

Microsoft replacing Skype for Business with Teams

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Microsoft is ending Skype's foray into business communications, packaging its communications tools into Microsoft Teams, the company's challenge to workplace collaboration startup Slack.

Skype for Business, the [company](#)'s voice and video-chat software, will be replaced in Microsoft's Office 365 bundle by Teams, Microsoft said Monday at Ignite, its annual conference for [business](#)-technology buyers. The company, based outside Seattle, didn't set a date for the changeover.

Much of the shift is cosmetic. Skype's technology backbone will still route customers calls through the web in Teams. (The consumer version of Skype, which got a Snapchat-like face-lift earlier this year, will

continue to operate under its own name.)

But the move shows the growing importance of Teams at Microsoft. The software, which allows business users to set up chat windows between individual co-workers as well as groups, was introduced a year ago and aimed squarely at the success of San Francisco based Slack Technologies.

Slack's easy-to-use software, and its free tier for people to experiment with, has made the company one of the hottest business-technology startups. When Amazon.com reportedly was looking at an acquisition of Slack earlier this year, Bloomberg News said the company could be valued at \$9 billion.

Microsoft's answer to Slack - Teams - is gaining traction, the company says. More than 125,000 organizations are using Teams, Microsoft said earlier this month.

Slack fired back a day later with far more specific figures: 50,000 teams, and a total of 2 million users, were paying for its service, the company said. And, including free users, more than 9 million people were logging into Slack each week.

Microsoft's corporate chat and calling tools have gone by several names over the years.

Skype for Business came into existence in 2014, a bet that the consumer brand that Microsoft acquired a few years before was stronger than Lync, the service's previous name. Before that, Microsoft sold Office Communicator.

For those dedicated to Skype for Business, Microsoft said it will release a version for corporate servers next year.

The company announced other tweaks to its business-software lineup on Monday.

A bundle of products sold as Microsoft 365, which includes Windows 10, Office 365, and management tools, is getting new editions aimed at schools, as well as workers who spend most of their days dealing with customers instead of staffing a desk.

Separately, Microsoft is rolling out an invitation-only preview of a version of its Bing search engine customized for companies' own needs.

Also coming: integrations of LinkedIn data with workers' Office 365 profiles. Microsoft closed the \$27 billion acquisition of professional social-network LinkedIn in December, and has been rolling out deeper connections between its products and Microsoft's Office suite.

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