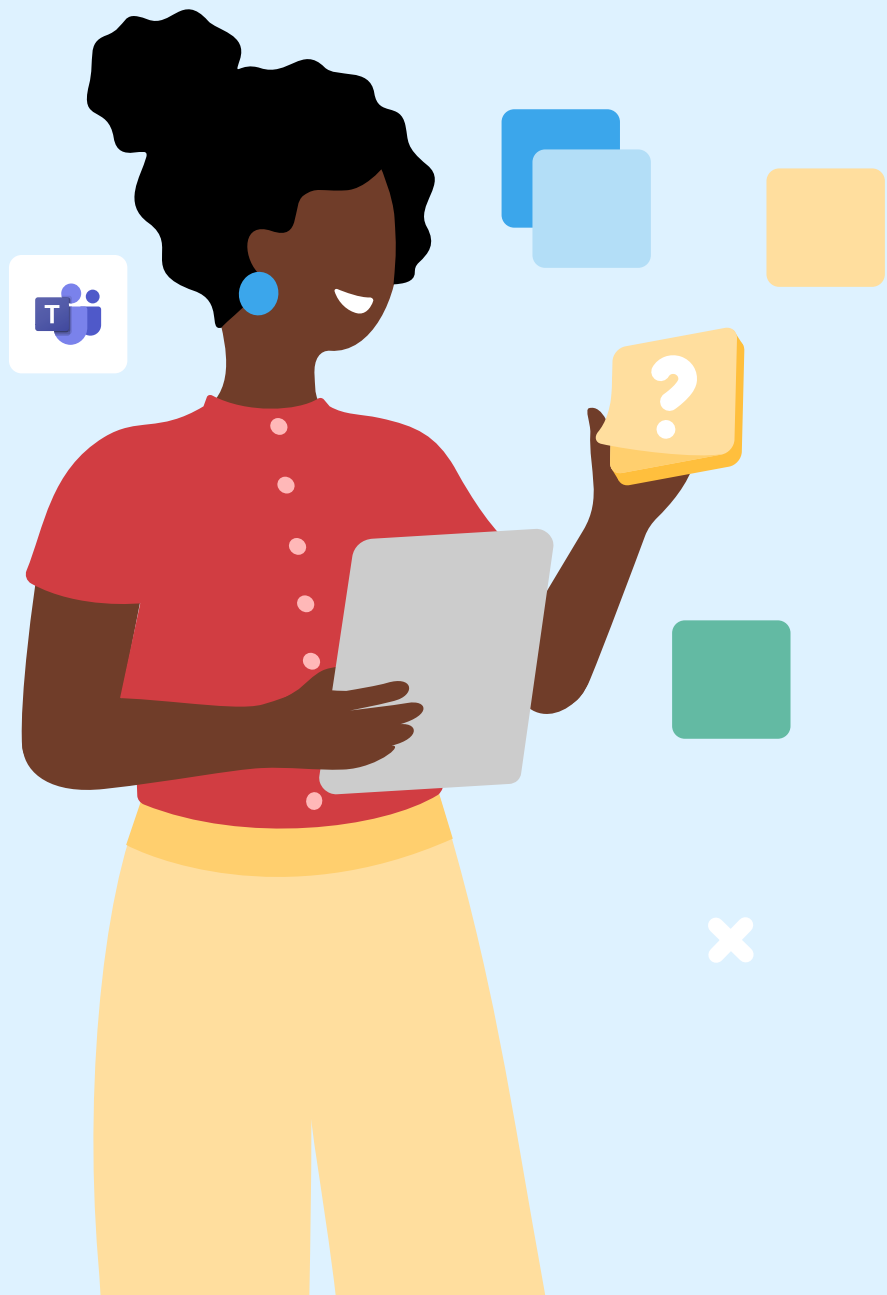E–BOOK

Key questions to ask your next Operator Connect partner

Are you asking the right questions?

Employees, customers, and teams all play important roles in your daily operations, but what binds your company together are the ways those distinct groups collaborate with each other.

Employees, customers, and teams all play important roles in your daily operations, but what binds your company together are the ways those distinct groups collaborate with each other.

Your sales and marketing teams need to talk to your product development team to provide feedback. Procurement and accounting need to collaborate for financial planning. And customer service specialists need a quick and simple way to assist customers.

Communication tools are ultimately what separates top companies from the average ones. With so many ways to collaborate in a business setting — online instant messaging, phone calls, emails, social media, and everything in between — it's no wonder more and more companies are investing in technology to help them unify these fragmented channels and create a smoother, more flexible user experience.

If your company uses Microsoft Teams and some sort of Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN), the Operator Connect for Microsoft Teams partner program is a powerful solution to connect those systems seamlessly.

Operator Connect is Microsoft's latest solution to solve the growing need for PSTN-connectivity within Microsoft Teams. With Operator Connect, businesses can bring PSTN calling into Teams with their chosen provider.

What is Operator Connect?

You may already be familiar with the basics of Microsoft Teams — a communication platform specializing in all forms of collaboration, including instant messaging, voice and video conferencing, file sharing, and other business-focused features. Part of its appeal is the direct connection with the Microsoft ecosystem, a familiar environment in most organizations today.

sinch

Why is VoIP so popular among businesses?

Online communication through Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) is largely considered the future of business collaboration thanks to its advantages over traditional phone systems.

Lower operating cost

Compared to PBX phone systems using a lot of physical infrastructure and hardware, VoIP doesn't charge as many service fees and operates entirely through your already existing Internet connection. The result is a much cheaper system — today and tomorrow.

True scalability

When businesses grow in size and reach, it's important for the communication platforms they use to be scalable. VoIP allows businesses to easily scale and grow which provides a lower operating cost than traditional phone systems.

No extra infrastructure

No need to buy additional hardware since VoIP runs on many of the personal devices employees may already have, like smartphones and desktop applications. In fact, many companies allow employees to bring their own devices to work.

Better accessibility

VoIP platforms (Teams included) often have mobile applications available for Android and iOS in addition to desktop software. All these "apps" work together in the cloud so employees always have access no matter where they are or what devices they're using.

Integrations with other business tools

VoIP platforms like Microsoft Teams are known for their ability to work closely with your other business tools, from CRM to enterprise resource planning tools.

sinch

Businesses who replace their PBX with Microsoft Teams Phone System can connect to the PSTN with an Operator Connect partner.

Companies are looking for intuitive ways to integrate traditional phone functionality into Teams seamlessly to unify communication and business processes — and the Microsoft Operator Connect program allows them to do just that.

Why isn't this functionality built into Teams directly?

Handling network traffic over a complicated business communication network can be a challenge, and meeting the high demands for reliable calling capabilities in a hybrid PSTN–VoIP system is equally difficult if you aren't a dedicated service provider.

While Microsoft provides an excellent VoIP system through Teams, it recognizes third–party service providers are better equipped to offer a reliable PSTN experience when the client needs it – provided you choose the right one!

Empower your employees with unified collaboration tools by turning to a reliable Operator Connect partner who can seamlessly combine the best VoIP and PSTN technologies.

sinch
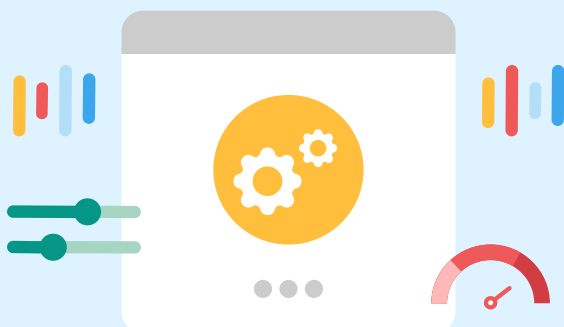
Why should I partner with an Operator Connect provider?

Here are some of the many advantages of the Operator Connect program:

✓ Save on costs by outsourcing the PSTN calling.

✓ Use your existing operators and contracts under the new system.

✓ Enjoy rapid deployments within Teams to get up and running quickly.

✓ Get access to a dedicated technical support team for unmatched reliability.

✓ Allow anybody to call you through PSTN, even if the caller isn't part of Teams.

Operator Connect is your best opportunity to integrate PSTN with Microsoft Teams and build a seamless experience for your employees, clients, and business partners.

But how do you select the right Operator Connect partner? What are the key questions to ask when choosing between providers?
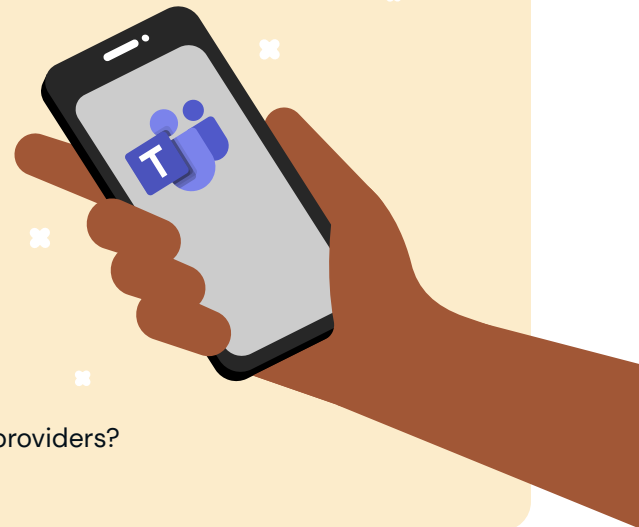
Can the partner meet my standards for performance and reliability?

"Performance" can be summarized as both coverage and uptime. Coverage includes the geographic locations where service is available, while uptime involves how often the service is available without experiencing downtime due to network failures or maintenance.

Why does this matter?

The reliability of your communication platform should be one of the top priorities. A broad network coverage ensures employees, clients, and other stakeholders can get in touch with you no matter where they are. The larger the coverage, the more people you can reach.

Likewise, a high uptime ensures your business is always reachable and prevents frustrating experiences for employees and clients trying to get in touch at critical moments.

sinch

What if my business has unique needs?

Operator Connect involves more than just giving clients basic calling features. Many vendors have additional functionalities and services for enhanced communication experiences. Look for those extra features when choosing a provider to make sure your unique needs are met.

Why does this matter?

What happens when you have a seasonal spike in demand, like when a call center receives a high volume of calls at a certain time of the year? What if your teams need specific special features like:

- Call queuing
- Call routing
- Voicemail
- Automated voice menus
- Voice-to-text transcription
- E911 service and compliance
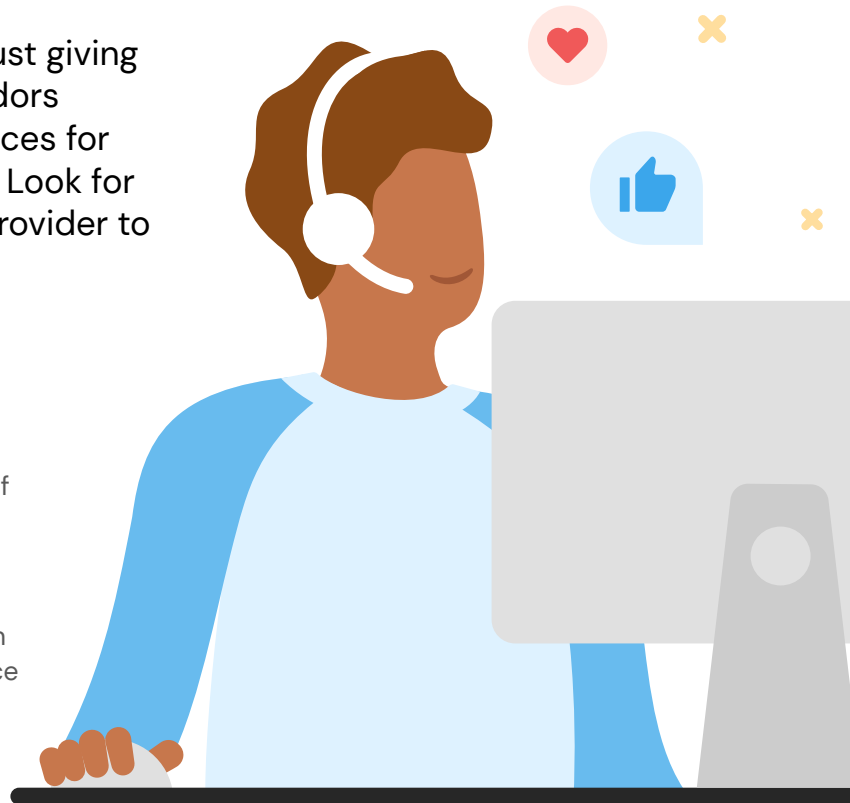
Is 24x7 customer support available?

Great support and customer experience should be key requirements with any business partner and Operator Connect is no exception.

Why does this matter?

A reliable and responsive customer support model is critical so you aren't left out in the cold if any issues arise regarding your Teams integration and calling services.

You might be wondering: Why not just ask Microsoft for help? Microsoft is the expert on their software while communications partners are the experts on voice.

Look for a partner who can provide you with ongoing support for your business phone system. Microsoft requires providers to meet standard service level agreements for Operator Connect for Teams, but the most reliable partners may even exceed those standards. Don't you want the very best for your business?

24x7

sinch

How does your business model work?

You're almost guaranteed to reduce costs for your organization when working with an Operator Connect provider — because there's no need for additional infrastructure and no set-up or maintenance fees. At the same time, individual vendors can have different business models and pricing options.

It's also important to determine how you'll be billed for your service. This often involves choosing between per-seat and per-usage pricing. You can save money paying per-usage versus more traditional per-user plans.

Why does this matter?

Pricing can be a tricky topic. The issue here is not only whether the price makes sense given your needs and budget but also whether it's truly transparent.

You want to make sure that the service package you receive actually has all the services and tools you need without charging extra for add-ons, hidden fees, or other potential traps.

Do they have E911 emergency calling capabilities?

When an emergency call goes through your system, you'll need accurate location services and precise routing to make sure potentially lifesaving medical help arrives quickly.

There are many laws holding communication service providers responsible for public safety. If there's ever a need for police, the fire department, or medical help, supporting faster connectivity with local 911 services is a necessity. The best way to approach 911 functionality is to have voice and E911 services come from the same provider to simplify call management.

Why does this matter?

Support for emergency services is becoming a legal and moral responsibility for businesses. In the United States particularly, it's required by law to be compliant with 911 regulations, especially for PTSN-enabled VOIP services.

Other important questions to ask include:

- Is your Operator Connect provider compliant with both Kari's Law and RAY BAUM'S Act?

- Can they support call-time notifications?

- Can they provide dispatchable location information as required by the FCC for multi-line telephone systems?

sinch

Enhance your Teams environment with PSTN calling capabilities

A reliable and consistent communication network is the lifeblood of your organization. It impacts how your employees collaborate, how customers contact you, and how productive your operations are.

Microsoft Teams is helping businesses everywhere supercharge internal and external collaboration through VoIP technologies, all while connecting with other Microsoft services.

But the need for PSTN calling capabilities still exists, so companies are searching for a way to combine the services into a unified, simple package.

The Microsoft Operator Connect program is the perfect way to do so. Choosing an operator involves asking a few key questions:

- Is the vendor able to meet my requirements for performance and reliability?

- Are there special features that I could use?

- How responsive is the technical support and customer service in case I need help?

- How does the pricing model work? Will I have to pay extra for certain features or add-ons?

- Is crucial E911 functionality available for contacting emergency services? Will this service make me compliant with 911 laws?

Operator Connect offers everything you need to add PSTN calling capabilities directly into the familiar Microsoft Teams experience, all while streamlining employee collaboration and workflows.

sinch

Are you looking for a trusted partner?

Sinch is a Microsoft-certified Operator Connect provider. Discover how we can help you turn communications into your competitive advantage with our industry-leading network and engagement solutions.

Our industry-leading customer engagement solutions enable personalized communication at scale across messaging, voice, and email to help businesses deliver next-level experiences.

To find out more, please visit:
sinch.com

sinch