



Frequently Asked Questions for AudioCodes Business Partners

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Microsoft Ignite 2017 Announcements & Changes to Cloud Voice Strategy

What is the new Microsoft 365 Enterprise (E suite)?

Microsoft 365 – announced at Microsoft Inspire this July – is the top level term that encompasses the entire suite of Microsoft products from Desktop to Office 365. Formerly known as simply E5 or Secure Productive Enterprise (SPE), this new term highlights the 'One Microsoft' message supporting their Cloud First, Mobile First strategy. You will hear terms like Microsoft 365 E5 - which includes all key workloads such as Microsoft Teams and Microsoft Phone System. A Microsoft 365 E5 license enables users to run voice workloads on premises (Skype for Business Server) or online - Skype for Business Online/Microsoft Teams.

What does the Microsoft 365 offer look like? What is the Microsoft strategy?

Microsoft wants to be the leader in the team collaboration and intelligent communication space, taking on the likes of Slack directly. One key component to team collaboration is easy and effective communication. Today, there is significant overlap between Skype for Business and Microsoft Teams. In an effort to streamline and further enhance Teams, Microsoft will transition Skype for Business Online to Microsoft Teams. The result will be improved telephony and conference capabilities within Teams, called 'Phone System'. It will also have the ability to use 'Calling Plans', which is essentially carrier PSTN services. While Phone System is available globally (virtually all countries), PSTN calling is not yet available in all countries.

What is Microsoft's new vision for Intelligent Communications (aka Unified Communications vision)?

Microsoft has enjoyed great success across Office 365 with over 100 million monthly commercial active users counting on Office 365 every day to get their work done. Microsoft is now aiming to bring the capabilities of Skype for Business in the cloud into Microsoft Teams to deliver a single hub for teamwork, with built-in, fully integrated voice and video. By tightly weaving communications into the apps that teams use to collaborate every day, alongside AI, Microsoft Graph, LinkedIn, and other data and cognitive services, Microsoft will enable Intelligent Communications, revolutionizing calling and meeting experiences. [Microsoft Teams FAQ](#)

What is the timeline for Intelligent Communications in Teams?

No firm dates have been provided by Microsoft. It is expected that Teams will have technical parity with Skype for Business Online in 12 to 18 months (so it should be expected around the beginning of 2019). Once that is achieved, Microsoft will take a more aggressive approach to user transition from Skype for Business Online to Teams.

Why is Skype for Business Online (Cloud PBX) migrating to Microsoft Teams?

The current CloudPBX infrastructure is essentially a hosted version of Skype for Business Server in the Microsoft Cloud. The existing platform is not able to scale quickly to meet customer needs and cannot support the agility required to deliver planned features and services. The Microsoft Teams backend is far superior and designed to scale inherently (Skype consumer core).

Is Microsoft abandoning the concept of CCE?

No, but things will change. Although Microsoft is transitioning from SfB Online to Teams, their goal is to provide greater features/functionality in Teams compared with what exists in SfB Online today. This includes the concept of Bring Your Own Trunk (BYOT), which will be accomplished by the next generation of 'CCE-like' connectivity termed 'Direct Connect'. Those looking to purchase CCE today should continue down that path knowing that the same AudioCodes device will support both CCE and BYOT, with only reconfiguration changes.

Can a customer have users in both SfB Online + Microsoft Teams?

Prior to Microsoft decommissioning SfB Online (date not announced), customers will have a period of time that they can use Teams side by side with SfB Online. At some point in time, Microsoft will require all users to move from SfB Online to Teams. Microsoft is making it easy to migrate from SfB to Teams, as demonstrated in the Skype and Teams session during Ignite. [Session Recording Link](#)

Is there a firm deadline by which customers need to move from Skype for Business Online to Teams?

Microsoft will make their roadmap for Microsoft Teams available, so customers can assess the capabilities for Teams relative to their needs and plan their move to Teams. Customers can determine the timing for moving to Teams that best meets their needs. [Microsoft Teams FAQ](#)

What is the future of Skype for Business Server?

Microsoft recognizes that customers are using Skype for Business on-premises, and that many of them need to use Skype for Business on-premises for some users or geographies due to their requirements. Microsoft is targeting the next version (currently called vNext) of the Skype for Business Server on-premises with a new set of server updates by end of CY2018 (dates subject to change by Microsoft). The fact that Microsoft is now planning another version for Skype for Business Server customers demonstrates the vision that on-premises deployments are here to stay for years to come. With a single E5 license, customers are free to deploy on-premises, in the cloud, or any hybrid mix. [Microsoft Teams FAQ](#)

What is 3PIP and what is the future of the program?

Microsoft's 3PIP (3rd Party IP Phone) program is a certification process by which IP phone manufacturers submit their phone firmware for evaluation against a set of required features/functionality criteria. The criteria changes from 3PIP version to 3PIP version and each qualifying vendor must meet or exceed the requirements of the program for each IP phone model.

AudioCodes One Voice for Microsoft 365 + CloudBond 365 Family

Why the change from AudioCodes One Voice for Skype for Business to One Voice for Microsoft 365?

AudioCodes is expanding the One Voice portfolio to cover both Skype for Business and Microsoft Teams. As a result of the expansion, the new term 'One Voice for Microsoft 365' supports the additional capabilities and indicates we support more than just Skype for Business.

What AudioCodes products work with One Voice for Microsoft 365?

The supported AudioCodes product mix remains unchanged. The portfolio that supports Skype for Business Server will support Skype for Business Server vNext. The product portfolio that supports Skype for Business Online will support Microsoft Teams.

Why is AudioCodes expanding the CloudBond 365 family of devices?

We have enjoyed success and established familiarity of the CloudBond 365 brand in the market. We are leveraging this position to provide a single 'family' of devices that will support the requirements of today and the needs of tomorrow. The key message is that buying into the CloudBond 365 family of devices will 'future proof' your connectivity with Skype for Business Server, Skype for Business Online, and Microsoft Teams.

What is included in the new CloudBond 365 family?

CloudBond 365 = CloudBond as we know it, full on-premises SfB Server deployment that supports up to 5000 users based on the hardware model. Also, it can be deployed in an OPCH model that allows for the customer to have users in both SfB Server (on-premises) and in Microsoft Phone System (cloud).

CloudBond 365 CCE Edition = Rebranded version of our current AudioCodes CCE Appliances (M800 and HP Server). This will continue to be supported by Microsoft for customers currently on SfB Online with Phone System (CloudPBX). Support will be provided by Microsoft until Teams Voice features have complete feature parity and all customers are migrated from SfB Online to Teams.

CloudBond 365 Teams Hybrid PSTN = Next generation Optimized SBC/Gateway that will be supported by Teams in Microsoft Phone System. This will allow for customers to utilize Teams Voice services with on-premises PSTN access. Though likely to retain the CloudBond brand, the underlying technology is core AudioCodes SBC.

What is needed to transition from CloudBond CCE with SfB Online to Teams Hybrid PSTN?

This will require a reconfiguration of the device and the decommissioning of the CCE bits. AudioCodes is working with Microsoft to make the process smooth for customers.

What about resiliency options for Prem, Hybrid, Cloud?

Today, AudioCodes can provide resiliency through OVR for Skype for Business Server and Skype for Business Online (the latter requires case by case approval by Microsoft).

AudioCodes Business Partners Sales Impact and Suggested Actions

Now that Microsoft Teams is announced, what does it mean for our AudioCodes product selection?

For AudioCodes, working with and supporting Microsoft strategy changes is part of our DNA. We have been doing this since we entered the Microsoft voice space. Our overall goal is to ensure that we simplify complexity for the customer and provide the smoothest transition path as customer needs change. Our solution remains largely the same, with current connectivity and devices supporting Skype for Business Server, Skype for Business Online and the future direction of Microsoft Teams. Our business partners have chosen wisely by working with AudioCodes, and here again, we demonstrate that we are agile and forward thinking.

Is the pricing of AudioCodes solutions impacted by the changes?

No, our pricing remains the same, though additional offers and commercial models will be available to help lessen the pain of transition. We also expect to see an increase in CloudBond 365 sales, and are looking at how to best position 'agnostic' hardware with user-management as a secondary layer.

Can we future proof a customer?

YES! With the AudioCodes CloudBond 365 family of devices we can future proof a customer, no matter whether they are OPCH, SfBO or Teams. In fact, we can support connectivity with SfBO and Teams at the same time. Our IP Phones and Huddle Room Solutions will also support all three deployment options.

What does the Microsoft change mean for existing connectivity deals in the pipeline?

This is TBD and will depend on customers' willingness to join Microsoft on yet another journey with cloud communications. If the customer does not require co-existence and is okay with the eventual transition to Teams, no change should be required. If the customer needs co-existence or is not willing to implement Teams, a discussion about OPCH and potentially on-premises SfB will be required. Either way, AudioCodes One Voice for Microsoft 365 offers the products and services to make for a smooth customer journey.

What questions do I need to start asking for deals in the pipeline?

The key question will be centered around plans for Microsoft Teams, as this will be the new 'Skype for Business Online' service. You should drive for a 'what to consider' session with the customer to discuss the changes announced at Ignite and how it might/might not impact their current plans. From an AudioCodes solution perspective, you can let them know that what works today will work tomorrow.

What do we tell customers that already have CCE deployed?

The good news is that the customer is already set up for success because they have a working AudioCodes CCE device to provide PSTN access to SfB Online users. When MSFT is ready for Teams Hybrid Voice, the customer will be able to “re-purpose” their existing CCE device to connect to the Teams Hybrid Voice environment.

Is pricing of AudioCodes solutions impacted by the changes?

No, pricing has not changed, though additional offers and commercial models will be available to help lessen the pain of transition.

What is the best way to position the changing architecture with customers?

First, Microsoft’s changes are opening the door for new innovation, improved productivity and intelligent communication – all capabilities that customers want. However, challenges arise from the integration and connectivity efforts required to make this happen successfully – on time and on budget. This can be addressed by the synergy of AudioCodes and our business partners. Our product portfolio is designed to help – and benefit – customers looking at either OPCH or Microsoft Teams. The biggest joint concern is deal timing and potential slowdown as the new options are considered by organizations in the middle of projects. By positioning AudioCodes CloudBond 365 and our IP phones, the majority of investments are safeguarded and risk-mitigated. Together with the professional services that our partners can deliver, the gradual, controlled migration to Microsoft Teams is achieved in line with customer expectations. Therefore, proactive outreach regarding the changes followed by assurance of investment protection is the best way to position the changing architecture.