# MICROSOFT LYNC 101: ENSURE UC EVERYTHING

IT Brief

MICROSOFT LYNC 101:
ENSURE UC EVERYTHING

Although the Microsoft Lync platform is somewhat of a newcomer to the unified communications world, it has turned a lot of network heads. Teams with significant Microsoft investments are obviously considering the platform, but the seamless integration of communication tools into an easy-to-use software GUI is also generating attention. This article will walk you through the basics of Microsoft Lync, how the platform is implemented, and its unique monitoring challenges.

WHAT IS LYNC?

The Microsoft Lync UC platform seamlessly combines VoIP and video with traditional Microsoft email and instant messaging platforms via a software GUI on the user's desktop. Given the wide use of Microsoft email and instant message application, most users will be familiar with the platform interface.

Part of its appeal comes from its integration with existing Microsoft Office applications. For example, if a user misses someone's IM, it conveniently appears in their inbox; and you can IM everyone, even if they don't have Lync. Also unique to the Lync platform, is that every communications piece is encrypted by default.
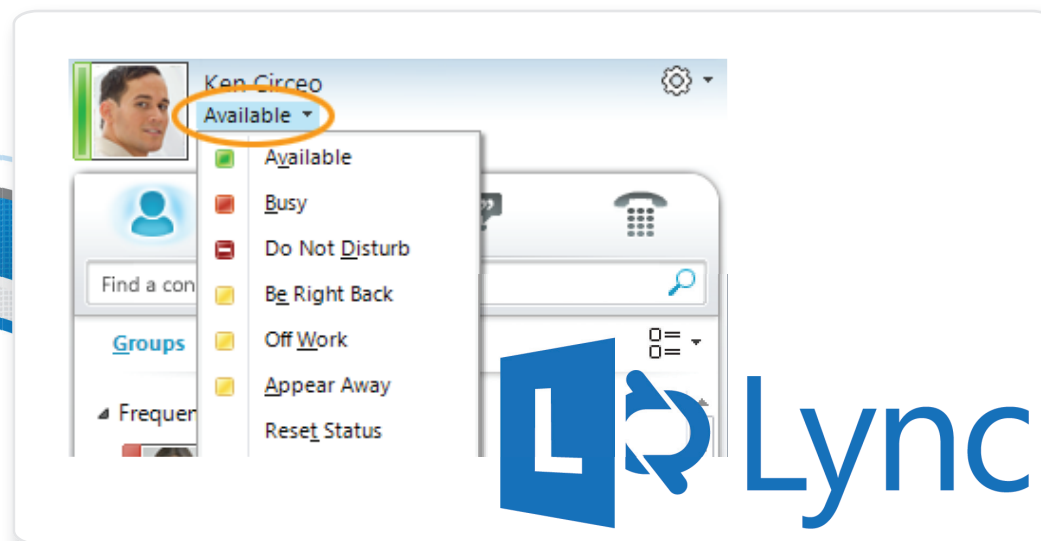
CONSIDER DEPLOYMENT OPTIONS

How are teams deploying Lync?

ENHANCE EXISTING PROGRAMS

Since Cisco® or Avaya® voice communications have dominated the voice market, portions of Lync are often used to enhance the UC capabilities of these existing programs.
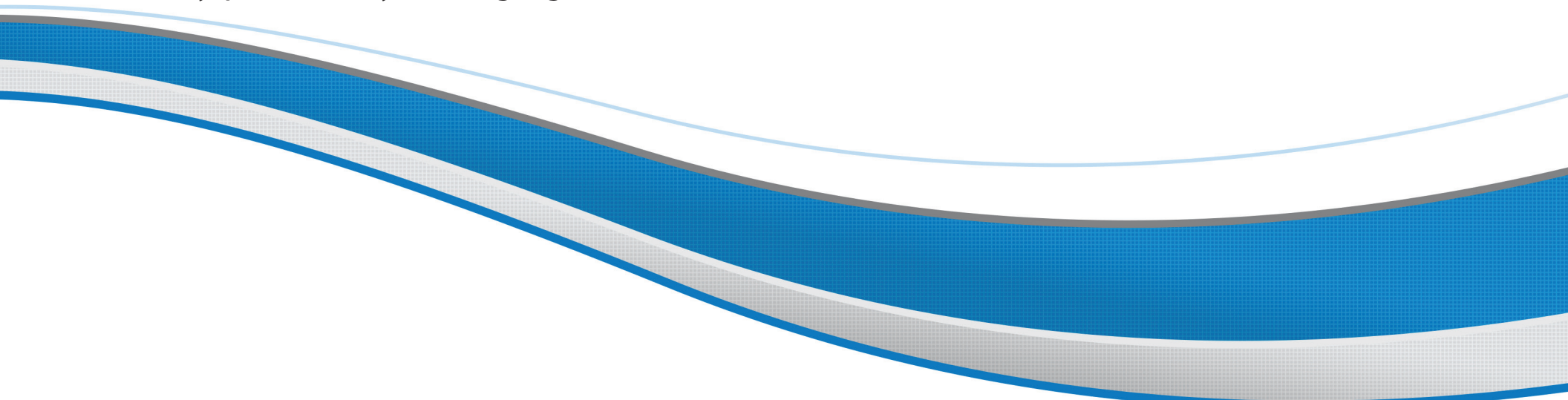
LAUNCH NEW SYSTEMS

For companies looking to switch communication application vendors or environments and offer new programs, a whole-sale dive into MS Lync might make sense. For example, if you currently have Microsoft Exchange or plan on implementing it and adding video conferencing to your UC lineup, considering Lync makes sense.

MANAGE THE CHALLENGES

With the perks Lync offers, come new challenges for network teams. These challenges can include:

IMPLEMENTATION

BANDWIDTH OVERLOAD

APPLICATION CONTENTION

EFFECTIVE MONITORING OF ENCRYPTED COMMUNICATION

Skilled network teams can achieve success with Lync rollouts and performance by proactively managing these concerns.

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IMPLEMENTATION

One benefit Lync offers is a pre-configured setup that's ready to go out-of the box. However, if you have an established infrastructure (three years or older), Lync offers little flexibility when it comes to adjusting to incompatibilities within your network. Before implementation, perform a complete analysis of your system to determine if any existing structure might interfere with successful Lync implementation.

② BANDWIDTH

Although Lync offers some improvements in bandwidth management, it can consume more bandwidth than traditional UC offerings. Given the ability of users to initiate video conferencing at-will from the desktop, the task of fail-safe bandwidth management will be a network team priority.

To manage this challenge and ensure adequate bandwidth, teams should perform limited Lync deployments and baseline existing activities alongside desktop video communications. With this data, you can better assess the impact of rolling Lync out to the entire organization, and whether network capacity should be increased.

③

APPLICATION CONTENTION

As two or more applications compete for bandwidth, one app can consume the space another needs to function. Voice and video on Lync are particularly contentious because they both need large amounts of bandwidth for optimal performance. To manage contention, ensure you have enough bandwidth overall to manage Lync. This means analyzing applications and components for bandwidth needs, and setting QoS preferences accordingly.

④

ENCRYPTION

Monitoring encrypted communications data can be challenging. Encryption can obscure visibility of monitoring devices into performance statistics and UC content. For example, encryption can stop data loss prevention devices from scanning instant messages sent from internal departments out to external organizations.

The solution? Verify how your monitoring devices handle encrypted traffic. For example, Observer decrypts SIP traffic and provides quality metrics on the fly once it has the appropriate security certificate.

CONCLUSION

With streamlined offerings in an out-of-the box setup, plus a multitude of cool, always-on features, Lync has become the popular new kid on the UC block. Follow the suggestions above to optimize the Lync experience for your enterprise. Then expect to see your work in action when your desktop Lync flashes with emails, IM's, video, and voice messages sent to express thanks for a job well done.
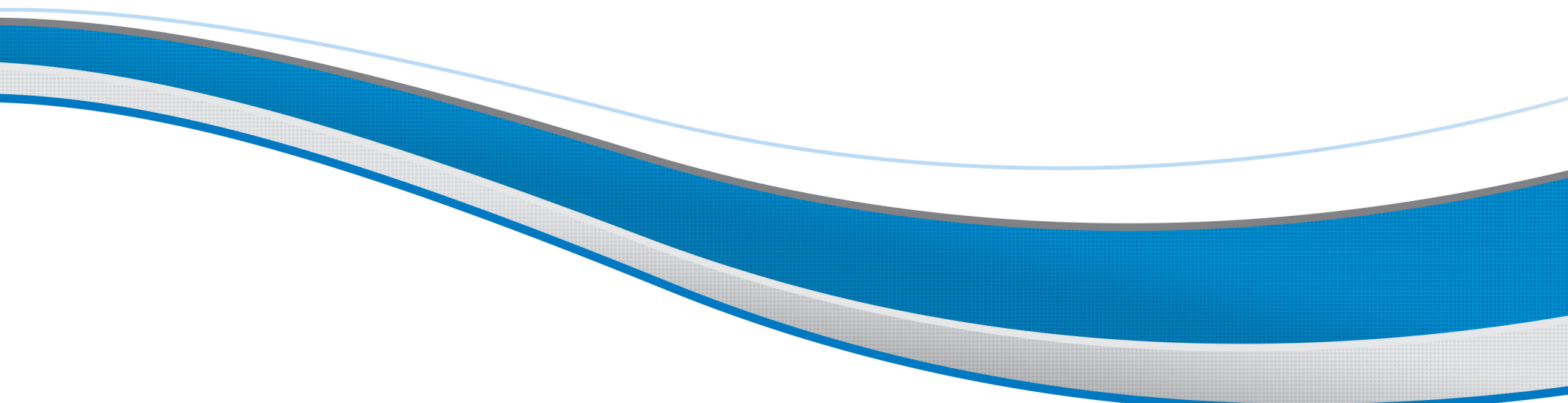
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