



Red River

**MICROSOFT TEAMS DEVICES:
A BUYER'S GUIDE**



If you're at all a regular reader of our blog, you've probably noticed that we're quite positive towards the many workplace benefits of Microsoft Teams. Microsoft Teams empowers employees to connect and collaborate in a truly modern cloud environment, enabling things like remote work – an increasingly common team arrangement in this current age.

While Teams can – and does – function perfectly well with typical over-the-counter hardware solutions that individual team members can buy at their local electronics store, companies with the budget to explore more specialized Microsoft Teams devices should consider doing so. In this ebook, we will explore the many benefits of Microsoft Teams devices and go over some of the more common options.



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF DEDICATED TEAMS HARDWARE?

If all your team members can collaborate perfectly well through Microsoft Teams with an audio headset and webcam purchased from Best Buy, then why should your business invest in dedicated hardware? Teams devices, rather than being primarily used by individuals, are more typically used to create a “Teams Room,” i.e., a conference room fully dedicated to collaborating through Teams, whether with people in the same room or people across the country or planet. There are many benefits to setting up a room with dedicated Teams hardware:

- **Reliability and ease of setup.** Connect and collaborate quickly with Microsoft Teams devices that are specifically built to work in teams natively.
- **Standardized equipment makes troubleshooting easy.** In the event something malfunctions, there will be no need to slog through a variety of readme files and user’s manuals to try to pin down the point of failure, as there might with an interconnected patchwork of software and hardware.
- **Exceptional audiovisual quality.** Store-bought webcams and headsets are perfectly satisfactory for Teams, but the impact of high-quality audio and visual communication cannot be overstated. When people on both ends of a video conference can clearly interpret what the other party is saying, the clarity reduces the risk of any misunderstandings.
- **Superior security.** In the age of cybercrime, every new device plugged in to a computer on a network is an extra point of complexity in a system. While it’s true that if a hacker has access to a webcam on your employee’s computer, your business network probably has bigger problems, it never hurts to be using more advanced, secure devices.
- **Dedicated Teams Rooms provide a more controlled environment.** With a dedicated Teams conference room, there’s no need to set up and tear down your technology every time you’re having a big conference call. Once set up, a Teams Room is good to go on command.

Now that we’ve explored the many benefits of dedicated Microsoft Teams devices, let’s look at some of the best, most common devices businesses use for their Microsoft Teams conference room.



MICROSOFT TEAMS PHONES

While we have previously talked about the many benefits of a full-fledged Teams Room, there are Teams devices of all stripes to suit you and your organization's needs. While these obviously do not have all of the aforementioned benefits of a Teams Room, these Teams phones have exceptional-quality audio for their small size and portability.

- **Polycom CCX 500 and CCX 700 Teams Phones.** These touchscreen handsets offer full connectivity to Teams and Microsoft's Cortana assistant. While the CCX 500 is audio-only, the CCX 700 has a camera, supporting video calls as needed.
- **Polycom VoxBox Speakerphone.** This small, portable speakerphone can connect to a phone through a USB or Bluetooth connection, and will deliver clear audio with noise-reduction technology. Perfect for an open office that prioritizes huddle spaces over fixed conference rooms.
Alternatives: Try the Poly Calisto and Jabra 710 MS for other powerful speakers.
- **Poly Elara 60.** This smartphone dock conveniently turns any individual smartphone into a full-featured desk phone, complete with headset and handset options for higher audio quality.
Alternatives: If you're looking for other headsets for your smartphone or other Teams device, consider the Poly Voyager 6200 or Poly Blackwire USB.
- **Poly Trio 8300, 8500, and 8800.** We will discuss the Trio series in greater length later in this ebook, as they can often be the centerpiece of a full Teams Room. Even if you do not have any intent to create a full-fledged Teams Room, a Poly Trio audio hub can be the solution any conference room needs when it comes to high-quality conference calls.



WHAT DO YOU NEED FOR MICROSOFT TEAMS ROOMS?

Before putting together a full Microsoft Teams conference space, it's important to plan ahead and know all the various parts. We will cover many of these in detail in this ebook.

- **Central console.** This is the computer or device that will run the meeting and handle all the various audio/visual feeds and any necessary file transfers. The central console has software and hardware requirements based on Windows 10. Typically, these are purchased as a bundle.
- **Video screen.** Whether an HDMI flat screen or a projector, you're going to want to be able to see the people on the other end of your call, or to go over files together as a group.
- **Audio in/out.** High-quality microphones and speakers will ensure clear, steady communication.
- **Camera.** From a standard webcam to something like Poly Studio, you'll want something to show an image of you and your team to whoever you're speaking with on the other side.

While many of the modern solutions support Bluetooth connections, for a Microsoft Teams Room we recommend you consider cabling to your screen(s), camera, and audio equipment to ensure the highest quality. This may require planning the physical layout of your conference room before you make any purchases.

MICROSOFT TEAMS CENTRAL CONSOLES

The central nervous system of any Teams conference room, these consoles are what control virtually every aspect of Teams in a physical space. Many of these can be paired with any other pieces of hardware, though some may be more compatible than others.

- **Logitech SmartDock.** One of the most popular central hub consoles for a Teams meeting room, the SmartDock is a meeting room hub console designed to pair well with virtually any camera or microphone. The heart of the SmartDock is a Surface Pro, making it very familiar for anyone used to working with Microsoft systems.
- **Lenovo ThinkSmart Hub 500.** Another easily deployed hub console, the ThinkSmart 500 can be ordered pre-configured for Teams. Unlike the SmartDock, the ThinkSmart is an all-in-one device.
- **Logitech TAP.** An attractive, self-contained controller that can hook up to any computer or laptop via USB, the TAP is an easy plug-and-play solution.
- **HP Elite Slice.** A small-form-factor desktop PC with an interesting modular design, the HP Slice can be bought preconfigured for meeting rooms.
- **Crestron Flex.** For large spaces, the Crestron Flex excels at integrating with existing A/V systems in an effective way.

It should be noted that a Microsoft Teams Room is designed around both software and hardware. For the most part, all of these devices are Windows 10 PC variants with touch screens. As previously mentioned, the SmartDock runs on a Surface Pro, whereas some of the others like the TAP or HP Slice are different variants.

While we strongly recommend that you buy these devices bundled with the software to run a Teams meeting, which is common, it is possible to purchase the software separately.

The software in question was released to the public in January 2019 as Microsoft Skype Rooms Systems v2 Console; it is now Microsoft Teams Rooms Console (v4.1.22.0 at time of writing). It requires both compatible hardware and a specific version of Windows 10, and supports both Teams Meetings and Skype Meetings – however, current Skype for Business users have until July 2021 to switch over, as Skype is being replaced by Teams.

For businesses on a budget, a Teams Meeting Room License will be less expensive than an enterprise license.



MICROSOFT TEAMS VIDEO SOLUTIONS

Video – that is, what you and your team see on your end of the call – is one of the areas of a Microsoft Teams Room setup where you tend to have great leeway. For the most part, any of the central hub consoles discussed above will be fully compatible with any HDMI-powered video screen or projector, so this is simply a matter of what your organization has at hand and what you prefer. The higher resolution the display, of course, the clearer the image.

One solution that bears particular note, however, is Microsoft's **Surface Hub 2** and **Surface Hub 2S**. Built to be a native Teams experience from the ground up, the Surface Hub 2 pairs a beautiful 4k+ touchscreen with interlinking capabilities, meaning that you can create a full video wall for a conference room.

The one downside is that the Surface Hub 2 is significantly more expensive than many of the other solutions we're discussing, so it may not be a feasible option for organizations on a budget.



MICROSOFT TEAMS AUDIO AND CAMERA SOLUTIONS

While many Microsoft Teams devices are standalone audio or camera solutions, many of the available purpose-built options pair both together, and so should be discussed together.

Here are some of the standout options:

- **Poly Studio.** You would be forgiven for thinking that the Poly Studio looks like a soundbar, because it is one! However, beyond its powerful speakers, the Poly Studio boasts a 4k camera and six microphones to pick up high-quality audio and video. This also includes the NoiseBlock and Acoustic Fence technology to minimize audio bleed, and even comes with Bluetooth stereo audio, so you can play music before a meeting.
- **Poly EagleEye Cube.** While this may not include speakers like its Studio sibling, the EagleEye Cube is much smaller and easier to fit into a cramped space. It does include a pair of microphones for clear audio pickup, and comes in two models: A 4K USB model, recommended for modern Teams rooms, and a 1080p HDCI model that works with legacy systems.
- **Poly Trio.** While we mentioned this earlier as an audio-only solution – which it is – the Trio works as a centerpiece for a conference room, boasting sensitive microphones and speakers. Trio units can be linked together, so multiple Poly Trio hubs can provide wall-to-wall coverage over even the largest meeting rooms without any loss in audio quality.

These are, of course, just some of the many devices being made to turn a conference room into a full multimedia Microsoft Teams Room, and the ideal solution for your company may be something not listed here.

If you're looking for an expert consultation as to the best hardware solution to turn your company into a Microsoft Teams-powered collaborative engine, consider [contacting Red River](#). Our experts will be happy to design a Teams Room perfect for your individual organization's needs.



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