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Microsoft Teams Revisited – A Fresh Analysis of Successful Deployments

A deep dive into enterprise drivers, lessons learned, and best practices to maximize the value of Microsoft Teams

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INTRODUCTION

Meeting solutions have garnered much focus over the last few years – from enterprise decision-makers, technology vendors, and analysts alike – and for a good reason: we're spending more time on these solutions than ever before. In 2019, Wainhouse estimates the number of *paid* per-user licenses for personal meeting solutions grew by 6.2 million to an all-time high of 36 million licenses – a year-over-year growth rate of 21%.[1]

Although impressive, this historical perspective does not even consider the recent seismic increase in remote working driven by the global adjustment that occurred in Q1 2020 as employers around the world rush to enable their employees with the tools needed to stay productive and connected in this "new normal." As a result, all major meeting solution vendors are reporting incredible increases in end-users over a very short period. Microsoft, for example, disclosed they had 44 million Teams users as of March 18, more than double the 20 million users the software maker reported in November. Microsoft Teams added 12 million new users between March 11 and March 18 alone.

And if this dramatic increase in licensed users is not enough, the management of communication and collaboration tools in your IT environment gets even more complicated as an explosion of freemium meeting solutions have found their way into the workplace. When this situation passes, ITDMs (IT Decision-Makers) will have to adjust their UC and meeting solutions strategies to a new paradigm where more end-users are familiar with and most likely demanding "remote working" use cases.

If you step back and look at the larger picture, meetings are just one critical component of a broader enterprise communications ecosystem. Users collaborate via three primary mechanisms – **content** that is created and shared through a managed platform that is commonly accessible, **messaging** via text using email and team chat solutions, and **meeting** in real-time via voice and video. This ecosystem includes a complex mix of applications and solutions from different vendors, often disconnected and unsupported by IT. Specifically, meeting solutions are everywhere in the enterprise, with the average knowledge worker reporting they use four or more *different* meeting solutions for business communications on a monthly basis.[2] This phenomenon is driven by an increasingly "meeting-centric" workplace, an increase in B2B collaboration, and flexible Bring-Your-Own-App (BYOA) enterprise policies…all compounded by the growing number of available meeting solutions.

While users hop between meeting solutions, odds are you'll find Microsoft within much of their communications workflow. At the end of 2019, Microsoft's CEO, Satya Nadella, reported over 200 million monthly active Office 365 enterprise users. In addition, the previously mentioned 44 million *daily* active users positions Teams as Microsoft's fastest-growing solution in history. These combined statistics place Microsoft as the market leader in the Enterprise Productivity market.

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[1] Estimate is for active meeting users of: Cisco Webex, Microsoft Teams (Meetings), Zoom Meetings, LogMeIn GoToMeeting, Google Hangouts Meet, and others (e.g., Bluejeans, Fastviewer, etc.). This does not include free licenses or paid users of messaging-only functionality.

[2] "Q3 2018 UC IT Decision Maker Survey," September 2018, Wainhouse Research

For the IT team supporting a Microsoft Active Directory, Office, and Exchange environment, the decision to consolidate a complex and redundant mix of meeting solutions into Microsoft Teams falls into the "no-brainer" category. Of course, IT preference does not always result in enterprise reality. While Microsoft Teams boasts a sizable active user population, most enterprises have implemented the messaging functionality of Teams but are only at the beginning of implementing Teams' meetings feature.

The reasons for this delay vary. For some organizations, meeting solutions garner more attention from users than essential platform functionality such as directory and email services that are critical to IT. As a result, IT can encounter a surprising amount of resistance when promoting a change from an end-user's current meeting solution to something more aligned with IT priorities. For other organizations, ITDMs have put the meetings workload in Microsoft Teams on a perpetual hold, waiting for the delivery of a critical feature-set before they consider it ready for their users. Others point to previous challenges rolling out a Microsoft meeting solution, either Skype for Business or early versions of Teams, and don't want a repeat of those complicated efforts.

Yet, while some enterprises wait for the right time, others have fully committed to the meetings functionality in Microsoft Teams. At over 27 million meetings a month, Microsoft Teams is quickly becoming one of the largest meeting platforms on the market. We've interviewed a number of these early adopters and found a consistent set of shared drivers, benefits, and lessons learned. These interviews, combined with our Wainhouse market insight and UC database, provide an updated view into the Microsoft Teams ecosystem – Microsoft's moving fast, and now's a good time to revisit the current experience.

Microsoft Teams Disrupts the Traditional UC Value Prop

The "UC Value Prop" has remained relatively unchanged over the year: save money, save time, deliver a consistent experience. We probed for details on the top drivers specific to Microsoft Teams with our IT partners – here's what they told us:

Delivers Impacts Beyond Travel Cost Savings – Enterprises with a large user population, or which are supporting a mix of redundant meeting solutions (or both) are expanding focus beyond the traditional travel savings driver. In other words, we are now seeing CFOs, alongside their CIO counterparts, sponsor initiatives to move to a single Unified Communications platform. They are vested in these initiatives because removing redundant solutions is as financially impactful (if not more) than just focusing on a cost category such as "travel." It also helps that the consolidation efforts can produce financial results that are tangible and measurable.

> *"Originally, our CFO connected 'video meetings' to travel costs – but now he's driving an initiative to consolidate our meetings onto Microsoft Teams. Why? We already pay for the Microsoft experience – if a user wants an alternative solution, they need to justify what they can't get by having their meetings with Teams first."*
>
> **VP of IT, Global Media Company**

Promises IT Synergy – The more complex enterprise has its hands full managing foundational components. To this end, Microsoft Teams is natively integrated into the Office 365 control panel, enabling IT to administer meetings as a "feature" instead of a standalone service. ITDMs often cite unified identity management as delivering the high-value synergy they require – map the user's identity, create authentication and compliance rules – and Teams adopts what's already in place.

"We are truly a Microsoft shop – moving to Teams, Stream, and SharePoint. Teams is the wrapper we expect to make life better for everyone. When you have this many users, you absolutely need to establish standards to make it all work."

Director of Windows, U.S. Healthcare Organization

Offers Centralized Security – Security and privacy are the top priorities for every IT team we talk to, but is often overlooked when it comes to meeting solutions. Those who are managing a large Microsoft Teams installation, however, are more likely to highlight "security and privacy" as a primary driver for their deployment. Fewer vendors, fewer pinholes in your edge, and a single management pane to conduct eDiscovery and manage compliance.

"Security is part of our DNA – our highest priority. We tie things down tight and narrow our vendor list. eDiscovery is significant, and content shares continue to grow like crazy – Teams gives us the opportunity to consolidate and manage our data better. We feel Microsoft Teams gives us a more secure environment all around."

EVP, Global Health Advocacy Organization

Encourages Employee Engagement and Inclusion – Virtually every employer we talk with shares an agenda or initiative related to increased productivity. At its core, productivity is tied directly to teamwork – the essential workflow for solving business challenges and achieving corporate goals. But making teamwork productive and efficient can be a challenging endeavor. Microsoft Teams may only be a piece of software, but it creates a platform that enables people to feel connected to other people. Need a quick answer? Send an IM. Need a face-to-face? Set up a video meeting. Want to make a co-worker smile? Send them a positive note, followed by a GIF. Maybe throw in a few emojis for good measure.

By increasing accessibility to others, you make organizational cultures less daunting; processes become more accessible as individuals quickly gain "self-serve" access to files, people, and communications through a user experience that is familiar and friendly. In short, the IT partners we've spoken to are finding the Microsoft Teams platform to be a robust toolset that helps promote employee engagement and inclusion, which ultimately leads to increased productivity.

Today's User Experience Is Not What You Remember

"We plan to move meetings to Microsoft Teams – once it's 'ready for prime time. 'Maybe next year."

Many IT Leaders We Talk to

We hear this quote regularly – many still have the perspective that Teams is missing something their users need before the platform is considered "ready to roll." While we understand that each enterprise has its list of critical requirements, we also understand that Microsoft is pumping out Teams updates faster than we can keep track of them. In the last six months, we've seen around 25 core feature releases on the worldwide Office 365 Teams platform – compare this to ~six Skype for Business server releases each *year*. Recent meeting-focused feature enhancements[3] include improved layouts, dual-screen support, improved lobby notification, better content options such as Microsoft Whiteboard, and support for new devices, to name a few.

[3] https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoftteams/rooms/rooms-release-note

This tempo may seem daunting to some IT decision-makers who are accustomed to a rigid change management process. However, this release tempo is likely the new standard going forward. In essence, current cloud services are built with feature velocity in mind, and users expect a continuous stream of feature updates thanks to their consumer app experience. If you're waiting for a specific feature, odds are it's already released – or at least on the published O365 roadmap.[4]

Here are the aspects of Microsoft Teams quoted as positive, recently changed, or key reasons our IT partners are confident using Microsoft Teams for meetings:

Improved Room Options at Lower Cost – The old Skype for Business' Surface Pro controller has been replaced by more accessible, general-purpose computing devices such as Intel-based small-form-factor PCs, enabling solution partners to create a more intuitive and flexible hardware experience. Microsoft has also expanded its Android client functionality to further equip partners with another cost-effective and familiar platform. As a result, hardware partners have delivered a growing range of meeting-room devices built to Teams-enable small, medium, and large conference rooms. Microsoft also offered a more cost-effective Meeting Room SKU – $15 per-room-per-month. ITDMs often mention the combination of expanded options for room devices, improved Teams' quality, and lower-cost room licensing as a welcome improvement.

Excellent Audio and Video Quality – In our research, the Microsoft Teams audio and video experience is generally quoted as "excellent" by the end-users and ITDMs. It supports up to 1080p video, uses the Opus audio codec, and includes a host of QoS and network controls to allow IT to ensure the best experience across their network. Those who make the transition from Skype for Business offers exceptionally glowing praise for Teams' A/V quality.

> *"Once we made the decision to 'Go Microsoft,' we evaluated both Skype for Business and Teams. We found the audio and video were far better on Teams – it's an excellent experience."*
>
> **VP of IT, Global Media Company**

Univerisal Guest Access – This was an old Achilles, heel for Microsoft Teams and a deal-breaker for many IT organizations. In Q1 2018, Microsoft delivered the guest access feature, allowing Teams users to invite anyone to a meeting via email – whether they have an O365 account or not. IT can control the functionality via policy, from basic on-off settings to more granular sharing and meeting-entry controls.

Reliable Mobile Experience – Another Skype for Business hangover, perhaps – but Teams' mobile experience is generally quoted as top-notch. From "hey, presence and chat just work," to "Wow, the meeting quality is great on mobile," we've found many IT leaders are bullish on Teams mobile.

> *"We've seen a significant increase in users joining Teams meetings from their mobile devices. Once a user realizes that Teams delivers a better mobile experience, the ball just started rolling."*
>
> **VP of IT, Global Media Company**

Simplified IT Administration – Most experienced IT teams are perfectly comfortable with the PowerShell admin experience. For us, lesser-skilled administrators, the Office 365 Admin portal is a critical service. Teams still requires the administrator to hop over to PowerShell for a few tasks, but the majority of controls have made their way into the Teams Admin Center." Similar to the user experience, we see new administrative controls surface at a rapid pace.

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[4] https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/roadmap?filters=Microsoft%20Teams%2CWorldwide%20(Standard%20Multi-Tenant)

Meeting Functionality That Delivers Benefits Beyond the Expected

Cost savings are now officially table-stakes in the Microsoft Teams conversation. Make no mistake, the savings opportunity can be considerable, depending on your current meeting solutions. However, the benefits quoted by our early adopter of the meeting functionality within Microsoft Teams go beyond the usual set of table-stakes we've grown accustomed to hearing. Here are some that resonated with us:

Meeting Transformation – Microsoft Teams has proven to be a catalyst in expanding the use of video within the enterprise. The common variable comes from the organization that has a long history of audio-centric meetings, driven by previous and outdated meeting solutions and user habits. Those switching to Teams point to its ubiquitous nature and ease-of-use as a critical video driver: "Everyone has a video solution now, where previously we provided audio conferencing to pockets of users." As these user communities uncover the video feature, it "just gets used" – and before you know it, the org has moved from audio- to video-centric meetings as a standard.

> *"Historically, we were audio-only – with the previous solution, we were even more 'point-to-point'! What we found with Teams: the immediate login and ability to easily message other users got people familiar – and we saw the use of video increase shortly after."*
> **Director of Windows, U.S. Healthcare Organization**

Increased Collaboration – Like the increase of video adoption, we often hear of a general rise in overall collaboration after a Microsoft Teams deployment. We're talking about volume across all meeting workloads. The common variables, from our perspective: ease-of-use, mass deployments, and higher quality audio and video.

> *"The number one complaint with our prior solution was 'I can't get connected.' With Teams, as long as the user is enabled in Office 365 and has a wired or WIFI connection, they are in. We've seen an 11% increase in the number of attendees getting on the line, and the total number of meetings has gone up by 13% after we moved to Microsoft Teams."*
> **EVP, Global Health Advocacy Organization**

Workplace Transformation – Early adopters consistently point to Microsoft Teams aligning with ongoing workplace transformation efforts they are undertaking. These leaders note an increase in open seating environments, more remote workers, and (of course) an explosion of mobile collaborators. They highlight a new breed of "internally mobile" workers – those without assigned workspaces who utilize hot desks and hoteling locations. Microsoft Teams supports an improved login process, allowing these users to easily associate their calendar and location to IT-managed devices such as desk phones and shared devices – driving a personal experience while IT maintains a substantial level of security and control over the devices and who is accessing them.

Cloud Catalyst – Odds are, you are already using the cloud for some or all of your enterprise meetings. Where things tend to lag behind: random file shares, complex email environments, and that dusty PBX. Early adopters point to Microsoft Teams as a catalyst that can naturally shift the end-user's reliance on these older, on-premises environments. When workloads are gracefully intertwined, friction is removed for end-users, and they adapt their workflows to stay within the single UC platform. This can reduce traditional file storage and email reliance, and shift voice traffic from that old calling solution onto the new Teams meeting platform.

The Hero Factor – It's unfortunately rare to hear IT get excited about deploying a change – but we heard this excitement regularly during interviews. Interestingly, it goes beyond IT getting "credit" for the high-quality video that is evident with the Microsoft Teams solution. Those who have gone deep into what Microsoft Teams has to offer point to several features they are most passionate about, often circling won Teams APIs and customization features. One leader gave us a great example: a three-hour hack-a-thon delivered a new bot, complete with natural language processing (they call it "Intern Steve," H/T to *Grey's Anatomy*). Steve answers questions, but the excitement is driven via integration – the solution ties to their internal ticketing system, takes user information, creates tickets, and kicks off PowerShell scripts to automate when and where possible. Executive feedback was immediately positive: the solution is fully on the corporate system, uses internal information, is personable, and extremely fast. When the executives delight, so too do the ITDMs.

> *"What do my executives love? The bot is on our systems, using our information, is personable, and extremely fast. Teams is honestly the first product I've been this excited about in a long time."*
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> **Director of Windows, U.S. Healthcare Organization**

Uncovering the New Keys to Success

As with drivers and benefits, the keys to succeeding with any UC implementation have remained relatively static over time. Those who have recent experience deploying Microsoft Teams, however, highlight a few that are as contextual as they are salient:

Use Meeting Rooms as an Adoption Catalyst – When it comes to Teams adoption, the early adopters highlight an exciting finding: deploying Microsoft Teams Rooms early can be a catalyst for personal Teams adoption.

> *"When the experience is as simple as sitting down and starting a video call, we'll do more meetings. Teams has momentum, driving the need for Teams in the conference room and vice versa."*
>
> **VP of IT, Global Media Company**

The relationship makes sense. When end-users can bridge "group use cases" with personal collaboration tools, the platform is reinforced as the solution of choice and convenience. Other synergies surface quickly with the early adoption of Microsoft Teams Rooms. These include: familiar meeting UI between rooms and personal devices promotes end-user confidence; a shared scheduling solution across environments drives productivity; and, perhaps most importantly, Microsoft Teams Rooms meets facility needs for shared spaces meeting spaces driven by today's open workspace environments. As the price point for group video solutions continues to drop, ITDMs can afford to "video-enable" more rooms. As a result, Microsoft Teams, meeting functionality delivers a higher-value and more consistent experience, regardless of who joins, where they are, and when the meeting happens**.**

Get Executive Sponsorship – From our research, Wainhouse strongly believes this is a critical, "do-not-pass-go" step – the most successful large-scale deployments are driven top-down. Those who follow the Executive-First mantra report quicker adoption of Microsoft Teams, and in particular, Microsoft Teams, meetings when executives are the early adopters. When meetings such as all-hands or weekly staff meetings occur on the Microsoft Teams platform as video meetings, it reinforces attendees to interact through the Teams application. The positive cycle is further enhanced when follow-up activities such as notes distribution,

content storage, or task management are handled through Teams' other workloads such as messaging and content management. "Video first" cultural shifts start when the most relevant meetings are promoted as examples of video best practices. It does not necessarily need to be forced by management, but it does need to have genuine buy-in from executives leading by example.

> *"For example, for significant calls (as determined by size or who is speaking), we use Teams. We also recruit Executives to use it with their constituents, which prompts their teams to leverage the same tool if they want to interact."*
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> **EVP, Global Health Advocacy Organization**

Support Viral Engagement by Your End-Users – As you may expect, when end-users figure out a Microsoft Teams workflow that aligns with other internal processes, they typically have a sense of achievement and pride in the accomplishment. However, organizations that do this best don't just throw "useful tools" over the wall – they engage key influencers to map, create, and transform their workflow *before the solution has been deployed*. Find the "heroes" in your organization and engage them early to align essential tasks within Teams. Wainhouse has seen examples of ITDMs fostering this sense of success and satisfaction by creating forums for end-users to share best practices internally. One obvious approach is to create a Teams deployment channel, owned by a user champion. Use the tool to disseminate information – training collateral, newsletters, blog posts, videos, updates, and so forth – *but engage the user team to own the process*.

> *"You can't just give Teams to people who love Slack – you need to engage them with the solution. We have a product owner driving our innovation pipeline and champion recruitment, managing the process within Teams. The channel is now up to several thousand users, all asking questions and creating solutions about – and with – Teams."*
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> **VP of IT, Global Media Company**

Establish Familiar and Logical Naming Conventions for Elements in Teams – Microsoft is not alone here – every Team Collaboration solution can fall prey to "Channel Fragmentation" as unbridled users experiment with the new solution. As teams, channels, and groups grow out of control, users have a harder time using the solution – and, as one IT leader puts it, *"you don't get a second chance at a successful deployment."* The bad experience lingers, and jaded users require convincing to come back – and the group side of Teams is a vital element to get right as you expand to meetings. Think through your current storage and file naming standards, update and apply to Teams accordingly, and educate yourself on the related administrative functions – many controls can be used at a policy level to help your users keep things clean, tidy, and productive.

Be Sure to Mine That Data – If security is the number one ITDM focus, then data is a close second. How an enterprise captures, stores, and gains actionable insight from their unique data universe is becoming a core competency, if not competitive advantage. Microsoft Teams adds a host of tools to enable IT to deliver more in-depth insights into how their users are collaborating, interacting, and engaging with each other. The Office Graph captures this data, providing insights via the O365 portal and Power BI visualization tools. The more advanced organizations have taken the discussion to the next level – they view meeting content itself as actionable data and are working to gain value from the related insights it delivers. Tracking user adoption and adjusting as you go is critical – and the more value you derive from the platform, the more support you will receive.

> *"We're now on Power BI, and we get considerably more analytics from the cloud than previous on-premises solutions. Much of this data is within Teams – meetings become data, and that data is searchable and adds value."*
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> **Director of Windows, U.S. Healthcare Organization**

SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

Between changes in demographics of your end-users, the places where they are working, and how they want to work, there is a perfect storm brewing – and the early adopters have pointed to Microsoft Teams as their future collaboration platform. Consider:

- Today, we are amid communication and collaboration upheaval. End-users are wanting new ways to work and are interested in moving quickly. They are asking for asynchronous communications, cloud-based file sharing, and the ability to meet when they want, no matter where they are – and the increasingly mobile workforce requires video as well as audio calling.

- When IT is not able to support these emerging needs, users find a way to enable these workflows themselves, often with free services that can easily create a "Shadow IT" network within the enterprise.

- This environment drives an increase in cost, lowers IT productivity, and creates a host of security challenges. The enterprise has a growing blind spot regarding their data, as it is stored in locations they can't easily monitor, track, or control.

- That said, employee-embraced workflows are not something you can turn on like a faucet. It's an ethos, a way of thinking that needs to be nurtured along as efficiently as possible, accruing insights, and adjusting as needed along the way. Establishing executive champions and engaging users to adapt the tool to their workflows (and vice versa) are critical steps to gaining adoption.

- Don't think of public or shared spaces as the last steps in your Microsoft Teams deployment. Instead, use Microsoft Teams Rooms as a catalyst for broad organizational adoption of the Microsoft Teams platform itself. Group video use cases enabled with MTR solutions drive learning among co-workers, reinforce workflows through common UIs, and creates a natural segue for pre- and post-meeting activities to take place in the Teams platform.

ABOUT LOGITECH

Logitech designs products that have an everyday place in people's lives, connecting them to the digital experiences they care about. More than 35 years ago, Logitech started connecting people through computers, and now it's a multi-brand company designing products that bring people together through music, gaming, video, and computing. Brands of Logitech include Logitech, Logitech G, ASTRO Gaming, Streamlabs, Ultimate Ears, Jaybird, and Blue Microphones. Founded in 1981, and headquartered in Lausanne, Switzerland, Logitech International is a Swiss public company listed on the SIX Swiss Exchange (LOGN) and on the Nasdaq Global Select Market (LOGI). Find Logitech at logitech.com, the company blog or @Logitech.
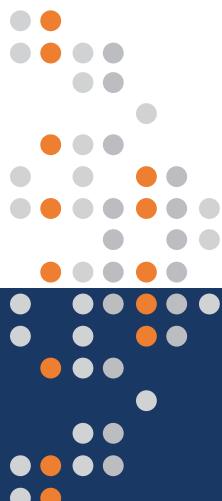
ABOUT WAINHOUSE

Wainhouse Research (https://www.wainhouse.com) provides strategic guidance and insight on products and services for collaboration and conferencing applications within Unified Communications. Our global client base includes established and new technology suppliers and service providers, as well as enterprise users of voice, video, streaming, and web collaboration solutions. The company provides market research and consulting, produces conferences on technology trends and customer experiences, publishes a free weekly newsletter, and speaks at client and industry events.

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ABOUT WAINHOUSE RESEARCH

Founded in 1999, WR is a research and analyst firm with the largest set of full-time analysts and researchers focused on Unified Communications & Collaboration (UC&C) technology, services, and markets.

WR's nine senior analysts and research associates hold both domain expertise and broad insight into the UC&C market – most have held product management or product marketing roles within the industry prior to joining the firm. Our experience includes a deep understanding of market drivers, services, architectures, and technologies.

Our approach provides a one-stop shop for 360-degree coverage of UC&C. Coverage areas include Unified Communications, Enterprise Video (streaming and cloud-based video conferencing), Meeting Room Collaboration (video conferencing endpoints and ideation products such as interactive flat panels and collaborative software), Personal Meetings (web conferencing), and Audio Conferencing.

No other analyst firm or sole analyst has our depth and breadth in covering UC&C.