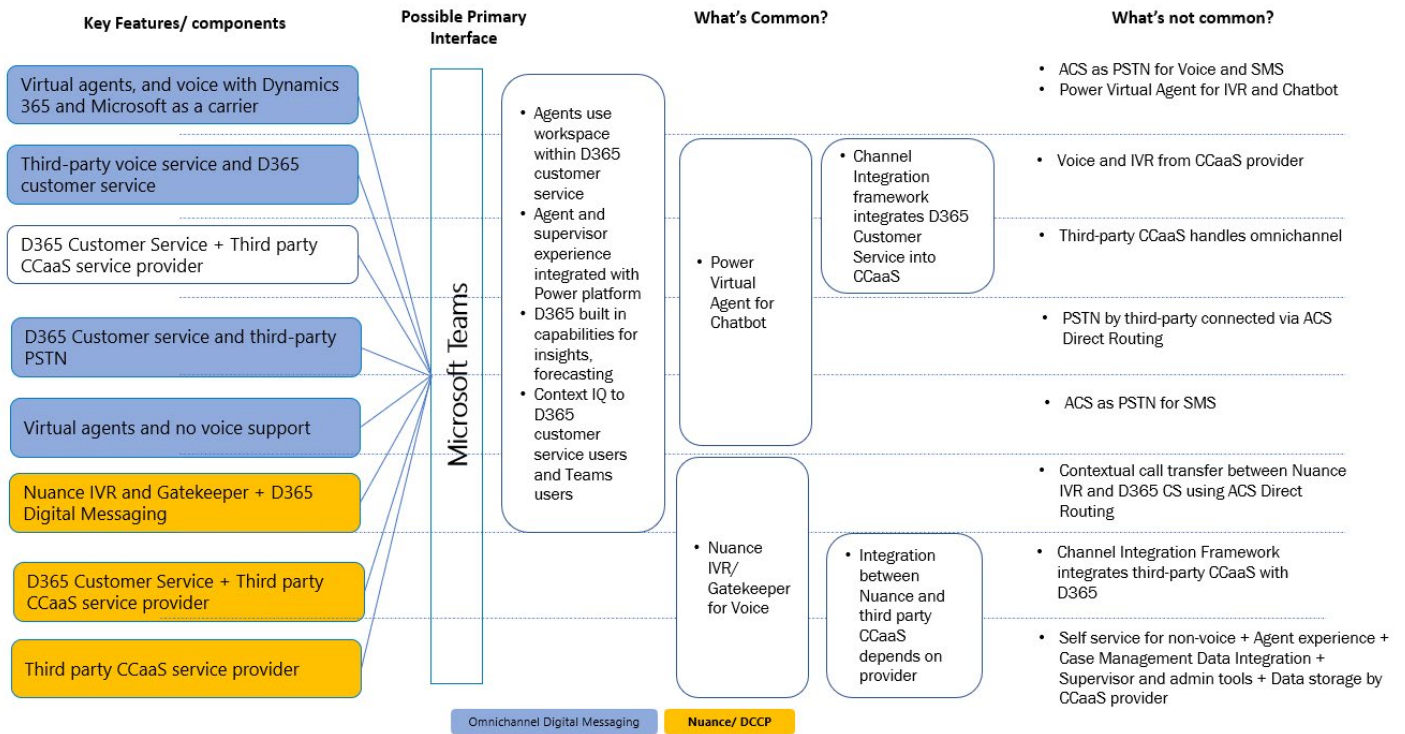
Low/ Moderate Multi-channel with Self-service – Teams (Phone + Collaboration)

Below illustration portrays how a combination of Teams Phone and Collaboration can deliver seamless experience for the end customer



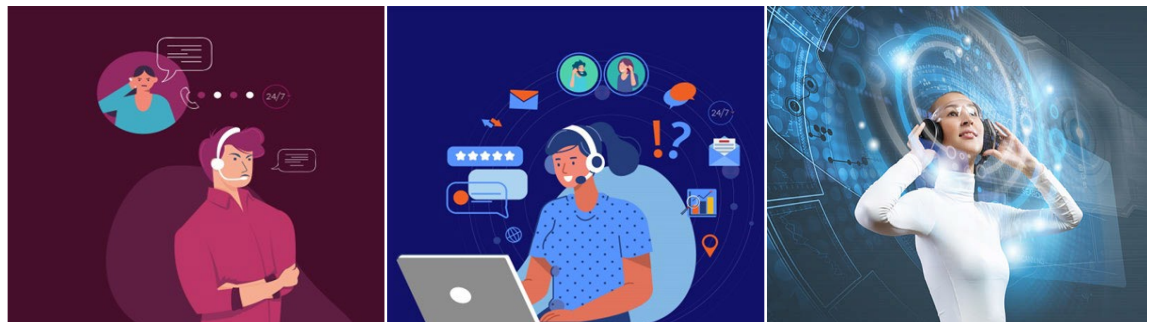
High-volume Omni-channel with/ without existing D365 Environment (DCCP and other options)

Whether an Enterprise is using a third party CCaaS services or Microsoft Dynamics Customer Service Module, the below illustration highlights multiple options on how they can leverage Teams to further differentiate on customer service delivery.



Teams Integrated into Third party CCaaS (Connect, Extend and Power Models)*

While integrating Teams into their contact centre solutions, CCaaS providers can select from one of the three options, as prescribed by Microsoft.



	Connect Model	Extend Model	Power Model
Applicability/Requirements of CCaaS Vendor	Certified SBCs and Direct Routing to connect CCaaS solution to Microsoft Teams	Use Azure bots and the Microsoft Graph Communication APIs	Use SDKs to embed native Teams experience in CCaaS App
Key Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Automated Virtual assistants Skill-based routing queues Check agents' availability Transfers and group call support Teams Graph APIs and Cloud Communication APIs Integration Multi-tenant SIP trunking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teams Graph APIs Cloud Communication APIs Integration Teams-based app for agent experience Teams as the primary calling endpoint for the agents Teams' client calling for all the call controls Agent experience app for both Teams web and mobile client Analytics, workflow management, role-based experiences for agents in the CCaaS app in Teams Chat and collaboration experiences integrated with Teams clients Preserve performance and quality of Teams client experiences in all apps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yet to be launched

(*Source: Microsoft)

Conclusion

Microsoft Teams continues to be the most preferred collaboration tool for Enterprises. In addition, Microsoft has been adding new features at regular intervals (For e.g., call delegate enhancements, Zoom in and out of a screen share during meetings, Compact chat, Review meetings in minutes in the meeting recap tab etc.). Some of these features can be very helpful for contact centre agents to drive effective conversations with their customers. While Teams may not be able to provide all the features present in a mature contact centre, we have explored multiple scenarios where Enterprises can benefit from the platform either by way of integrating Teams within an existing solution or leverage select capabilities depending on the requirement.

Author



Venugopal has over 19 years of diverse experience in the areas of Research, Consultative Selling, and Strategy Support.

He has extensive experience of working closely with senior leadership to build Market Estimation Models, Tracking Sales and Market Strategies of competitors, Designing Go-To-Market Strategies for Industry-specific Solutions across industries including TMT, Insurance and Retail. He is currently working as a Principal Consultant at Infosys Microsoft Practice. In addition to driving cross-industry consulting engagements, Venu is also actively engaged in advising clients on the impact of Sustainability on their business operations and how Infosys can propel clients' Sustainability agenda – making it a winning strategy/proposition.



TERMINOLOGY USED IN THIS POINT OF VIEW

- ACD: Automatic Call Distribution
- ACS: Azure Communication Services
- AI: Artificial Intelligence
- CCaaS: Contact Centre as a Service
- CEC: Customer Engagement Centre
- CPaaS: Communication Platform as a Service
- CRM: Customer Relationship Management
- CX: Customer Experience
- DCCP: Digital Contact Centre Platform
- FCR: First Contact Resolution
- GTM: Go to Market
- IVR: Interactive Voice Response
- LCNC: Low code No Code
- ML: Machine Learning
- PSTN: Public Switched Telephone Network
- SBC: Session Border Control
- SBR: Skill-based routing
- SDK: Software Development Kit
- SME: Subject Matter Expert
- UCaaS: Unified Collaboration as a Service

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