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8x8 **Essentials**
eBook Series

Creating Digital DNA with Microsoft Teams

Explosive Growth of Microsoft Teams will Springboard Demand
for Premium Telephony Capabilities

Contents

Executive Summary

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COVID-19 aside, 2020 was the year of the platform for cloud communications and collaboration vendors. The year's biggest moves—Salesforce's Slack acquisition, the raft of CCaaS/UCaaS mergers and the launch of the 8x8 Open Communications Platform™—foreshadowed 2021's rise of the cloud platform approach to telephony, contact center and workforce collaboration.

Beyond cost savings, customers want to use platforms because the uncertain economy and health environment is forcing them to extract maximum value from their tech investments, now perhaps more than ever. Enabling work from home will not be enough for them in 2021. They want their apps to integrate seamlessly and support application programming interfaces (APIs) to introduce new capabilities. They want common data repositories for the 3 As—Analytics, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Automation. This is what platforms do best.

To help our customers better understand these platform trends, particularly how Microsoft Teams can impact their organization, 8x8 commissioned Hanover Research to study how IT decision makers feel about Microsoft Teams direct routing solutions, sometimes called bring-your-own-carrier (BYOC) solutions, both for office workers and in contact centers.

80% of respondents said their organizations are somewhat or very likely to integrate Microsoft Teams with third party telephony providers, as part of BYOC.

One of the most startling findings is that 80% of respondents said their organizations are somewhat or very likely to integrate Microsoft Teams with third party telephony providers, as part of BYOC. If this figure holds true, that portends a huge number of businesses enhancing their Teams implementation with a telephony direct routing solution.

Use this report as part of your Teams telephony due diligence to help you get the most value and performance from your Microsoft investments. Ask questions of potential direct routing solutions providers and your technology advisors. Access product demonstrations, attend online information sessions and review what your peers are doing. Platform and integration technologies will be big in 2021. There will be no more critical examples than Microsoft Teams direct routing solutions.
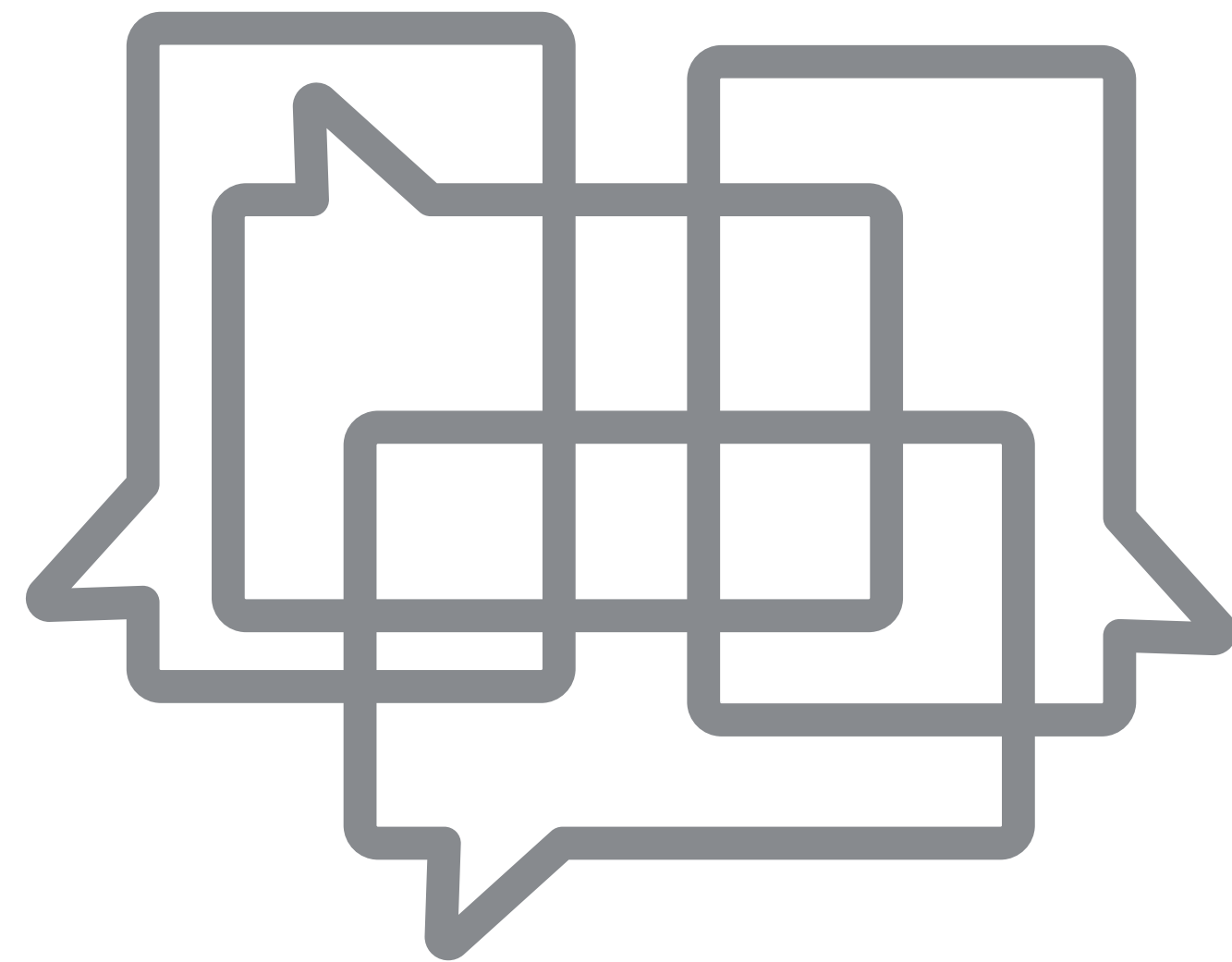
Survey Methodology

Hanover Research, on behalf of 8x8, conducted an online survey of IT decision makers for cloud communications. There were 300 respondents from the United States and 200 from the United Kingdom. Each respondent was employed at a company that had more than 250 employees and had deployed Microsoft Teams within the organization.

Questions covered topics ranging from how respondents felt about Microsoft Teams, whether Teams met their PSTN voice communications requirements and how well Teams integrated with their contact center and CRM systems.

2

Microsoft Teams:
State of the Union

Microsoft Teams: State of the Union

Microsoft positions Teams as an enterprise productivity platform, which means opening up more APIs and enabling third parties to innovate around and within Teams. This allows customers to derive more value from Teams by integrating new capabilities and applications within the familiar Teams interface. Openness allows Microsoft to build *stickiness* that keeps their infrastructure in the heart of every organization. Any good Teams implementation plan requires thought and analysis about integrating it into an organization's operational processes over time.

Microsoft Teams is set up for another massive year in 2021. The Redmond, WA-based computing giant said late last year its daily active user count is 115 million users, which is up roughly 5700% since November 2017. It is not surprising given Microsoft 365 has approximately 258 million paid users and SharePoint has about 200 million users.

Openness allows Microsoft to build stickiness that keeps their infrastructure in the heart of every organization.

The transition to Teams is going very well, say our respondents. More than three quarters of them view all Teams tasks as easy, and the vast majority of them are satisfied with all aspects of Microsoft Teams. Seventy-eight percent said they expect to continue using Teams more in the future.

Respondents said they are most frequently using Teams with 365 apps such as Word. Unsurprisingly since the survey was administered in 2020, respondents said their organizations used group video chat nearly 50% more than group text chat (Figure 1). Is your organization going to continue to be chat heavy, or will video backlash elevate group text chatting? It is something to monitor to help inform good choices about your needed tools and resources.

Microsoft Teams Capabilities Currently in Use

Use of Microsoft 365 apps within Teams **51%**

Group video chat for meetings **46**

Meeting recording **45**

Screen sharing **40**

File sharing **37**

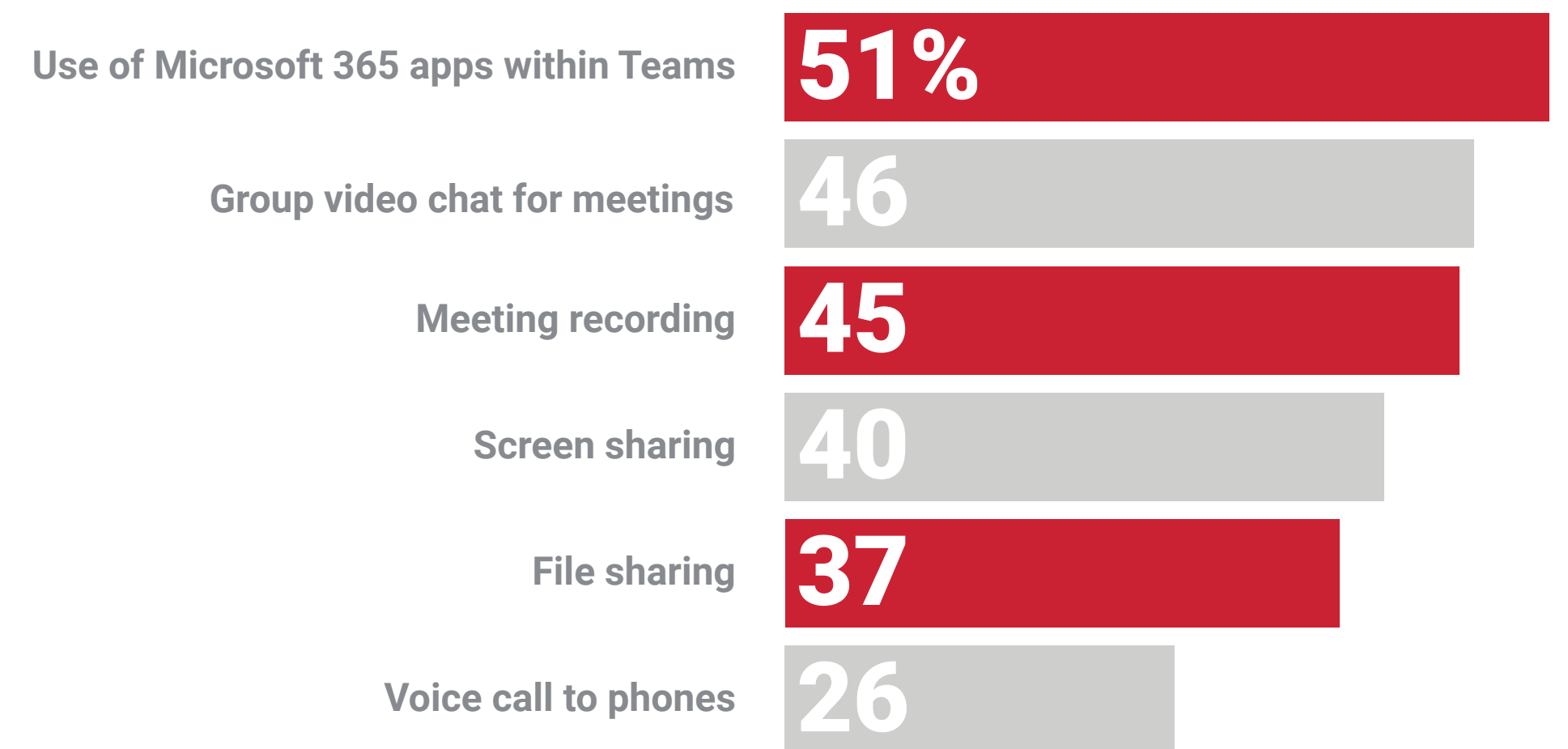Voice call to phones **26**

figure 1

This doesn't mean there aren't potential headaches. Security, in offices and now more commonly in employee homes, is an ongoing concern. Security, respondents said, is the most important thing to organizations when selecting cloud communications platforms. Change management, governance, user adoption and training are all areas that impact an organization's overall experience with Teams or any other platform. Take a look at how our respondents viewed selection criteria for cloud communications platforms and see how that aligns with your cloud communications strategy (Figure 2).

Top 5 Attributes When Selecting Cloud Communication Platforms / Data
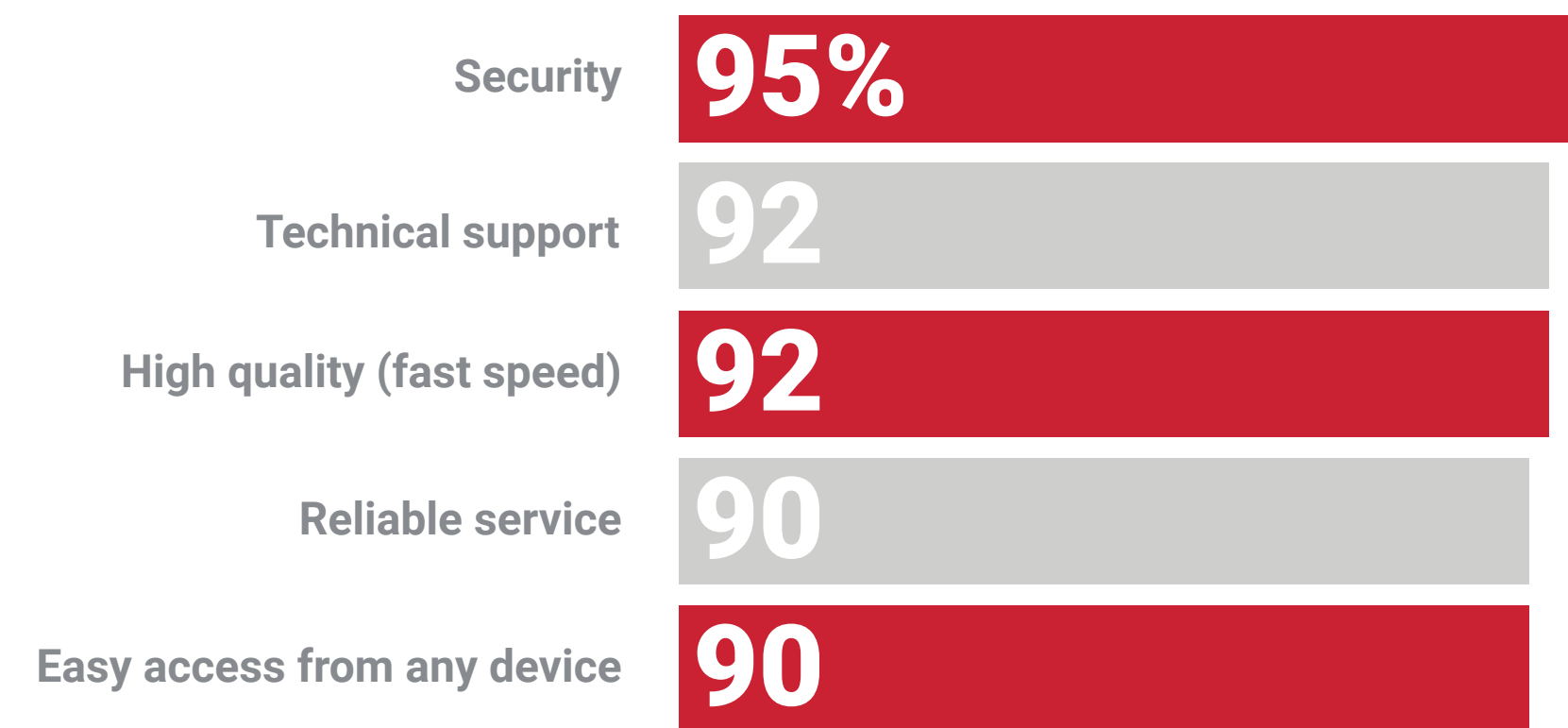
Security	**95%**
Technical support	**92**
High quality (fast speed)	**92**
Reliable service	**90**
Easy access from any device	**90**

figure 2

3

Who wants BYOC?

8x8 Creating Digital DNA with Microsoft Teams

Who wants BYOC?

One of the motivating factors for conducting this study is to better understand demand for Microsoft Teams direct routing solutions. Anecdotally, we know organizations are very interested because as one sales person put it, "it comes up in every customer conversation I have." 8x8 published an update on some of the momentum it was seeing with Teams last November.

Respondents were asked "How likely would your organization be to integrate Microsoft Teams with your existing and/or another third party telephony provider? 80% said either somewhat likely or extremely likely (Figure 3).

Likelihood of adoption of a direct routing solution did not wane if it required additional investments including telephony infrastructure, resources to support user administration and software to be installed on user devices.

Likelihood to Integrate Microsoft Teams with Current/Another Telephony Provider

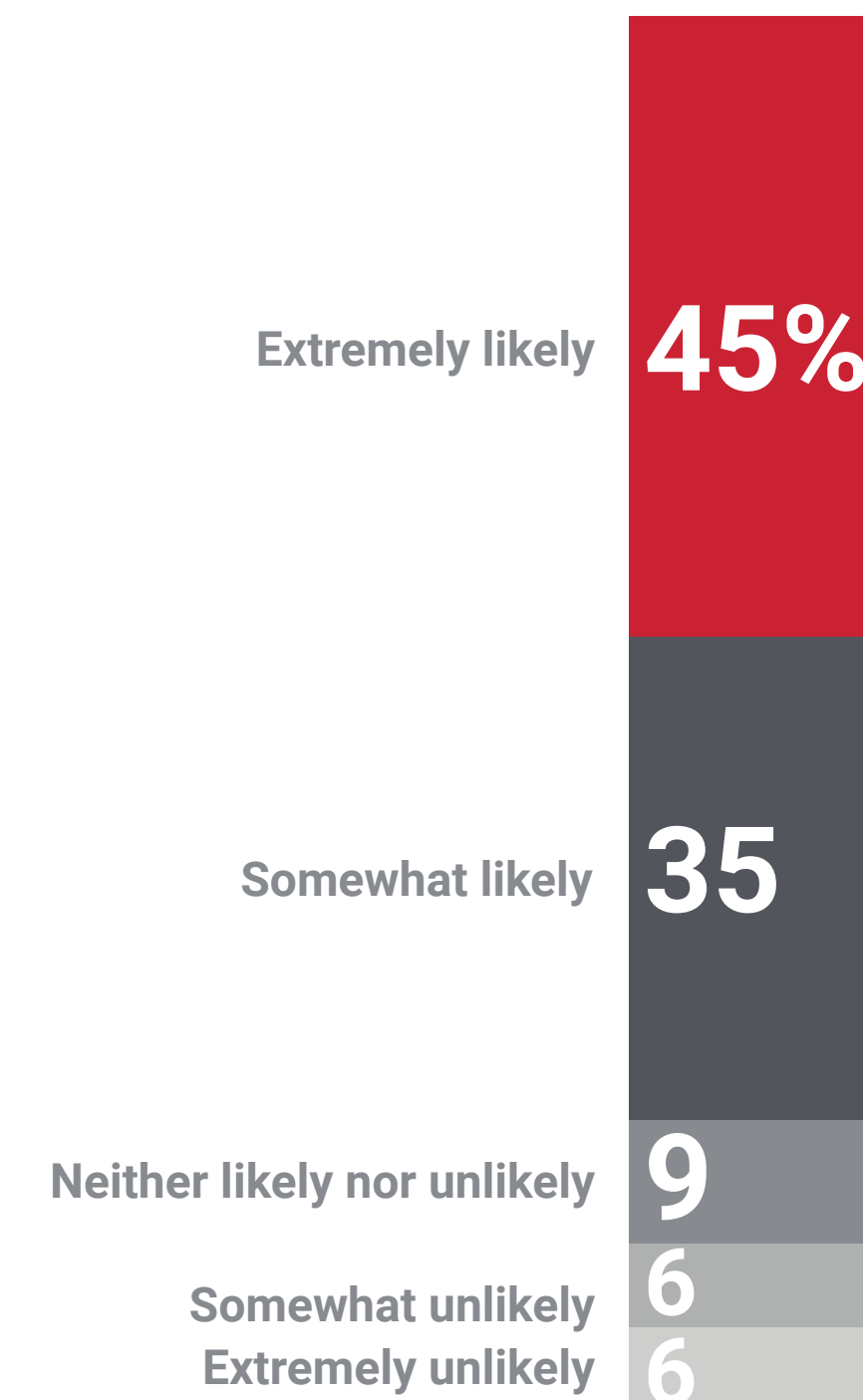|	
Extremely likely	**45%**
Somewhat likely	**35**
Neither likely nor unlikely	**9**
Somewhat unlikely	**6**
Extremely unlikely	**6**

figure 3

What this means for you.

The obvious interest among end-user organizations to augment Teams' voice capabilities means that they will be able to select from a wide range of direct routing solution options, in addition to being able to choose their own carrier. In a subsequent chapter of this book, we provide a list of questions you can ask a potential provider.

Do your due diligence. Use the competition to your advantage. Work with your technology advisors to understand how each option fits your needs from contact center functions, call reporting quality and integrations with business applications.

4

You deserve more than just a cheaper phone bill.

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Direct routing solutions are much more than giving an organization a cheaper phone bill. Sure, voice quality is important as well.

We asked respondents about features, available via direct routing solutions but not yet available directly from Teams. We wanted to understand the capabilities that interested them the most. Figure 4 highlights the interest levels which illustrate that reducing phone bills are just a part of the story about the growing demand for direct routing solutions.

IT Decison Maker's Extreme or Strong Interest in Voice Communication Features Offered by Teams

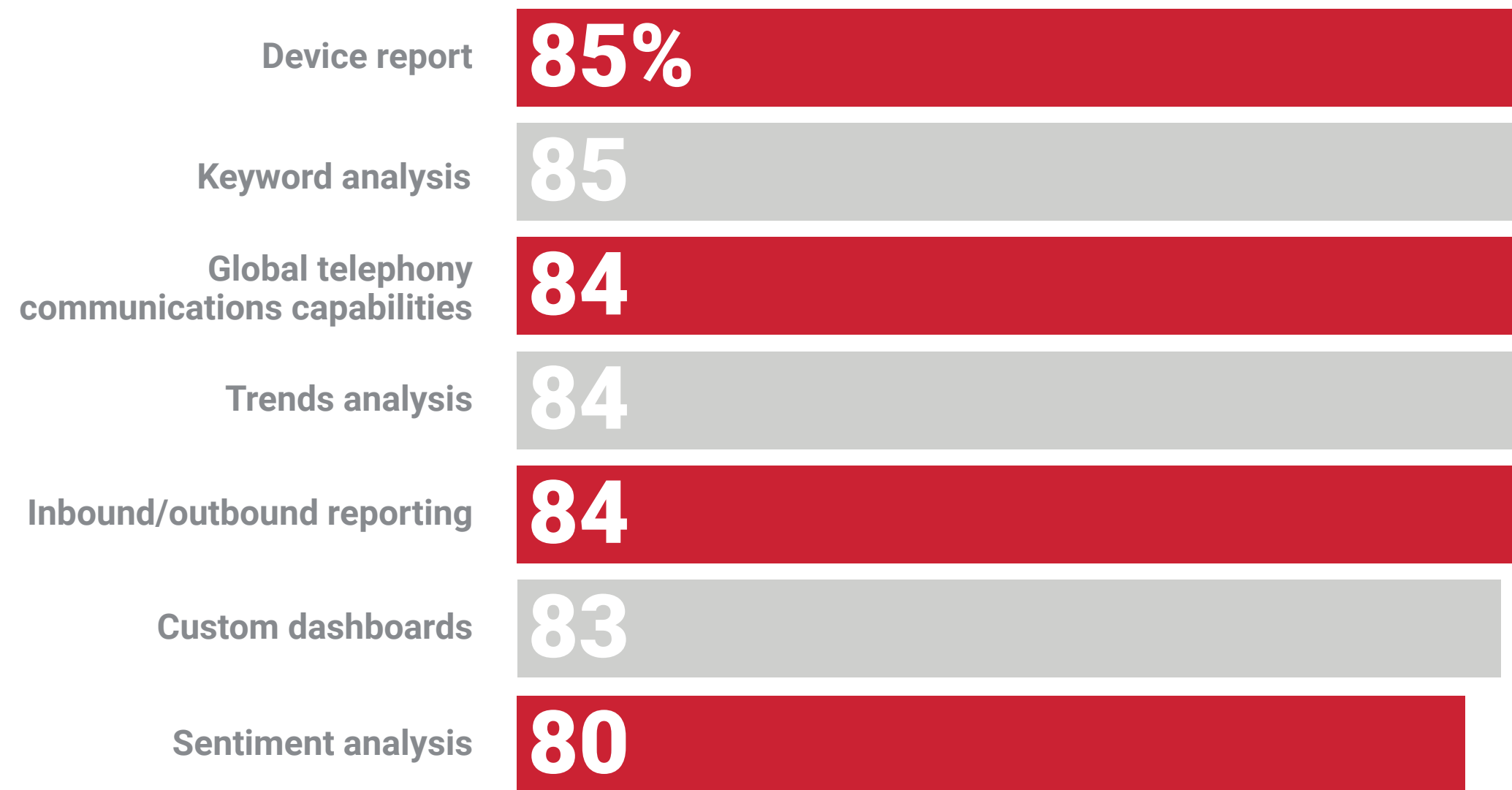| Feature	Value
Device report	**85%**
Keyword analysis	85
Global telephony communications capabilities	**84**
Trends analysis	84
Inbound/outbound reporting	**84**
Custom dashboards	83
Sentiment analysis	**80**

figure 4

Concurrently with the interest for trend, keyword and sentiment analysis, artificial intelligence/machine learning capabilities that accelerate and deepen analysis are improving. Plus, new storage technologies are making it easier to store analytics data, from different apps, in a common repository, often called a data lake. This will help algorithms do their work.

5

Is your UCaaS strategy more than voice, video and collaboration?

Is your UCaaS strategy more than voice, video and collaboration?

As platform and integration technologies mature, the scope of what constitutes unified communications expands. Unified communications is no longer just voice, video, collaboration and text messaging. Ninety-three (93%) of respondents said that CRM systems (e.g. Salesforce) and existing business apps are part of their unified communications strategy.

It will not be long before Internet of Things (IoT) sensors report status and other information to humans within a chat app. Robots too, will eventually need to be a unified communications component in some kinds of organizations.

The vast number of choices that organizations have to enable business communications and that speed at which the landscape is changing reiterates the importance of having a documented unified communications strategy.

93%

Ninety-three (93%) of respondents said that CRM systems (e.g. Salesforce) and existing business apps are part of their unified communications strategy.

Communications tools are now receiving board-level attention because they are critical to business resiliency. Yet, in our survey, 15% of respondents said they either have no unified communications strategy or are unsure (Figure 5). That number is too high.

The lesson is that before diving deep with any unified communications platform or direct routing solutions, work with your technology advisors to develop plans that allow you to benefit from the applications that matter to your business most in addition to voice and video, for example.

IT Decision Maker's Belief that Their Organization has a Unified Communications Strategy

Strongly agree **47%**

Somewhat agree **37**

Neither agree not disagree **6**

Somewhat disagree **4**
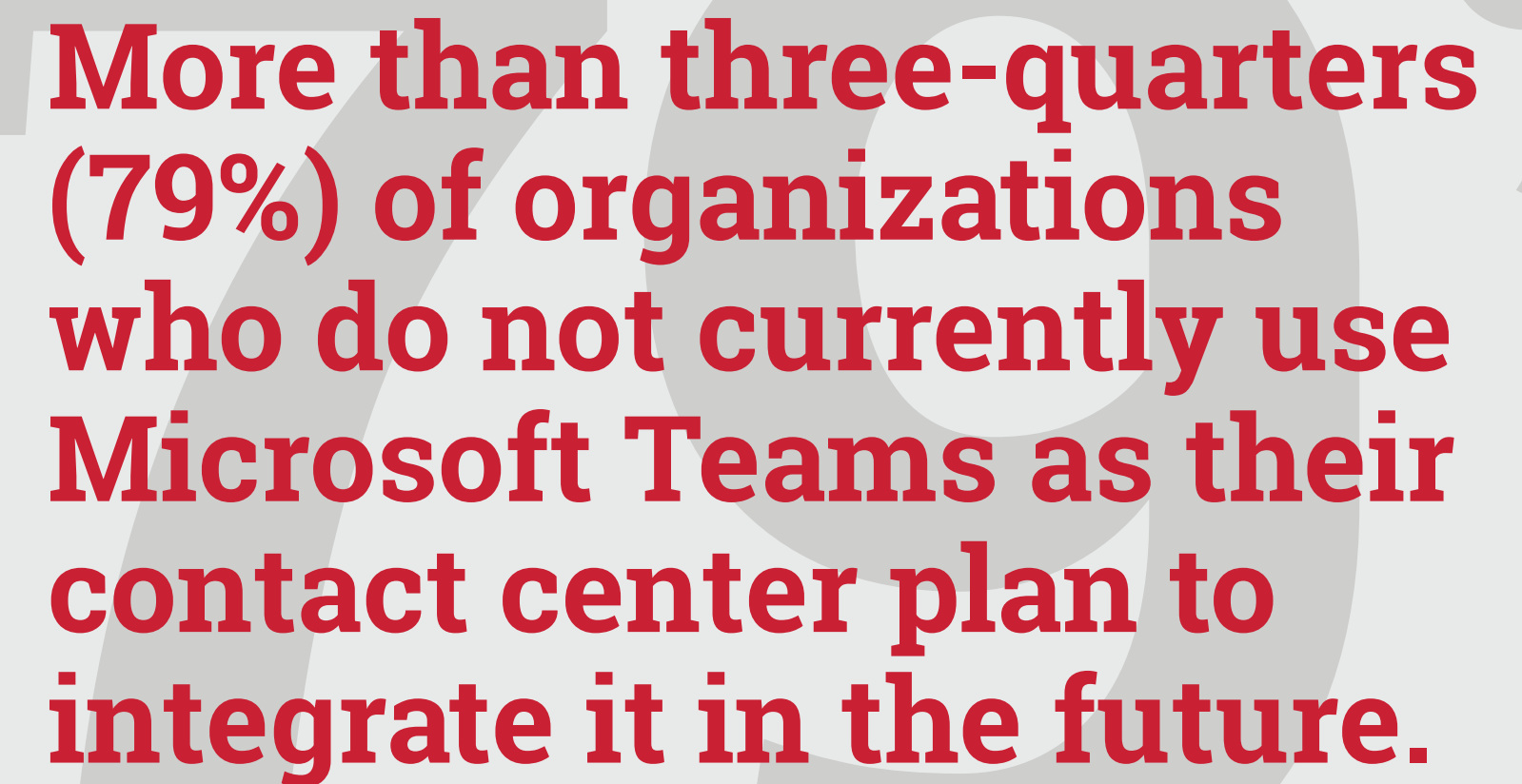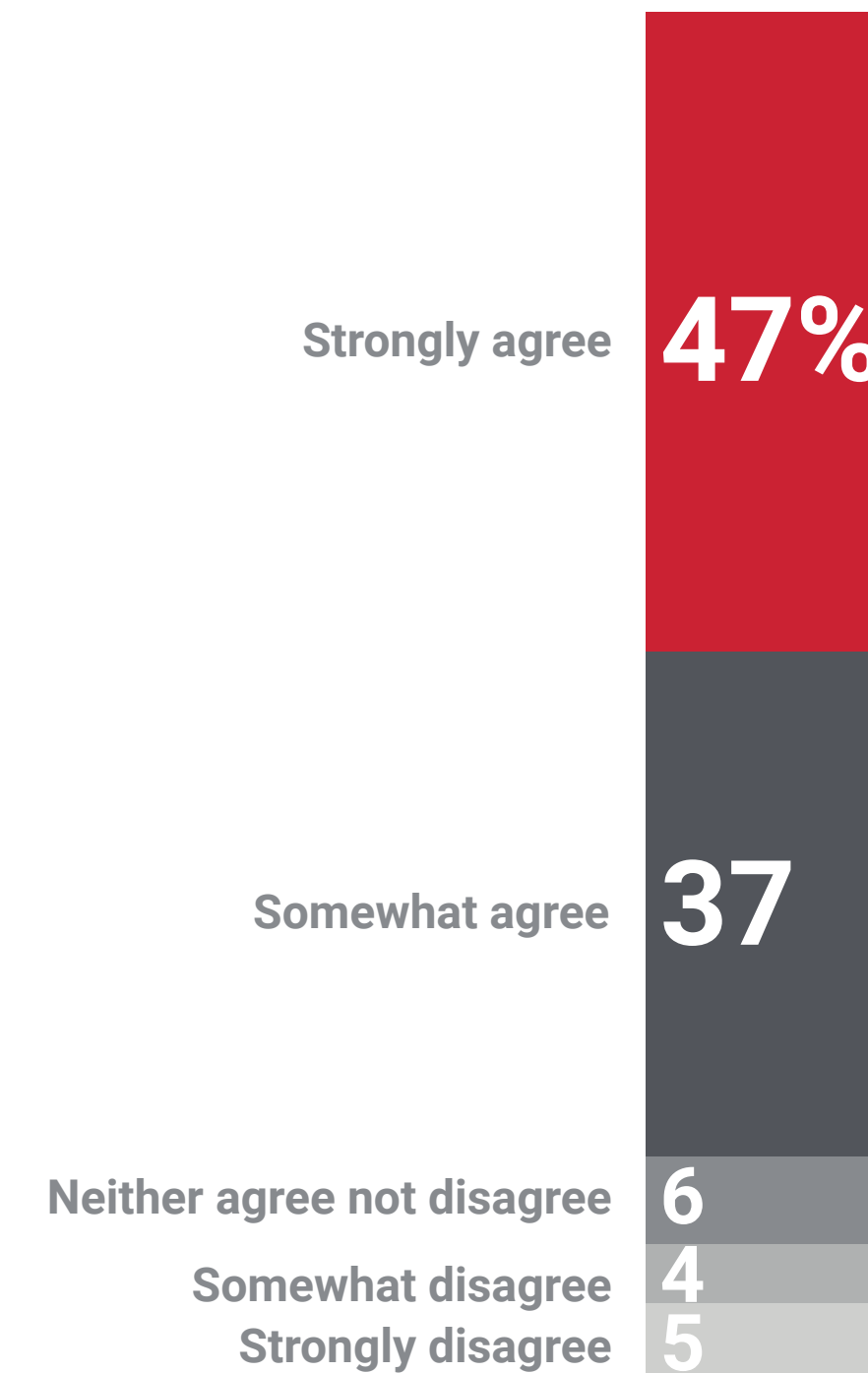
Strongly disagree **5**

figure 5

The study examined how important IT decision makers felt contact centers ought to be part of their unified communications strategy. More than three-quarters (79%) of organizations who do not currently use Microsoft Teams as their contact center plan to integrate it in the future.

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6

Is Microsoft Teams in your contact center?

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When people have a great experience doing business with a company, chances are they will want to do more business with it or will refer their friends and colleagues. This is one reason why there is so much innovation and investment in contact centers today.

Our study explored what respondents had to say about Microsoft Teams in the contact center. We were curious about whether they felt that contact center strategy should be separate from the rest of an organization's telecommunications (Figure 6).

Ninety-one percent (91%) said either they somewhat or strongly agreed that unified communications strategy includes contact center strategy. This makes a lot of sense because more products and services are becoming available that lets customers merge both worlds that yield

It is Important That My Organization Has a Unified Communications Strategy Between the Contact Center and the Rest of the Organization

Strongly agree **54%**

Somewhat agree **37**

Neither agree not disagree **5**
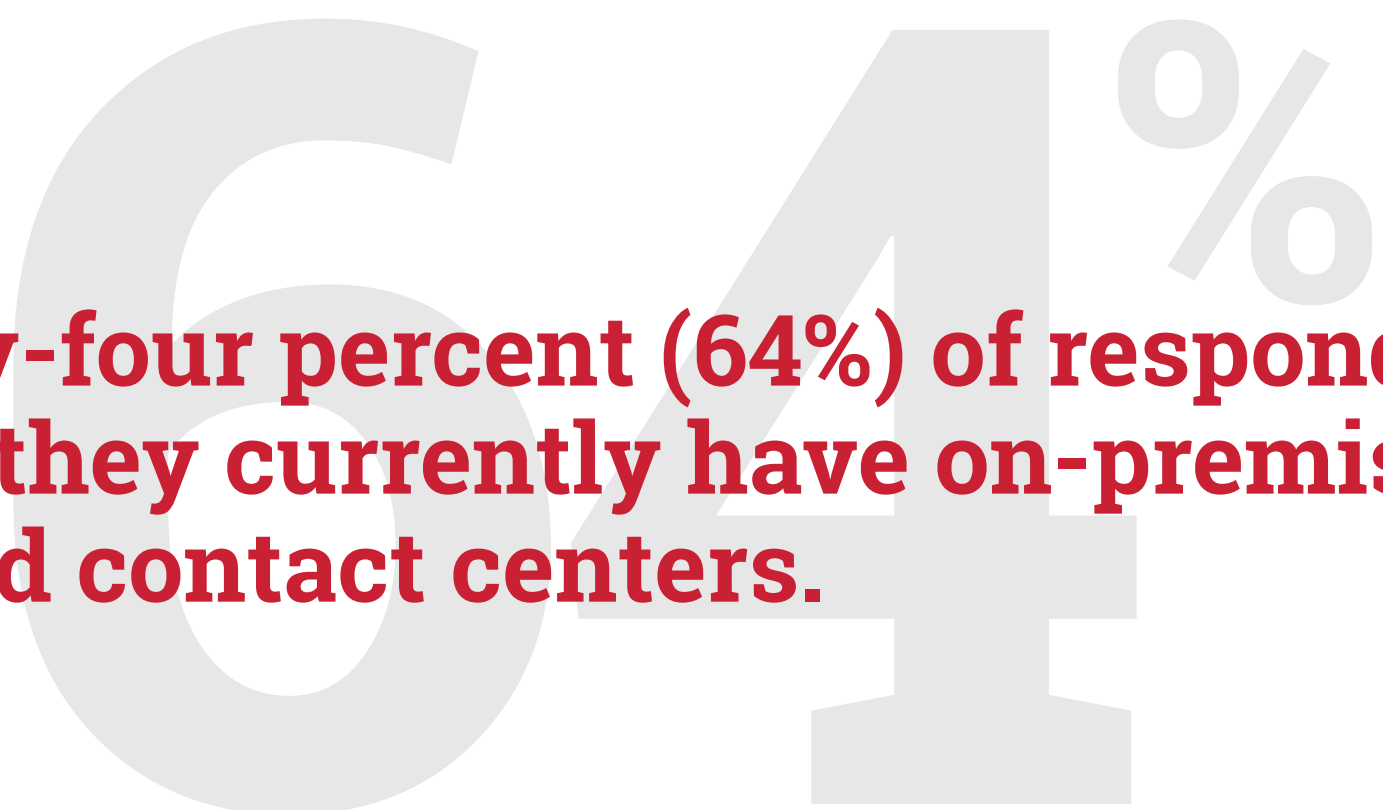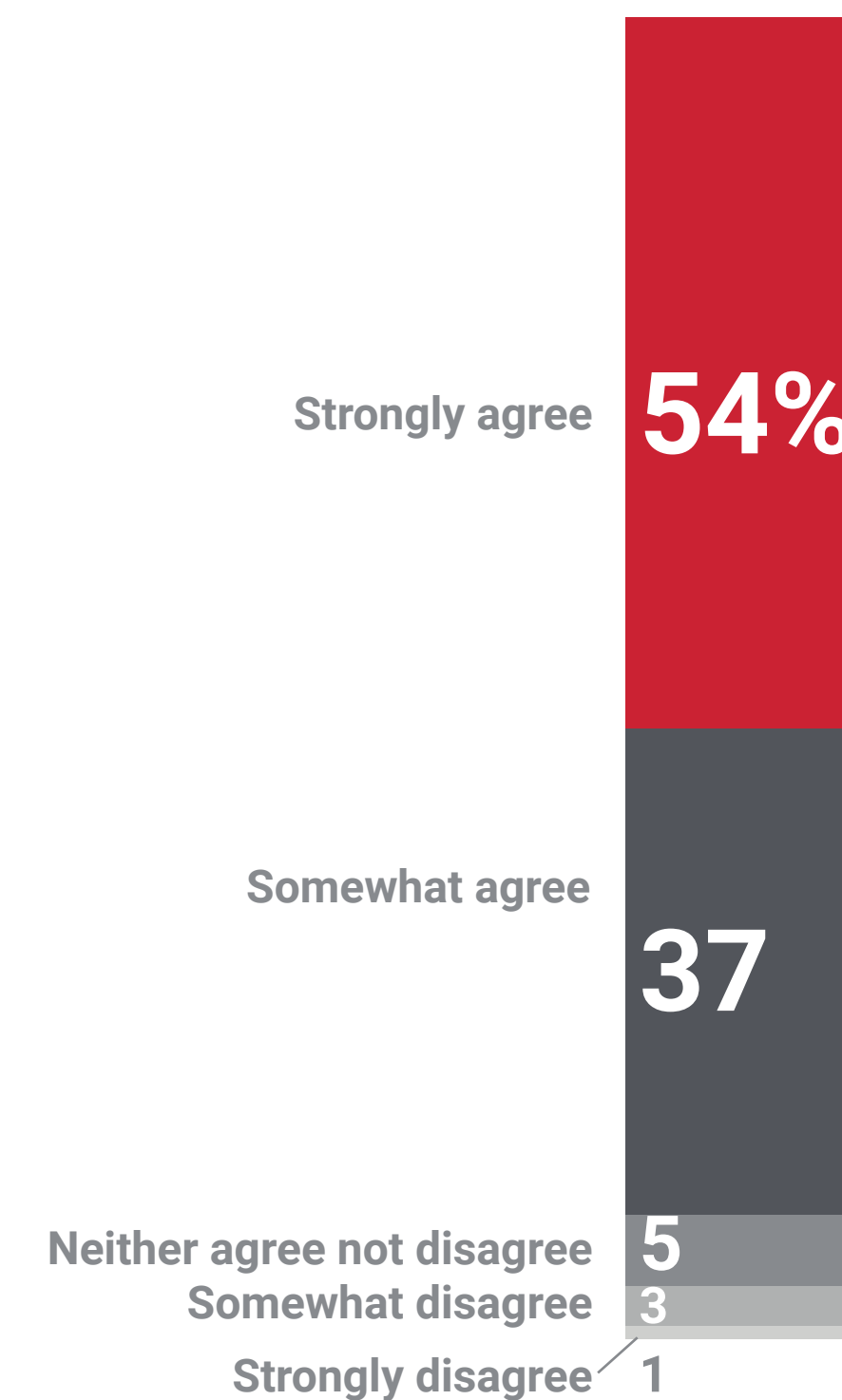Somewhat disagree **3**

Strongly disagree **1**

figure 6

more comprehensive analytic insights. Plus, not every customer interaction flows through a contact center.

Microsoft Teams is a common thread between office calling and contact center for many organizations. Ninety percent (90%) of our respondents said Teams is part of their contact center with nearly four-fifths saying it is somewhat likely or extremely likely that they will integrate Teams into their contact centers in the future.

64%

Sixty-four percent (64%) of respondents said they currently have on-premises based contact centers.

Direct routing solutions for Microsoft Teams offer similar benefits in office environments as in contact centers.

Sixty-four percent (64%) of respondents said they currently have on-premises based contact centers. We think a lot of them will shift to cloud-based ones in the coming year. If that is your plan, we urge you to:

- Consider the role Teams will play and evaluate how a direct routing solution makes sense for your needs.

- Consider how Teams can deliver more value for you across both contact centers and office calling—make sure your unified communications and contact center planning are tied together closely.
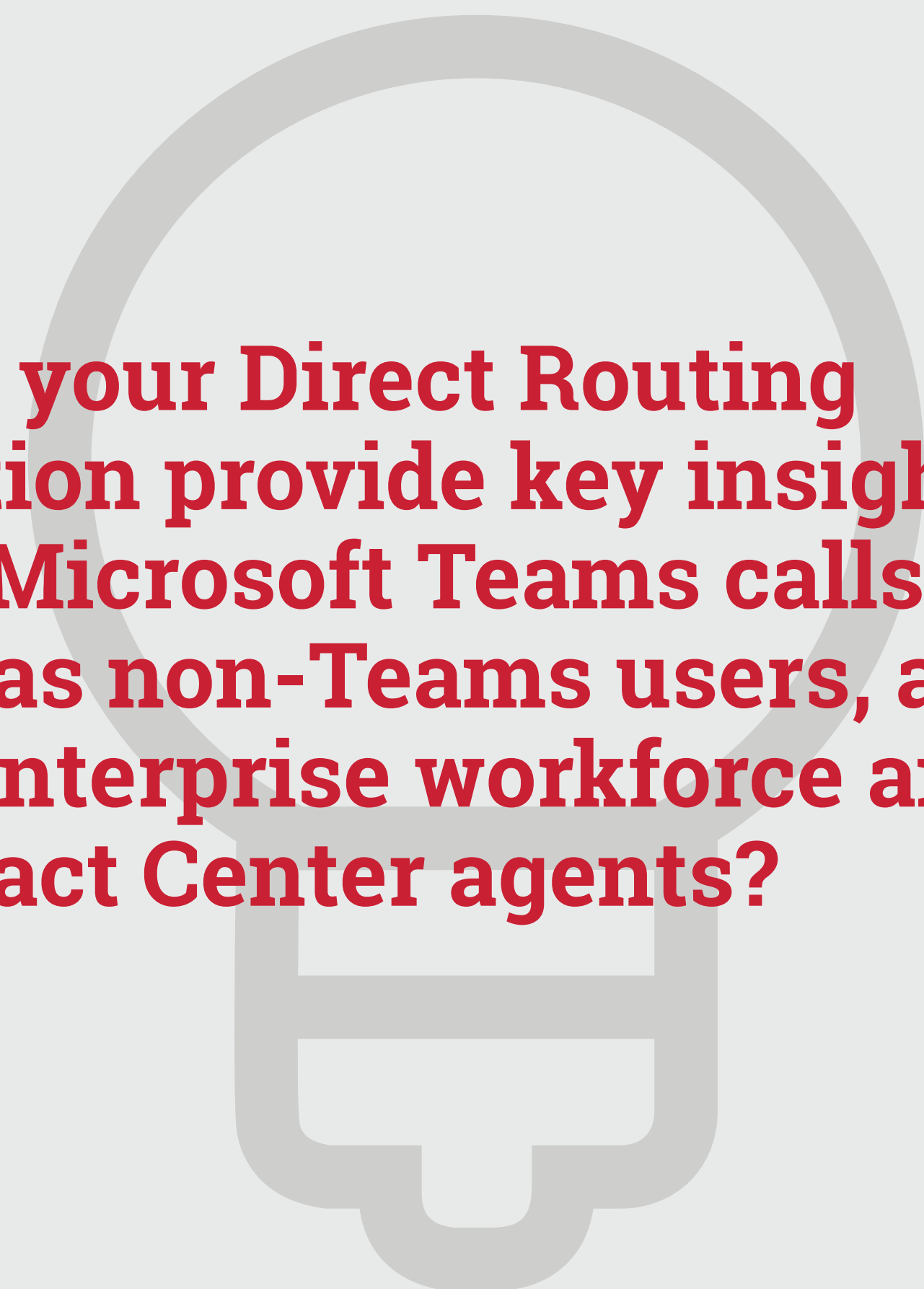
7

Top questions to ask potential MS Teams direct solutions providers.

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Here are some key questions to ask your Microsoft Teams Direct Routing provider when adding voice capabilities for Teams:

1. Does your direct routing solution require a Bot or Web extension installation on the end-user device?

2. In how many countries do you offer full PSTN replacement for Microsoft Teams?

3. Do your call plans include unlimited calling? How many countries?

4. Do you offer a Microsoft Teams certified contact center solution?
Does it integrate natively on a single platform with your Teams voice calling solution?

5. Does your Microsoft Teams certified contact center allow agents to make and receive calls within Microsoft Teams?

6. Does your certificated Microsoft Teams contact center include omni-channel interactions, and workforce engagement management, for Microsoft Teams?

7. Does your Microsoft Teams Direct Routing solutions support native business application and CRM integrations? Which integrations are supported?

8. Does your Direct Routing solution provide key insights into Microsoft Teams calls as well as non-Teams users, across the enterprise workforce and Contact Center agents?

9. Does your Direct Routing solution provide speech analytics and quality management reporting?

Does your Direct Routing solution provide key insights into Microsoft Teams calls as well as non-Teams users, across the enterprise workforce and Contact Center agents?

10. Does your Direct Routing solution support these security and compliance certifications:

    a. FCC Consumer Proprietary Network Information (CPNI)

    b. Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)

    c. National Institute of Standards and Technology – NIST800-53 R4

    d. Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA)

    e. Standard Contractual Clauses (SCC) for data transfers between EU and non-EU countries.

    f. ISO 27001:2013 and ISO 9001 certification

    g. PCI-DSS 3.2.1 SAQ-D

    h. Data-in-motion encryption with Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) over Transport Layer Security (TLS) and Secure Real-time Transport Protocol (SRTP)

    i. EU General Data Protection Regulation

    j. UK Government G-Cloud compliance

    k. UK Government Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation

About 8x8, Inc.

8x8, Inc. (NYSE: EGHT) is transforming the future of business communications as a leading Software-as-a-Service provider of voice, video, chat, contact center, and enterprise-class API solutions powered by one global cloud communications platform. 8x8 empowers workforces worldwide to connect individuals and teams so they can collaborate faster and work smarter. Real-time business analytics and intelligence provide businesses unique insights across all interactions and channels so they can delight end-customers and accelerate their business.

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With 250+ tech and IT experts across ANZ, we'll make sure your solution sets you up for success.

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