Microsoft Skype for Business
Audio Devices Solutions Brief
The Importance of Skype for Business Devices

Microsoft Skype for Business 2013 is a phenomenal advance in Unified Communications, connecting people across devices and productivity scenarios in a way that is collaborative, consistent, engaging and accessible, from the living room to the boardroom. Skype for Business provides the application infrastructure to integrate common channels of business communication including instant messaging (IM), VoIP (Voice over IP), file transfer, web conferencing, whiteboarding, screen sharing & voice mail. Skype for Business can be used within a single organisation, between multiple organisations (federation), and with external individuals (consumer-based Skype federation). Deploying Skype for Business provides new ways for businesses to change working practices, enhance productivity and customer service through greater flexibility and collaboration.

Voice is a fundamental requirement for Skype for Business – devices enable UC to truly harness the power of voice. Devices work across different hardware and software solutions, providing a consistent experience, and also come in many different forms to suit the varied needs of modern workers. However, the wide range of devices available can also create confusion and complexity when deciding which solution(s) to roll out with a Skype for Business deployment.

These are the types of questions that are often asked and in reality it’s never a case of ‘one device fits all needs’. The device of choice will always be defined by the worker’s profile: where and how they work. If the device does not fit the needs of the worker then the undoubted benefits of Skype for Business will not be realised. In fact, selecting the wrong device could quite easily lead to productivity challenges, resulting in the mistaken idea that Skype for Business is not a high-quality UC business solution. In essence, the device defines the Skype for Business experience - built upon an infrastructure comprising a number of approved products from a vendor eco-system.

“Do I need a headset, a phone… or both?”

“What’s the difference between Lync Optimised, Lync Qualified and Certified for Skype for Business?”

Choosing the wrong device could quite easily lead to the mistaken idea that Skype for Business is not a high-quality UC business solution.
The Complexity of Choice

In a Skype for Business deployment, the UC functionality is typically enabled either by the soft client in conjunction with a headset and/or USB phone; or by an IP desk phone which is Lync optimised, Lync qualified or Certified for Skype for Business. However, with some desk phones now supporting ‘Better Together over Ethernet’ (BToE) the lines have become blurred.

In summary, the device options are:

- **HEADSET**
  - Bluetooth or USB connectivity (Skype for Business client)

- **USB DESK PHONE**
  - (Skype for Business client)

- **IP DESK PHONE**
  - (Lync phone edition or Skype for Business client if BToE)

If the device of choice is a desk phone, there may still be a requirement for a headset. However, this will be a standard headset connected to the desk phone; providing hands-free and office roaming benefits.

Vendor Portfolio

The following device vendors provide best-in-class solutions, all of which have been certified by Microsoft as either optimised or qualified for use in Skype for Business deployments.
Headset or Desk Phone - Key Considerations

COST

A mid-range Lync Optimised or Certified for Skype for Business headset can be up to 70% cheaper than a desk phone. Therefore, limiting the number of desk phones can reduce the total Skype for Business deployment cost. However, it’s also important to take into account the average life-span of the device. Headsets generally need replacing more frequently than desk phones, so the initial cost saving gained from deploying headsets could be lost. It’s also worth considering the detrimental impact on productivity and customer service that may result from having to replace headsets more often than desk phones.

RESILIENCE

An IP desk phone has no reliance on the PC as Skype for Business functionality is driven by the phone firmware. Headsets or USB desk phones depend on the Skype for Business software client for UC functionality. Therefore, if the PC crashes or reboots during a call and a headset or USB phones is being used, the call will be dropped. However, if an IP desk phone is being used then the call will continue uninterrupted as it has no reliance on the PC.

HEADSET ADOPTION

In general, people are familiar with using a desk phone for telephony, especially if migrating from a traditional PBX. There may even be perception that a Skype for Business soft client could ‘interfere’ with desktop applications and be counter-productive, therefore favouring a desk phone. Choosing the most suitable device, first time, is a critical success factor when deploying Skype for Business because the wrong type of device has a significant detrimental impact on productivity, customer service as well as a negative perception of the overall Skype for Business solution.

Discussing device selection at the initial planning stage of a Skype for Business roll-out is critical – creating pilot groups profiled around different worker types is now considered ‘best practice’ to ensure appropriate devices are selected which best fit the groups needs. When workers become familiar with using headsets (in conjunction with the Skype for Business client or via a desk phone), there is a high likelihood that greater benefits can be achieved by adopting a headset device.

WORKER PROFILE

Arguably, the greatest influence on device choice is the profile that best fits the worker. Examples of typical worker profiles:

- **Desk based workers** would benefit from either a headset or desk phone.
- **Desk based workers who need to roam the office** need a wireless headset. However, Skype for Business functionality could still be delivered via an IP desk phone if resiliency was required.
- **Flexible and mobile workers** would benefit from the freedom of a Bluetooth enabled headset.
- **Home workers** would benefit from either a headset or USB phone (possibly a combination of both).

**COST**

Investment Lifetime

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Summary of Key Consideration Points

Consideration of the above points will help the worker make an informed decision as to whether a headset or desk phone will drive greater benefit.

1. Cost should not be the main driver of choice but establishing the right balance between headsets and phones will help to lower the initial investment and allow the full collaboration and productivity benefits of Skype for Business to be realised.

2. Resilience is an important consideration as this will potentially influence productivity and customer service. The importance of resilience will somewhat depend on the worker profile. For example, a desk based agent or knowledge worker will require resilient UC whereas a mobile worker will have less of a requirement.

3. Always ensure the device chosen is a best fit for the worker profile.

4. Initially, workers are likely to opt for a desk phone due to a perceived familiarity with PBX-like functionality and usability. However, a desk phone may not necessarily be the right choice. It’s important for workers to trial headsets and become more comfortable with a differing UC approach, driving greater adoption and maximum solution benefit.

“Do I need a cordless, wireless or multi-use headset?”

“I need a wireless device but which is better, Bluetooth or DECT?”
Desk Phones – Key Considerations

There is an extensive range of desk phone options available, designed to meet different worker needs. The key to correct device selection is understanding the options available. These include:

- Executive phones with colour displays, programmable buttons and wideband audio
- Knowledge worker phones with a greater level of functionality
- Basic desktop phones for workers with low level functionality requirements
- Common area phones suitable for public areas or warehouses
- Conference room phones

DO I NEED AN IP OR USB DESK PHONE?

Desk phones are available in two formats; USB or IP. USB desk phones provide a more simple, flexible ‘plug & play’ experience ideal for low level use, where Skype for Business functionality is driven by the soft client. IP desk phones provide a resilient, feature rich experience ideal for high usage. Skype for Business functionality is usually driven from the phone but can be tethered or paired to the soft client for a ‘Better Together over Ethernet’ experience.

As a general rule, these guidelines should be followed:

- Resiliency required (IP desk phone)
- High level functionality (IP desk phone)
- Skype for Business functionality being driven by soft client (USB desk phone or IP desk with BToE)
- Home worker (USB desk phone)

BETTER TOGETHER OVER ETHERNET (BTOE)

The BToE feature allows supported Lync Qualified or Certified for Skype for Business desk phones to pair with a PC/laptop Skype for Business client. This provides a degree of feature transparency between the Lync desk phone and Skype for Business client, similar to USB tethering with Lync Optimised or Certified for Skype for Business desk phones. Once paired, calls can be made and received as well as controlled from either the Lync desk phone or Skype for Business client.

SUMMARY OF VENDOR DESK PHONE SOLUTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vendor</th>
<th>Optimised / Qualified</th>
<th>IP Desk Phones</th>
<th>USB Phone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Best</td>
<td>Better</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polycom CX</td>
<td>Optimised</td>
<td>CX700</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polycom VVX</td>
<td>Qualified</td>
<td>VVX600</td>
<td>VVX500</td>
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<tr>
<td>snom</td>
<td>Qualified</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AudioCodes</td>
<td>Qualified</td>
<td>UC440</td>
<td>UC430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plantronics</td>
<td>Optimised</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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</table>

LYNC AUDIO DEVICES - SOLUTIONS BRIEF
Lync Phones: Optimised vs Qualified vs Certified

Microsoft has developed different categories for desk phones. There is a range of “Lync Optimised”, “Lync Qualified” and “Certified for Skype for Business” desk phones available, which are suitable for any type of business requirement from the basic “common area phone” to the “knowledge worker executive” who requires high level functionality.

- **Lync Optimised**: desk phones that are designed specifically for Microsoft Lync for and are pre-installed with Lync Phone Edition (LPE) software, providing full Lync functionality. Lync Optimised desk phones only work in a Lync environment.

- **Lync Qualified**: desk phones that are standards-based SIP phones that can work in a Lync or Skype for Business environment and an IP-PBX environment concurrently. These IP phones support core Skype for Business features and also allow for customised telephony features and third-party voice applications.

In general, Optimised desk phones are better suited to workers who require full Lync or Skype for Business functionality with no further customisation of features, whereas Qualified phones provide more PBX-like functionality but also enable a broader range of customised telephony features. The addition of ‘Better Together over Ethernet’, USB/Bluetooth headset support and video on specific Qualified phones, has somewhat blurred the lines between the two categories of desk phone.

- **Certified for Skype for Business**: this badge is awarded to devices that have passed the Skype for Business Certification Program, ensuring the third party solution offers a high quality experience and compatibility when used with Skype for Business. Please note that Lync Optimised and Qualified devices may also be Certified for Skype for Business.

### Optimised for Lync
Optimised Lync IP phones are specifically designed for Lync and run the Microsoft Lync Phone Edition software directly on the phone.

### Qualified for Lync
Compatible and Qualified for Skype for Business are IP phones containing firmware tested with the phone manufacturer’s software.

### Certified for Skype for Business
“Certified for Skype for Business” is the designation for products that meet the highest specifications outlined in the Skype for Business Certification programme. “Works with Skype for Business” is the designation for products that meet the minimum specifications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Optimised for Lync phones include: Polycom CX range</th>
<th>Qualified for Lync phones include: Polycom VXV range, snom and AudioCodes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lync only</td>
<td>Lync and SIP based PBX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lync Optimised desk phones support Lync functionality with deep integration but are limited to only this functionality</td>
<td>Lync Qualified desk phones support core Skype for Business functionality but also offer a broader range of customised telephony features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC connectivity not required as full Skype for Business functionality from the desk phone. However, some desk phones support PC tethering to allow feature integration between the soft client and desk phone</td>
<td>PC connectivity not required as core Skype for Business functionality from the desk phone. However, some desk phones support BToE to allow feature integration between the soft client and desk phone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PLEASE NOTE:**
Skype for Business will support backwards compatibility with Optimised / Qualified Lync 2013 devices. However, it is advisable to only deploy Lync Optimised or Qualified solutions that have achieved the Certified for Skype for Business designation.

Integrated security and manageability, allowing for direct provisioning and configuration from the phone to the Skype for Business Server 2015 and remote Skype for Business Server 2015 updates to the device.
Headsets – Key Considerations

Headsets are fast becoming the UC accessory of choice, driven by changing working behaviours. Almost every working environment has a need for a headset and where Skype for Business is deployed, in some circumstances, a headset is an essential requirement.

To understand whether there is a real need for a headset, (a Lync Optimised or Certified for Skype for Business device to replace a desk phone or a headset to connect to a Lync desk phone) the following questions will help to identify the need:

TOP 10 QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Do you work at a desk?
- Do you take a high volume of calls?
- Do you have to balance the phone handset between your ear and shoulder to write or type?
- Do you need ‘hands-free’ to use applications, access documents or take notes while on a call?
- Do you often have to speak to colleagues whilst on a call?
- Do you need to roam the office?
- Do you work remotely?
- Do you use multiple communication devices such as a laptop, mobile phone and tablet?
- Do you work in a noisy environment?
- Do you need to use your phone while driving?

Not every headset is the same, therefore it is imperative to understand the individual user requirements. As discussed earlier, the profiling, selection and deployment of the most appropriate UC devices will have a significant impact on the adoption of Skype for Business within the organisation. These discovery questions will not only uncover a need for a headset but will also help to qualify the actual types of headset required.
HOW IS THE HEADSET CONNECTING TO SKYPE FOR BUSINESS?

The choice of headset will largely depend on whether the Skype for Business client or desk phone is being used. The Skype for Business client will require a Lync Optimised or Certified for Skype for Business headset to be connected via USB whereas a headset connected to a Lync desk phone will be via the traditional method of an Electronic Hook Switch (EHS). In the latter case, the headset will not need to be Lync Optimised.

WIRED OR WIRELESS?

As deploying new hardware for the workplace can be a costly investment, you need to take the time to weigh both options carefully. When it comes to your business, the decision between wired and wireless is extremely situational - no one headset will be the perfect fit for every worker. Whether a worker requires a wired or a wireless headset should be a simple choice based on whether they are desk-bound or have a need to ‘roam’. However, it’s also important to factor in cost as wired headsets are considerably cheaper than wireless headsets. Therefore, try to only deploy wireless solutions where mobility is absolutely necessary.

USB OR DESK PHONE CONNECTION?

An industry standard connection via a USB connection, a headset can connect directly into any computer, for maximum compatibility. The computer provides power for the headset, dispensing the need for batteries or recharging, while delivering a digital audio signal into the headset, eliminating interference and maximising voice clarity.

The headset can connect to a desk phone, possibly requiring an adapter cable (depending on the vendor). In this scenario the connected headset does not need to be Lync Optimised, instead a standard compatible headset would suffice.

MONO OR DUO?

Mono headsets more suited to the occasional headset user where the level of background noise is not a major consideration. Having only one earpiece allows the worker to converse with colleagues without removing the headset. This not only improves the potential life span of the headset (less wear & tear) but also provides productivity benefits for many types of workers.

Duo headsets allow for a greater level of concentration by the worker as the two earpiece wearing style blocks out background noise. This makes duo headsets ideal for workers who take a high volume of calls and require a high degree of concentration. Duo headsets are essential for workers in certain vertical markets, where attention to detail is critical; emergency services, finance & legal and call centres.

WIRELESS DECT OR BLUETOOTH?

DECT (Digital Enhanced Cordless Technology) has become a universal standard. DECT headsets operate on a specific range resulting in superior sound quality and clarity when compared to Bluetooth devices. Furthermore, DECT signalling provides a much larger range than Bluetooth, allowing for greater wireless freedom without degradation of call quality or dropped calls. If a Lync desk phone is to be used (resiliency, customised features...) but wireless freedom is also required, a DECT headset would provide easier connectivity direct to the desk phone.

Bluetooth is a hands-free, wireless technology that allows a user to connect a Bluetooth headset to a mobile phone, laptop computer or other portable Bluetooth enabled devices such as a tablet. Although the ‘in-office’ range is limited compared to DECT, the ability to pair various devices provides for greater flexibility when wireless freedom is also required ‘out-of-office’, for example Skype for Business Mobile client calls. Being able to communicate across various devices with a single headset is also more efficient and cost effective. A Bluetooth headset would not be ideal where a Lync desk phone is being used as DECT provides the better connectivity option. Bluetooth is better suited where the Skype for Business client is being used as headset connectivity would be via a USB Bluetooth dongle, delivering Skype for Business specific functionality such as presence and call control.
Selecting the Right Headset

The following questions will determine the most suitable headset for the worker; providing greater adoption and a faster business ROI.

1. Is a desk phone or Skype for Business client connectivity required?
2. What profile does the worker fit into?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORKER PROFILE</th>
<th>JABRA</th>
<th>PLANTRONICS</th>
<th>SENNHEISER</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Office Worker (Desk Based)</td>
<td>PRO 9460 Duo BIZ 2300</td>
<td>Savi 710-M or 720-M</td>
<td>DW Pro 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office worker (Roaming)</td>
<td>Motion Office MS</td>
<td>Savi 700 Series</td>
<td>DW Series</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<th>WORKER PROFILE</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mobile worker</td>
<td>Stealth UC</td>
<td>Voyager Edge UC</td>
<td>Presence UC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible worker (in/out of the office)</td>
<td>Motion Office</td>
<td>Savi 700 Series</td>
<td>Presence UC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Worker (Desk Based) (Softphone)</td>
<td>UC Voice 750 MS Evolve 65 MS BIZ 2300 / 2400 USB MS</td>
<td>Blackwire Series</td>
<td>SC 660 USB ML MB Pro UC ML</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home worker</td>
<td>Evolve 65 MS Speak510</td>
<td>Blackwire 710 / 720 Calisto 620 M</td>
<td>MB PRO UC ML</td>
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</table>
The choice of device is not a decision to be taken lightly, and certainly not one to be based solely on cost. Devices play a critical role in a Skype for Business Enterprise voice deployment, with productivity and the customer experience largely dependent on matching the correct device to the worker profile (the worker profile determining the worker requirements). It’s important to understand that ‘one device does not fit all needs’. The successful roll-out a Microsoft Skype for Business solution requires a trial phase, whereby workers can familiarise themselves with a range of devices to ensure the most suitable solution (based on their individual needs) is selected. In many scenarios, more than one device may be necessary. For example, a Lync desk phone may be required to guarantee resiliency yet the benefits of a wireless headset may also be appropriate.

Following the four steps below will ensure a successful device deployment, meaning that the full business benefits of Skype for Business will be more immediately apparent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identify</th>
<th>Which worker profile does the customer fit into?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trial</td>
<td>Select, test and evaluate a range of Skype for Business devices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deploy</td>
<td>Roll out chosen devices selected from trial phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train &amp; Evaluate</td>
<td>Drive user device adoption and satisfaction through continuous training and evaluation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Next Steps

Find out about Microsoft Skype for Business and Westcon’s portfolio of Skype for Business Eco-system vendors through our extensive overview guide:

“Tell Me About ... Skype for Business UC Solutions”

Download it now

Westcon also provide a series of “Solutions Brief” guides, exploring specific areas of the Skype for Business Solution. See the series of guides on our website:

See them now

discoverUCC.com features wealth of resources dedicated to Skype for Business. Discover how Westcon is the Skype for Business Hardware Distribution Partner making Skype for Business simpler and more profitable with discoverUCC.com

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