

# Simplifying Microsoft Teams Voice and Unified Communications Deployment



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*By Doug Barney*

Teams migration entails teaching end users to take advantage of all this rich collaboration solution has to offer. A barrier just as large is the administrative burden of setting up Teams services, and here the toughest nut is configuring enterprise-ready voice and communications services. While certainly a migration issue, this is perhaps better described as a deployment concern.

Microsoft is anxious to have its Office 365 customers maximize productivity and boost collaboration through deep use of Teams. Many of these benefits stem from Teams' rich and insanely cost-effective voice and unified communications (UC) capabilities, which are tightly integrated with the full suite of O365 productivity services.

At the same time, UC replaces the need for expensive and inflexible legacy voice systems, replaced by Voice over IP (VoIP) enhanced with conferencing, video chat, meetings, and even built-in recording and transcription.

As great as these integrated services are, they are not always so easy to configure. Microsoft recognizes this. In fact, a global labor services enterprise and O365 customer was still using Skype, and Microsoft is heavily interested in getting them to Teams. Their barrier for Teams adoption is moving to Teams' voice capabilities, which stemmed from the organization's decentralized nature, and the fact that it crossed international boundaries. Meanwhile, administrative delegation within Teams was not as robust as it was with the far older Skype.

These delegation limitations manifest in areas such as using Skype as an auto attendant and call queue, and moving these functions to the vastly more modern, integrated and feature-packed Microsoft Teams. These functions need to be set up to suit local needs, and Skype, which has been around since 2003, still has a somewhat easier time than the more recent Teams, which only launched in 2016.

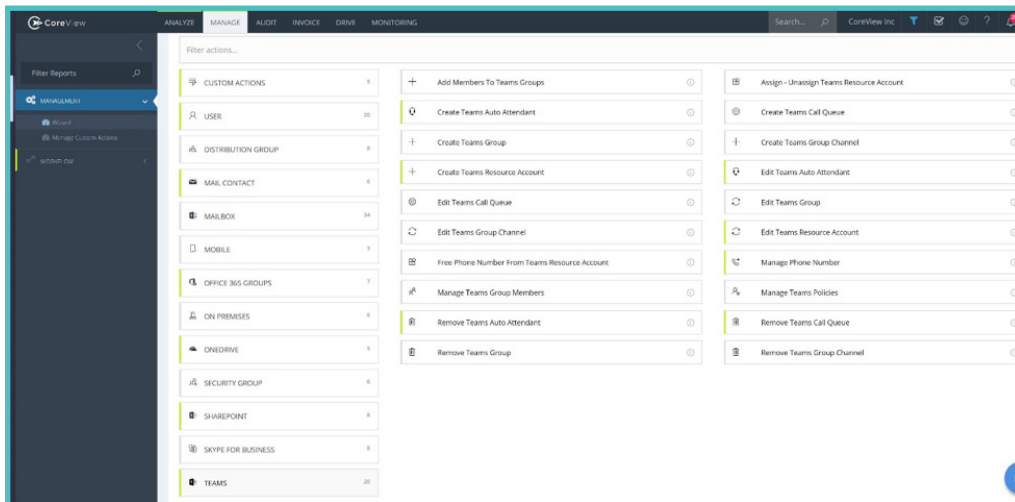
Microsoft reached out to CoreView for help, and we built a set of specific Teams voice actions tied to Role-Based Access Control (RBAC) and segregation of duties. CoreView already does a lot for Teams migration and adoption, focusing on adoption campaigns and learning. Our new features help Teams migration and deployment by fine-tuning how Teams voice administration is handled.

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As you can see in the following screen shot, these new voice actions include:

- Create Teams Auto Attendant
- Create Teams Group
- Edit Teams Call Queue
- Free Phone Number from Teams Resource Account
- Remove Teams Auto Attendant
- Create Teams Call Queue
- Edit Teams Auto Attendant
- Manage Phone Number
- Manage Teams Policies

## Voice Teams Deployment Actions



# Microsoft Calls for CoreView Help

With these customer hurdles in mind, Microsoft reached out to CoreView for answers. CoreView developers spent months diving into the issues, and building deep functional delegation capabilities specific to Teams voice and UC deployment. The result is that CoreView now provides all the commands and the interface to allow central IT to delegate out very quickly and very securely just those voice functions without delegating the full role of Teams administrator to needed local groups.

This speaks to both CoreView's RBAC and functional delegation of duties. That distinction between a role and a function is important here. Functions are more granular than roles. Roles can be seen as a concatenate -- a combination of various functions. In fact, roles such as Exchange or Active Directory (AD) are becoming rarer than functional admin assignments -- at least for CoreView administrator customers -- who can granularly grant and control these rights.

Today, IT staffers have functions they need to do as part of their job, such as creating a user, changing a password, initializing a mailbox, changing their name, setting up OneDrive, or configuring Teams voice features. These various functions are not easily defined into a particular role. Instead, CoreView can break what IT or even non-IT professionals need to do into functions that then can be combined into what a user's job actually entails.

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# Why Voice is so Tough

Teams' voice functions are very specific to departments, groups of users, and geography. Meanwhile calendars and chat are relatively generic functions.

Setting up voice systems for geographically dispersed organizations entails not just the language issue, but requires specific greetings from departments, and a determination of how calls are routed amongst teams of people.

"Voice functions are very localized – who's going to cover for this particular person during lunch breaks and vacation, who is in our pool of administrative assistants, and who are they allowed to access the voicemail for? Items like calendar settings are much more generic, but voice is very personalized," said Matt Smith, CoreView solution architect.

With Teams, local set up of voice is not so easy. For instance, as languages change based on country served, so does the need for the recording, "Hi, thank you for calling Acme. Press one for sales, press two for support." These greetings all need to be recorded in different languages. If central IT is located in the United States, their rendition of languages such as Spanish, Portuguese, German, or Swahili does not cut it. The answer is to have local people who know the language and the local needs do the setup – which means these folks need local function-based delegated rights. With rights limited to function and location, these admins cannot access the global tenant, eliminating a security problem. Even better if these local, voice UC-focused rights can be granted temporarily, and taken away when the setup is done.

Call routing is another tricky set up issue. Let us say seven people should be in the sales queue when somebody calls 1-800-ACME. Maintaining that configuration across time zones and international boundaries is logistically difficult for a non-local admin to sort out.

A better idea is to allow non-admins, non-Office 365 professionals to set up these voice and unified communications-oriented Teams systems. It is not just the virtual tenants and the delegation that makes this possible, but just as importantly, CoreView makes it easy from an administrative standpoint for non-IT pros to do this work.

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CoreView solution architect

# Complexity of Rolling out Teams Made Simple

Teams' voice features are more difficult to roll out than other functions such as calendar, chat, file sharing and so forth. CoreView RBAC, delegation of duties and least privilege capabilities, along with our new Teams calls and UC set up features, make it a breeze.

Compare this to the Microsoft Office 365 Admin Center. "In the Microsoft world, I can give you Application Administrator, which is one of about 50 roles that Microsoft has defined. That number continues to grow because Microsoft has a mantra of 'Admins must fit into a role.' Unfortunately, the real IT world doesn't work that way," Smith said.

Smith explained that the Application Administrator role, given by the native O365 Admin Center, has 75 different attributes. "But nobody can fully define what those 70 plus attributes actually do. IT cannot look the chief security officer in the eye and say, 'I gave them Application Administrator rights, but have no idea now why he can the manage fields in Active Directory. That was not what we intended.' That's not a viable model," explained Smith. "What CoreView does in contrast is have a checkbox-based model. If I want you to create a mailbox, you create a mailbox. If IT wants to scope that to Australia, it can scope that to Australia users in a matter of a minute, not weeks or days or months."

In fact, a huge barrier to Teams adoption in general, and voice and UC in particular, is that not all the needed controls are in the native Microsoft O365 Admin Center Portal. Moreover, IT cannot granularly define what you are able to do – and what you are not able to do. While Microsoft is encouraging customers to move to Teams, when you get down to deployment, it is often in the hands of a small number of global admins that can't fine tune the solution, especially UC features, for the needs of specific groups and geographic locations.

"Meanwhile, everybody is waiting in queue, saying 'I need a channel created, I need an Office 365 group created, or I want to set permissions on this.' The entire administrative model either goes through a choke point or we open it up to a slew of global admins and Teams becomes the wild, wild West," Smith explained.

In contrast, CoreView provides the usage statistics and metrics from both a user and data assets standpoint. Then the secure delegation model optimizes the entire IT organization for adopting Teams securely.

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# Least Privilege Access

Today's enterprises understand the concept of least privilege access. CoreView takes this concept to a whole new level for Office 365, providing rapid deployment of least privilege access that is highly defined and easy to configure.

In the Microsoft Office 365 native Admin Center world, IT can give an admin the Exchange Administrator role so they can create mailboxes for your business unit, say, in Malaysia. That Exchange Administrator role offers the ability to create user mailboxes and shared mailboxes in conference rooms, and change mail routing for the entire organization. However, that may not be the kind of privilege you want to delegate out to a remote administrator in Malaysia. It is simply too much power, and too much of a security risk.

That same logic is just as true for voice configuration. Instead, limit these rights through RBAC and functional delegation of duties.

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# The Role of Workflow

Workflow is also key to the equation. To set up Teams UC properly, certain tasks must be performed in order. It is not reasonable to expect a person who is not an expert in Office 365 administration to understand voice deployment, for instance, all the dependencies. Take mailbox administration. You have to create a user before you can create a mailbox, which seems obvious. However, there are many layers of subtleties beneath that. You need to wait until the mailbox is fully created before setting a litigation hold or retention policies on it, and so forth.

Workflow gets all these dependencies right, and even puts in the waits and the retries, which are important because O365 is a shared environment of over 200 million users. Things do not often happen instantaneously within a system as large as Office 365.

Without workflow, even if you knew the exact commands to operate, and the order that they needed to be operated in, people sometimes start the task and then have to wait – and they don't know how long, 15, 30 minutes, an hour for, say, step three of seven to complete. So they switch to another task, and critical step number four never gets finished due to human error.

A large number of data breaches are because admins did not complete all required steps, and misconfiguration arises.

CoreView workflow eliminates that human error, ensures that all the dependencies are met. Moreover, it guarantees that desired configuration management practices are met. While configuration management is often found in the realm of machines, it is just as important for setting up user accounts and other data assets like mailboxes, shared mailboxes, and Teams channels.

In the case of Teams, and voice systems a higher-level admin can create workflows to set up Teams-oriented voice functions, routing and that sort of thing, and provide that to local employees that can simply apply those workflows and those processes to their own individual environments.

With CoreView workflow, these local workers or admins get a form to fill out instead of waiting on a human asset to execute on that form. CoreView workflow automates the process so it is much timelier, and more straightforward. It defines exactly what data is needed to process the request, and CoreView workflow processes that request efficiently and precisely.

A person needing to set up Teams' voice features in Spain, for instance, could use a form provided by higher level admin, and apply that to setting up call features such as auto attendant for their organization, department, or group of users. Even better, this workflow is available on demand, 24 hours a day, seven days a week in their language. There is no need to pick up the phone, or translate user requests. In fact, if you translate these requests using Google Translate or something similar, the subtlety gets completely lost in translation.



# Helping Communications Professionals Step In

This workflow and automation is also useful to other technology professionals involved in unified communications and telephony. This could include a separate telephony department, or dedicated unified communications professionals involved in trying to exploit Teams features.

Today the Office 365 platform spans so much, IT is bound to cross-organizational boundaries, and Teams is a perfect example – it combines chat with file access, collaboration, conferencing, and voice. Automating the deployment and configuration of these features, and localizing set up, increases IT efficiency, and means those doing the setup do not have to make multiple requests across those boundaries, or depend upon enterprise IT staff who juggle many priorities. Meanwhile, CoreView workflow can go from department to department, and if there are multiple approvals, automate that process and perform administrative actions.

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# The Teams UC Economic Payoff

There are huge economic benefits to fully exploiting Team's voice features. In years past, voice systems such as PBXes and related gear were massively expensive. Harnessing Teams to provide these functions is far less expensive, and provides vastly more function and flexibility.

Microsoft long ago targeted unified communications with solutions such as Lync. In the early days, Microsoft tried to compete with established UC vendors such as Cisco, but then switched to a different, decidedly Microsoft direction. Microsoft really hit its stride recently with Teams and its deep integration with all Office 365 services. Teams "combines not just voice collaboration but data and all the data assets that Microsoft has to bring to bear, such as integrating with the information you're currently working on, the ability to share that data within a Teams' session, plus white boarding and all kinds of other application and data integrations," Smith pointed out.

There is a huge ROI for deploying a full collaboration suite like Teams, and voice and UC greatly add to those economic benefits.

The 32-page Forrester Report, [The Total Economic Impact of Microsoft Teams](#), finds the ROI of Teams adoption to be a staggering 832%. The report offers formulas you can apply to your own Teams workloads, and to measure the value of a successful Teams migration campaign, which can be easily tracked on an ongoing basis.

Voice is a huge area of payback. "Teams allows customers to get rid of an array of communications hardware and software tools, and reduce or eliminate the use of non-Teams web conferencing, as well as telephony solutions and services such as mobile phone, long-distance, and on-premises telephony products," the report found.

Telecom savings over three years for 5,000 workers is \$648,727, Forrester found.

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# CoreView Helps Realize Your Teams Dreams

Find your level of Teams adoption and usage FREE with our new [CoreDiscovery](#) solution. You can get your free software now at the CoreDiscovery sign up page: <https://www.coreview.com/core-discovery-sign-up/>

Or you can [request a demo](#) of our solutions!

You can also watch our webinar, [Moving from Skype for Business to Microsoft Teams](#), where Microsoft and CoreView executives walk you through the basics of Teams adoption.

Find your level of Teams adoption and usage FREE with our new [CoreDiscovery](#) solution.

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## About the Author

*Doug Barney was the founding editor of Redmond Magazine, Redmond Channel Partner, Redmond Developer News and Virtualization Review. Doug also served as Executive Editor of Network World, Editor in Chief of AmigaWorld, and Editor in Chief of Network Computing.*