

Putting you back in charge of your comms

By [Dale Isaac](#)

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"It's all about finding the calm in the chaos," exclaimed renowned fashion designer, Donna Karan, founder of the famous DKNY label. We're all familiar with 'the new normal', with most people working remotely - but now we struggle with all our different communication devices.



Image by [Alexandra Koch](#) from [Pxabay](#).

While dealing with barking dogs, doorbells, children at home most of the time, and myriad other distractions, one still needs to maintain a productive, positive work schedule.

As if our anxiety levels weren't already high enough over the lockdown stages, our cellphones ring incessantly while we try to conduct meetings via Teams or Zoom. Even more frustrating? People getting annoyed when we don't answer our phone while we're on a live video call! We don't have control over our communications tools, and we inevitably end up missing something.

It all centres around access to the people and information required to get the job done. That may be from your perspective – gaining access to those people and that information – or their perspective: people being able to access you at the right time and by the most effective means.

TACTICAL COMMUNICATIONS SOLUTIONS RESULT IN CHAOS



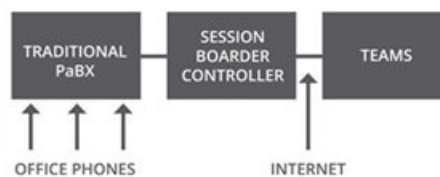
INTEGRATED STRATEGIC CONTROL OVER YOUR COMMUNICATIONS



COMMUNICATE ANYWHERE



USING SIP TO COMBINE EXISTING VOICE TECHNOLOGY WITH TEAMS



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Many businesses had to respond to the immediate need when Covid-19 hit, to enable workers at home to be able to communicate with and on behalf of the business. Now that the initial requirement has been met, remote workers are left with a collection of communications technologies that don't talk to each other.

What's required now is strategic thinking and a communications plan built around your business needs. If you understand who needs to be involved in communication and decision-making for your key business processes to function, everything else can build out from there.

Microsoft leads the field in combining everyday business applications (like Word and Excel) with real-time communication that's now enabled with the Teams application. If you are already using Office 365, then you already have your technical foundation and if you're not, you probably should be! Office 365 includes Teams, and you can add a public telephone number to your Teams client so you can use Teams as your business line.

Once you understand your processes and have the Office 365 foundation in place, there's a straightforward process to realise real business value:

Design

You want staff to take advantage of better call rates that you have negotiated, rather than using their cellphones. Business communication should occur over company phone numbers for reasons of identity and customer retention. Ensure your phone lines and business numbers sit with your communications partner, and all the tools and technologies leverage that for external telephony.

In mapping out your processes and key individuals involved for business success, set up your groups in Teams to cover three main areas:

- Company-wide Teams for general communication, access to company documents and templates, directories and shared calendars.
- Project Teams, who access the same documents, work on them in real-time and track multiple tasks on a schedule.
- Process Teams, who can hand off to the required parties throughout the workflow until completed.

Maintain flexibility to move from a simple person-to-person conversation to full collaboration – whether the other party is in the office, on their cellphone or on a home Internet connection.

This structure can change at any time as the business pivots to take advantage of new opportunities.

Integrate

You have existing investments in tools that work; what's needed is to pull them together to make the whole thing easier to manage.

Add tabs to your Teams from existing applications or web pages; where possible use Office 365 plug-ins to easily create tasks from external workflows that you can track and manage within Teams.

Your scaled-down office staff still need to contact remote workers, so integrate your office telephony system with Teams via an approved gateway.

A key idea with modern communications technology is presence management: showing others your availability to communicate, and the most effective method. This can easily be added to your existing environment – the technical integration, which can happen in stages, makes the information more automated and reliable.

Optimise

You need a communications service provider that will continue to work with you to maintain and grow your business communications to meet changing requirements. The best customer engagements come from a close relationship and understanding of the balance of current requirements and positioning for what's around the corner. These customers derive the most value from our involvement.

You have to put your people back in control of their communications. Make use of the tech you already have, like in-office phone systems, but extend the value by integrating new ways of communicating – like a Teams call being connected to a cellphone to include people who would previously have been left out of a critical meeting.

These days, businesses need to quickly harness the various methods of communication into a more manageable set of tools.

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