How To Become a Voice Champion

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SECURE CUSTOMERS: Promote Renewals and Grow New Business

This guide is provided by SIPPIO to help business partners learn more about Microsoft Direct Routing and enabling voice capabilities in Microsoft Teams. If you'd like to explore becoming a SIPPIO partner, drop us a line at hello@SIPPIO.io.

Since the early part of this century, the telecom market has undergone substantial change. To-date, much of that change has been driven by consolidation and optimization of the IT resources and cost savings associated with transformation. Voice over IP (VOIP) started the consolidation and unified communications drove further reductions and optimization. Next, the transition to UCaaS was yet another milestone on the journey to transform communications and accelerate adoption by leveraging cloud-based technologies.

With all that happened in the last 20 years, it was only with the introduction of team-based collaboration tools like Microsoft Teams, Slack or Zoom, that enterprises could really see the value in consolidating all their communication and collaboration tools into a single user experience. Estimates suggest nearly 750 million traditional telecom endpoints still exist in the market today ready to be transformed. The obvious questions are 'why' and 'what' needs to change to accelerate this transformation.

The events of the past year have created permanent change in how and where people work. Solution providers are grappling with retaining existing customers and in many cases are resorting to offering unprecedented discounts and slashing profit margins to prevent customer exodus where they are not readily able to showcase ongoing value.

In Q4 2020, Technology Services Industry Association (TSIA) survey results showed 60 percent of service providers (partners) believe that renewals will remain a major concern throughout 2021 and 2022. This creates an opportunity to pause and reflect on the 'what's next' wave of opportunity for the partner to continue as the trusted advisor for their customers.

With cloud-based collaboration solutions accelerating digital transformations, solution providers can quickly pivot to offer new solutions and services to help customers adapt quickly. TSIA Research's paper by Thomas Lah, "The State of the Technology Industry 2021: The Haves and the Have Nots," highlights two key customer trends:

1) Moving discussion away from the abundance of feature/function towards value and business outcomes talk tracks
2) Seeking to leverage 'as a service' offerings versus owning (and disposing of) technology assets

With employees no longer tethered to a single location, deploying cloud-based unified communications and collaboration services has emerged as a top priority. In a January 2021 call with investors, Microsoft reported Azure grew 50%, which continues a trend of acceleration in products that support working and learning from home. In addition, third-party, custom-built apps in Teams has grown seven times year over year and Teams now has over 60m+ active daily *mobile* users with 145m+ active daily desktop users.

Voice has typically been hard. PBX vendors set a high bar for reliability, feature/functions and have been entrenched for many years in customer environments. Customers have high expectations as a result and low tolerance for a poor user experience. However, the main challenge continues to be how to migrate millions of users efficiently and as frictionless as possible without hardware, expensive professional services engagements and modernize the desktop at the same time.

The Microsoft Opportunity

Organizations invested in any number of enterprise Microsoft subscriptions have access to various 'flavors' of Microsoft Teams. To help customers maximize productivity, the business partner can offer valuable guidance to customers in how to harness the full value and utility of Microsoft Teams.

Kevin Kieller, Microsoft aficionado and co-author of EnableUC, echoed his belief in this strategy. In a recent interview with *BC Strategies,* Kieller highlighted his firm's ability to help organizations maximize the full utility of Microsoft's ecosystem as a key factor for their continued growth.

A majority of these businesses, according to Kieller, attribute their ability to keep functioning over the past year to Microsoft Teams. The platform's popularity is undisputed. When empowered with native calling capabilities, Microsoft Teams becomes a single hub for accessing productivity, communications, and collaboration applications.

Kieller confirmed Microsoft Teams' efficacy as an end-to-end platform, adding that when his customers question Teams viability as an enterprise-grade PBX, he advises them that if Microsoft 365 is working well for them, they should explore adding voice calling. Benefits associated with using Microsoft Teams as a sole communications and collaboration platform:

- A single interface and repository for all collaboration needs
- Cloud based and agile innovation adds new features on a consistent and ongoing basis
- Leveraging a single network infrastructure reduces costs and complexity
- Highly secure, redundant, global footprint facilitates enterprise expansion, divestiture and change

An enterprise of any size and scale has normally been reluctant to move their voice platforms to the cloud and realize the full benefits of Microsoft Teams due to the complexity of manually migrating voice users from an array of disparate voice platforms. They lack the tools and the process to make the transformation pain free….until now.

Unprecedented adoption of productivity and collaboration tools, like Microsoft 365 and Microsoft Teams, illustrates how business partners and carriers can create new streams of monthly recurring revenue while reducing churn and preserving renewals. Next, we'll explore the various methods for voice enabling Microsoft Teams.

PROMOTE VALUE: Voice Enable Microsoft Teams

Partners and carriers can guide their customers to realize greater return on investment by voice enabling Microsoft Teams. Utilizing all the features versus some of the features Teams has to offer promotes employee productivity, flexibility to work from anywhere (WfX) and lessens the upkeep of multiple toolsets.

There are a few ways to enable voice capabilities in Microsoft Teams. The first is through a Microsoft calling plan. This option has its merits but is tailored for a finite segment of customers and offers little opportunity for a partner to add value. The porting and billing functions are very basic which places additional overhead and resources required on the customer.

The second option, Direct Routing, exemplifies the brilliance of how Microsoft goes to market. Designed for enterprise customers wanting more control of their telephony services and migration plans to the Microsoft environment, Direct Routing provides a build-it-yourself option combining carrier services and cloud infrastructure through a Session Border Controller (SBC).

In this scenario, the SBC is akin to a traffic cop managing traffic between the dial tone and Teams. The solution runs in Azure or another data center to render calls into Teams. An average enterprise with 3,000 users would need to deploy

around 20 SBCs each requiring separate configuration and management. Multiply that across dozens of sales or service locations and deployments become very expensive and unwieldy.

Most Direct Routing solutions are limited since they are built as one-offs and as a result, are costly given the complexity and skill sets required along with lack of repeatability, best practices, and shared resources. Each deployment basically starts from scratch every time while often introducing vulnerability and security risk by fragmenting the solution between 'on earth' and the cloud.

In addition, the expertise required to deploy, configure, and manage this infrastructure is expensive and difficult to retain. This strategy not only hinders the speed of new-user activation, but also misses an opportunity to quickly deploy a cost-effective solution in an 'as a Service' model for easy of consumption, billing and scaling up or down. For additional information, reference this article written by Irwin Lazar on Optimizing Native Voice for Microsoft Teams Direct Routing.

Direct Routing as a Service

The most viable option for adding voice to Microsoft Teams is end-to-end Direct Routing as a Service (DRaaS). These solutions are designed and architected to leverage the power of Microsoft's cloud, built with security, scale and redundancy. Shared services minimize professional services and eliminates overhead costs.

A true DRaaS solution will be architected and governed by experts in carrier services, direct routing, data center, security, and Teams. Activation will be simple, visible, and intuitive with automation for set-up and ongoing management. Professional services will focus on the needed planning, migration and decommissioning versus building. Costs are predictable, fully inclusive and provide contract flexibility without managing ratios or surprise overage charges.

For organizations in various stages of migrating workloads to the cloud, DRaaS is the preferred strategy for avoiding the complexity of building in-house to ensure customers are focused on their business instead of their backend. The next section will detail how partners can leverage SIPPIO to activate new, revenue-producing user accounts in a matter of minutes.

MIGRATION EASE: Activate Users in 10 minutes with Global Scale

As innovation in the cloud has progressed at a rapid pace, new tools and APIs are now available that have a massive impact on how enterprises can transform and migrate their current platforms. Automation is playing a critical role in how we visualize this transformation and SIPPIO is at the forefront. Voice enabling Microsoft Teams with SIPPIO provides flexibility and scale with inclusive or consumption-based subscriptions across the largest global footprint available for Direct Routing in today's marketplace.

SIPPIO was fully architected to leverage the value of Microsoft's cloud strategy and the natural relationship between Azure and Teams. The end-to-end solution provides unlimited, non-blocking Tier 1 grade carrier services, secure PSTN calling with Microsoft certified session border controls running in Microsoft Azure across 6 primary and 2 secondary global regions to running multi-tenant in the cloud using super (derived) trunk with E911 services.

A derived trunk is a specialized direct routing SIP trunk used in the Microsoft Teams customer tenant that adopts - or derives - its routing policies from a single isolated and protected carrier tenant. This type of trunk allows for rapid adoption and updates to policies across an entire customer base and eliminates the need for dozens of direct routes required by most other solutions.

Benefits of this fully native architecture are the inherit security, scale, high availability, redundancy, and failover inclusive with every subscription. Scale enables SIPPIO to handle large and fluctuating call volumes without managing concurrent sessions or bursting overages which dramatically increases uptime and positive user experiences.

The Gold Standard of Direct Routing

Activate users in minutes through the Voice Panel by SIPPIO with automated tenant provisioning and user onboarding so customers experience a fast, friendly, and productive experience of enabling calling capabilities in Microsoft Teams. Instead of waiting months for complex Direct Routing deployments and the first trickle of revenue, your accounts begin producing almost immediately.

Leveraging automation completely changes the transformation challenges associated with moving towards leveraging the voice infrastructure in Microsoft Teams. It provides a user experience completely devoid of friction along with a full

graphical interface to the entire voice footprint for ongoing user management, updating routing policies and priorities. This should add a little joy to your day by eliminating the complexity of PowerShell.

The expertise required to deploy, configure, and manage this infrastructure is expensive and difficult to retain. SIPPIO and its partner channels can radically simplify this process for customers. The final section will detail the quantifiable ROI for both business partners and their customers that only SIPPIO can deliver.

GROWING MRR: Offering Voice in Microsoft Teams

As a business that brings its solutions to market exclusively through resellers, SIPPIO's commitment to understanding the landscape in which our partners operate is unwavering. This knowledge allows us to provide solutions end-customers need and are the foundation for sustainable monthly recurring revenue.

Microsoft's methodology for enabling user productivity and active daily usage in Microsoft Teams is based on consistent utilization of the platform's many features. Voice enabling Microsoft Teams opens the door for partners and carriers to offer complementary services that augment the user experience and increases value. SIPPIO makes it quick and easy for Business Partners to help customers retire legacy PBX systems and consolidate chat, video, calling and activities to further the perceived trusted advisor status.

For enterprises, SIPPIO also accelerates the opportunity to migrate from legacy telephony, hybrid integration, and Skype for Business (SfB). Partners can provide valued add services for planning, migration, integration or decommissioning of existing solutions while also offering hardware solutions for analog, handsets, headsets or app add-ins such as Five9 Contact Center solutions or call recording and meeting insights from AudioCodes.

For partners, SIPPIO is a vehicle for converting free trials into paying accounts and capitalize on providing services wrappers for move, adds, changes and deletes (MACDs) and Teams tenant management. These service offers coupled with a healthy and sustainable monthly recurring revenue (MRR) from SIPPIO subscriptions will build a healthy voice practice and promote long-term customer relationships.

Value, Productivity and Agility

Customers want and need to know they are spending their dollars wisely and making decisions that will stand the test of time to deliver value to their organization. SIPPIO eliminates the need for expensive infrastructure, PSTN connectivity and other unnecessary third-party products. Consolidating enterprise communications with Teams reduces the complexity of managing multiple systems, the drain on compute resources and the risk of non-compliance with regulations such as OSHA and HIPAA.

Focusing on productivity by increasing consistent usage with Voice, coupled with popular features like conferencing, chat and video meetings, encourages user adoption and also benefits employee wellness, engagement and overall empowerment. Demonstrating how your customer can derive more value from their Microsoft investment with end-to-end collaboration should be a key conversation thread broached in every engagement.

In addition, providing a single platform that employees can use on any device and from any location also simplifies their day-to-day experience by streamlining workflows to offer a more agile workplace. Adopting this strategy increases visibility and control over an environment in which end-users work from disparate locations, on unsecured devices and in different time zones for whatever the future might hold.

With the largest global service footprint covering 60 countries, 10-minute user activation, infinite flexibility to scale, simplified billing and a choice of inclusive or consumption-based subscriptions, SIPPIO stands apart by being 100% focused on enabling partners and carriers to be successful trusted advisors for their customers through automation and ease.