Clearly Anywhere as a Skype for Business VoIP Replacement

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Clearly Anywhere: A Modern Replacement for Skype's Communication Platform

Introduction

Skype – once a dominant player in business communication – has been phased out by Microsoft in favor of Teams. Skype for Business Online was officially retired in 2021 (Source: en.wikipedia.org), and even consumer Skype is slated for retirement by 2025 (Source: microsoft.com). This shift has left many organizations seeking alternative solutions to fill the void left by Skype's deprecation.

Clearly Anywhere, a softphone solution from ClearlyIP, has emerged as a potential replacement for organizations that need robust voice over IP (VoIP) communications, mobility, and integration with existing phone systems. This report provides an in-depth analysis of Clearly Anywhere as a Skype replacement, covering what it is, its core features (VoIP capabilities, mobile and desktop applications, call management, security, integration, and scalability), and how it compares to Skype for Business and Microsoft Teams on key communication features. We also examine deployment and migration strategies from Skype to Clearly Anywhere, compatibility with legacy VoIP/SIP infrastructure, real-world use cases, and potential limitations. The goal is to offer IT decision-makers and communication architects a comprehensive, up-to-date (2025) view of Clearly Anywhere in a professional, structured format.

ClearlyIP and the Clearly Anywhere Solution

Clearly Anywhere is a **feature-rich mobile and desktop softphone** developed by ClearlyIP, designed to let users make and receive calls on their computer, tablet, or smartphone with the same capabilities as a desk phone (Source: clearlyip.com). In essence, it is a software phone (softphone) that extends a user's business phone extension to virtually "anywhere" they are, over the Internet. Clearly Anywhere leverages the power of VoIP and integrates tightly with PBX systems (particularly FreePBX® and ClearlyIP's own platforms) to provide a seamless calling experience outside the confines of the office (Source: clearlyip.com). Users can install the app on multiple devices – laptops, smartphones, etc. – enabling them to stay connected and reachable under their business number from any location. ClearlyIP markets the solution with the tagline "Your Extension, Everywhere," emphasizing its role in enabling an *"anywhere office"* for modern professionals.

ClearlyIP is the company behind Clearly Anywhere. Headquartered in Appleton, Wisconsin and founded by industry veterans in 2019, ClearlyIP specializes in telecommunications software, VoIP infrastructure, and cloud services (Source: clearlyip.com). The team at ClearlyIP has decades of experience (many came from the FreePBX/Asterisk open-source telephony community) and offers a broad portfolio including IP phones, on-premise PBX appliances, SIP trunking services, and unified communications solutions (Source: clearlyip.com). Clearly Anywhere is a flagship software offering in ClearlyIP's unified communications suite, complementing their cloud UCaaS platform (Clearly Cloud) and SIP trunking. By providing Clearly Anywhere, ClearlyIP aims to give businesses a modern, flexible communications tool – especially useful as organizations move away from legacy solutions like Skype and embrace remote or hybrid work environments.

Figure: Clearly Anywhere enables professionals to work from home or on the go with a full-featured softphone on their laptop or mobile device. It extends the office phone functionality beyond the physical office (Source: clearlyip.com)(Source: clearlyip.com).

In summary, Clearly Anywhere is essentially a **Skype replacement focused on voice communications**. It doesn't operate as a standalone social or consumer network (unlike Skype); instead it acts as an endpoint for a business's phone system. As such, it is typically deployed by organizations in conjunction with a SIP-based PBX or cloud phone service, rather than as a peer-to-peer calling app. Next, we will explore the core features of Clearly Anywhere in detail, and see how it delivers the functionality needed to replace Skype for Business or augment Microsoft Teams' telephony capabilities.

Core Features of Clearly Anywhere

Clearly Anywhere was designed to offer a rich set of communication features to rival or exceed those provided by Skype for Business, especially in the area of voice calling and mobility. Below we analyze its core capabilities – including VoIP audio quality, cross-platform apps, call management tools, security measures, integration flexibility, and scalability – to understand how it meets enterprise communication needs.

VoIP Capabilities and Audio Quality

At its heart, Clearly Anywhere is a VoIP softphone, so high-quality voice calling is a top priority. The application supports a wide range of audio codecs to optimize call clarity and bandwidth usage, including modern high-definition codecs. In fact, Clearly Anywhere supports **Opus (wideband HD audio)**, G.722 (HD voice), G.729 (low-bandwidth optimized), G.711 (standard PCM), iLBC, and GSM codecs (Source: play.google.com). Support for Opus and G.722 means it can deliver *"crystal clear communications"* with better-than-landline audio quality when conditions allow (Source: play.google.com). At the same time, support for efficient codecs like G.729 or GSM ensures calls remain stable over limited bandwidth or mobile data networks. This broad codec compatibility is comparable to or better than Skype for Business, which also offered wideband audio, and gives Clearly Anywhere an edge in voice quality – a key consideration for business telephony.

Clearly Anywhere operates entirely over IP (using the SIP protocol under the hood) and can route calls through the organization's PBX or cloud service to reach any phone number. Users can call internal extensions or external PSTN numbers as permitted by their PBX, essentially **replacing the voice calling function of Skype** with a more PBX-integrated approach. Voice calls can be made on

any Internet connection, and the app is designed to handle transitions between Wi-Fi and cellular data seamlessly. For example, a user could start a call on home Wi-Fi and move to cellular with minimal disruption – Clearly Anywhere offers *"seamless transition during handovers between Wi-Fi and mobile coverage"* (Source: play.google.com) to keep calls from dropping. This reliability in handling network changes mirrors Skype's adaptive calling, ensuring mobile professionals remain connected.

Another notable VoIP feature is support for **push notifications** for incoming calls. On mobile devices, Clearly Anywhere leverages push integration so that calls and messages reach the user without the app needing to run constantly in the background (Source: clearlyip.com). This not only conserves battery (important for smartphones) but also means users are reliably alerted to calls, much like how Skype and Teams notify users of incoming calls or chats. In practice, ClearlyIP's push servers wake the app when a call or SMS comes in, improving responsiveness. Combined with the codec quality and network flexibility, Clearly Anywhere's VoIP foundation is strong. It allows organizations to confidently use it as a primary voice solution, delivering clear audio and dependable connectivity suitable for business-critical calls.

Mobile and Desktop Applications

One of Clearly Anywhere's biggest strengths as a Skype replacement is its **cross-platform availability**. It is offered as a mobile app for both **Android and iOS**, as well as a **desktop application for Windows and macOS** (Source: clearlyip.com)(Source: clearlyip.com). This is very similar to Skype for Business and Teams, which also provide clients across desktop and mobile. The multi-platform support means users get a consistent experience whether they are on a smartphone or a PC. In fact, a single user can install Clearly Anywhere on multiple devices and be reachable on all of them – the system supports **simultaneous registrations on unlimiteddevices per user license** (Source: clearlyip.com). ClearlyIP's licensing deliberately allows *"unlimited devices per license"* so that, for example, an employee can use the softphone on their office desktop, personal laptop, work cell phone, and home tablet all at once without extra cost (Source: clearlyip.com). This flexibility encourages adoption and mirrors the device-agnostic approach of modern UC platforms.

The **user interface** of Clearly Anywhere is designed to be intuitive and business-oriented. On mobile, the app presents a dialpad, contact list, call history, and messaging interface, all branded to the company's system. Users can easily dial extensions or full numbers, much like using the native phone app. The desktop app likewise provides a softphone dialpad and on-screen call controls. Call

handling features (hold, transfer, mute, record, etc.) are accessible with buttons, making the experience akin to a desk phone on your computer. Figure 1 shows an example of the Clearly Anywhere mobile UI, with features like contact presence indicators and in-call controls.

Figure: Clearly Anywhere Mobile app interface (sample screens). The softphone provides a dialer, contact list with presence (via BLF status), and in-call options like mute, transfer, record, etc., enabling full office phone functionality on smartphones (Source: clearlyip.com)(Source: kb.clearlyip.com).

Deployment of the apps is straightforward. Clearly Anywhere was built for **easy provisioning** in business environments. Administrators can deploy the mobile app by simply having users download it from the Apple App Store or Google Play and then provision it via a QR code, link, or credentials provided through the PBX's user portal (Source: clearlyip.com). The integration with FreePBX (discussed later) means setup can be as easy as scanning a QR code generated by the phone system – very similar to how Microsoft's authenticator or some VoIP apps configure. This quick setup reduces IT effort and gets users running fast, addressing a common complaint with some other softphones that were "complicated to get started" (Source: clearlyip.com). ClearlyIP specifically touts the **"quick and easy set-up"** of Clearly Anywhere, where users just log in with their PBX username/password and the app auto-configures (Source: clearlyip.com).

With both mobile and desktop covered, Clearly Anywhere ensures that **remote and hybrid workers stay connected**. Employees can answer calls on their PC with a headset or use their cell phone on the go, all while presenting the company's caller ID and extension. This continuity is crucial for replacing Skype for Business, which also allowed multiple endpoints per user. Moreover, by using a unified softphone platform, organizations can standardize communications – *"having one platform across all employees makes it easier for them to communicate and simplifies how they connect with clients"* (Source: clearlyip.com). In essence, Clearly Anywhere's multi-device support and ease of use fulfill the promise of letting people work from anywhere with full phone capabilities, directly addressing the remote work needs that platforms like Skype/Teams were used for.

Call Management and Collaboration Features

Beyond basic calling, Clearly Anywhere provides a suite of **call management features** to match the PBX and Skype for Business functionality users expect. The softphone supports all the typical call controls: users can **transfer calls, put calls on hold, record calls, and set up ad-hoc 3-way conference calls** right from the app (Source: clearlyip.com). For example, employees can *"Call, Record, Transfer, Conference"* as needed (Source: clearlyip.com) – this set of features aligns with Skype for Business's call transfer and conferencing abilities. In Clearly Anywhere, initiating a

conference call is as simple as adding another participant to an ongoing call, which is useful for quick team huddles. Call **recording** can be triggered on demand if enabled by policy, allowing users to save important conversations (with compliance considerations).

Voicemail is another integrated feature: Clearly Anywhere offers **visual voicemail access**, so users can easily see and play their messages in-app (Source: clearlyip.com). This eliminates the old practice of dialing into a voicemail system; instead, messages are listed on screen for quick retrieval, much like the voicemail tab in Skype for Business or Teams (or modern mobile phones). Additionally, the app supports the concept of **"Business Line SMS/MMS"**, meaning users can send and receive text messages and even pictures using their office phone number (Source: clearlyip.com)(Source: clearlyip.com). This is a powerful feature that Skype did not natively offer – it effectively converges texting into the corporate phone system. Employees can text colleagues or customers from the Clearly Anywhere app, and the recipient will see the company's number (DID) as the sender. Multiple team members can even share a single number for SMS (for example, a support hotline) and collaboratively respond to texts (Source: clearlyip.com). This business texting capability addresses the messaging gap left by Skype's IM: while it's not the same as persistent chat channels, it allows quick one-to-one or one-to-group communication via a familiar text messaging paradigm.

For internal collaboration, Clearly Anywhere includes features akin to presence and speed dial keys. The app has a **QuickDial Favorites** function, which lets users set up one-tap dialing for frequent contacts or feature codes (Source: clearlyip.com). Uniquely, these QuickDials can show **Busy Lamp Field (BLF) status** – in other words, the app can display whether a given colleague's extension is currently on a call (busy) or free (Source: clearlyip.com). This is similar to the presence indicator in Skype (available/away/on call) albeit focused on telephony status. The BLF integration gives a real-time view of coworkers' phone status and is very useful in a business setting for knowing who is available. Users can also set their own status with **"Private Time" / Do Not Disturb (DND)** scheduling (Source: clearlyip.com). Clearly Anywhere allows users to create granular DND schedules – for example, silencing the softphone outside of work hours or during lunch (Source: clearlyip.com). This feature acknowledges work-life boundaries; an employee can ensure their business line won't ring on their personal device at midnight, for instance. It goes beyond Skype's simple status by providing automated rules (e.g. DND every evening) to enforce quiet times.

Collaboration is further enhanced by integration with conferencing and video. While Clearly Anywhere is primarily a voice app, it **supports one-to-one video calls** between extensions on the same system (Source: kb.clearlyip.com). If both users have video capable devices (and the PBX supports video), they can escalate a call to a video call by tapping a video icon during the call (Source: kb.clearlyip.com). ClearlyIP confirms that *"the Clearly Anywhere app supports making*

video calls from one extension to another… if your PBX is set up for video", including using either front or back camera on mobile (Source: kb.clearlyip.com)(Source: kb.clearlyip.com). This is useful for quick face-to-face discussions. However, it's important to note that **multi-party video conferencing is not a core function of the Clearly Anywhere app itself** – unlike Skype or Teams which can host video meetings with many participants. For multi-party video needs, ClearlyIP's solution would be to use the separate **Clearly Cloud Meeting Room** feature or integrate a third-party video meeting service. Indeed, Clearly Cloud (the UCaaS platform associated with Clearly Anywhere) includes a video conferencing component with screen sharing and collaborative tools (Source: clearlyip.com), but that is outside the softphone app. Still, for basic needs, Clearly Anywhere's support of 1:1 video and the ability to schedule and join conference bridge calls (audio) can cover a lot. It effectively replaces Skype's ad-hoc audio conference calls and person-to-person video calls, though it's not aiming to replicate full-scale Teams video meetings in the softphone.

In terms of *user experience*, Clearly Anywhere's feature set makes everyday call management more efficient than traditional methods. For instance, sales or support staff using it at home reported that *"collaboration is easier, smoother, and more accessible, improving communication and efficiency"* compared to their old desk phone setup (Source: clearlyip.com). A case study noted that after adopting Clearly Anywhere, staff could maintain professional communication with clients remotely – the app ensured the **outbound caller ID** showed the company number (not the employee's personal number) for professionalism (Source: clearlyip.com)(Source: clearlyip.com). This mirrors one of Skype for Business's popular features (using work caller ID and not personal numbers for calls). All these call management and collaboration capabilities illustrate that Clearly Anywhere is **much more than a basic dialer**; it brings together voice, messaging, and a touch of presence, thereby covering most real-time communication needs that Skype for Business or Teams would handle, minus the more advanced meeting and team chat functions.

Security and Privacy

Security is a critical concern when replacing a communication system. Clearly Anywhere, being an extension of the enterprise phone system, inherits many of the security features of the underlying PBX and also adds its own measures to ensure calls and messages are protected. At a fundamental level, Clearly Anywhere supports secure SIP signaling and media transport – namely **TLS encryption for SIP** and **SRTP (Secure RTP) for voice/video streams**. While official ClearlyIP documentation for the softphone doesn't explicitly advertise this (since it's somewhat expected of modern VoIP), their other product docs and community info indicate support for TLS/SRTP. For example, ClearlyIP's gateway specifications list *"TLS/SRTP"* support for encryption (Source: clearlyip.com), and the Clearly Anywhere softphone uses the same SIP stacks that can leverage

these protocols. In practice, if the PBX is configured for secure SIP, the Clearly Anywhere apps can connect over TLS (rather than plaintext UDP) and negotiate SRTP for voice, thereby **preventing eavesdropping and tampering** on calls (Source: clearlyip.com). This offers enterprise-grade security akin to Skype for Business's encryption of calls. Businesses dealing with sensitive information (legal, healthcare, finance, etc.) can be assured that conversations are encrypted end-to-end between the app and the server, and on to the carrier if supported.

Another aspect of security is **user authentication and provisioning control**. Clearly Anywhere ties into the PBX's user management, meaning each user has credentials (typically their extension number and a secret or an OAuth token) to register the app. Administrators can centrally manage who has access to the softphone by enabling or disabling it per user in the PBX interface (Source: clearlyip.com). This is similar to how accounts were managed in Skype for Business – IT can ensure only authorized employees use the service. Additionally, the Clearly Anywhere module on FreePBX can enforce password policies and uses secure links or QR codes for provisioning so that configuration data is not exposed. The fact that provisioning is done through the FreePBX Admin interface (with secure authentication) and user portal means there's no need for users to manually input server addresses or credentials incorrectly (Source: clearlyip.com). This reduces the risk of misconfiguration that could lead to security holes.

From a privacy standpoint, calls made via Clearly Anywhere remain within the company's control (through their PBX or ClearlyIP's cloud). Unlike consumer Skype which routes calls over Microsoft's network, Clearly Anywhere calls traverse the company's chosen SIP trunks with all the usual compliance controls (call recording policies, logging, etc.) in place. This can be a compliance advantage – companies can ensure call data is handled according to internal policies or regulations like GDPR, since they control the servers or trust ClearlyIP as a provider. ClearlyIP also built compliance features such as E911 support and Kari's Law compliance into their platform. In a webinar, ClearlyIP detailed how **emergency calling (E911)** is handled in the mobile apps, ensuring that if a user dials 911 from the softphone, the correct location information is sent (Source: community.freepbx.org). This is vital for safety compliance, and something Skype for Business on-prem also had to handle via location information services.

Furthermore, the case study of Midwest Benefits Exchange highlights that security and privacy were imperative for them (handling sensitive client data). The ClearlyIP solution gave them confidence that *"calls can be answered no matter where they are, and that they are secure, private conversations"* (Source: clearlyip.com). The use of a dedicated cloud PBX with Clearly Anywhere meant calls were encrypted and not happening over personal phone lines, maintaining client confidentiality. In summary, Clearly Anywhere addresses security on multiple levels: **encryption of**

communications, controlled access and provisioning, compliance with emergency calling, and maintaining professional privacy by separating personal and business telephony. These measures align well with the expectations set by Skype for Business (which boasted enterprise security) and provide IT teams the tools to secure their voice communications.

Integration and Compatibility

A major consideration when replacing Skype is how well the new solution integrates with existing systems and workflows. Clearly Anywhere was specifically built to integrate with **open-standard SIP PBX systems**, most notably FreePBX/Asterisk-based platforms. It provides *"simple integration to your supported platforms"* (Source: clearlyip.com) via an add-on module, making it essentially a plug-and-play softphone for those systems. In practice, this means if an organization already has a VoIP PBX (on-premises Asterisk/FreePBX or a hosted instance, or ClearlyIP's own **Clearly Cloud UCaaS**), adding Clearly Anywhere is straightforward. The Clearly Anywhere module on the PBX handles provisioning and ties the mobile/desktop apps into the PBX's dial plan, extension list, and features. This tight integration yields some powerful capabilities:

- **Corporate Directory and Contacts Sync:** Clearly Anywhere can pull in the PBX's internal phone directory and contacts. In a 2022 update, ClearlyIP added support for *"importing all FreePBX contacts, per user, into the contact directory of Clearly Anywhere Desktop and Mobile"*, so that users have a unified address book (Source: clearlyip.com). This means when an employee uses the softphone, they can easily search for a coworker by name and dial them, just like they would in Skype's contacts list. This addresses a pain point of early versions (where one Reddit user lamented *"can't even search people on softphone"* (Source: reddit.com)). Now the contacts integration **streamlines the user experience** – no more manually maintaining separate contact lists; it's all in sync with the PBX and, by extension, possibly with whatever source the PBX contacts come from (which could include an LDAP or CRM integration on FreePBX).

- **Calendar and DND Integration:** While Clearly Anywhere doesn't natively integrate with Outlook or calendars like Teams might, its DND scheduling and the PBX's follow-me features can be seen as integration with the user's time preferences (not exactly calendar, but a form of it). It's more manual but effective for routing calls or silencing them based on schedules.

- **PBX Feature Codes and Advanced Functions:** Because Clearly Anywhere is essentially an extension of the PBX, it can utilize all the PBX's features via dial codes or UI toggles. For instance, setting call forwarding, call parking, call recording on/off, etc., can all be done. The 2022 update also introduced an **in-app Park button** for parking calls (holding a call in a "lot"

for others to pick up) – earlier only physical phones had a dedicated button, but now *"with version 14.0.10.19... we support showing a Park button while on an active call"* in the Clearly Anywhere UI (Source: clearlyip.com). This is an example of integrating with the PBX's parking feature to enhance call management.

- **SIP Trunk and Carrier Integration (SMS/MMS):** Clearly Anywhere's SMS feature works in conjunction with SIP trunking providers that support SMS. If using ClearlyIP's SIP trunks, the integration is seamless; but it can also work with other carriers' SMS-enabled DIDs as long as those feed into the FreePBX messaging system (Source: clearlyip.com). Essentially, **any provider's number with SMS that is set up on the PBX can be used in the app** (Source: apps.microsoft.com)(Source: clearlyip.com). This makes the app flexible in different telecom environments. It's not locked to a single vendor network (unlike Skype which was a closed network for Skype accounts; or Teams which is tied to Microsoft's cloud telephony unless using Direct Routing). Clearly Anywhere will happily use your existing SIP trunks for voice and messaging, protecting your investment in your current telecom contracts.

- **Compatibility with Third-Party SIP Systems:** Officially, Clearly Anywhere is marketed for ClearlyIP's own platforms and FreePBX-based systems (Source: clearlyip.com). Unofficially, since it speaks SIP, it *could* be configured to register to other standard SIP servers (like a Cisco CUCM, 3CX, etc.), but the provisioning won't be plug-and-play in those cases. Some clearlyIP documentation suggests interoperability with various SIP servers – for example, their gateway datasheet notes interoperability with *"Cisco CallManager, BroadSoft, Microsoft Skype for Business (Lync), Asterisk, FreePBX, and others"* (Source: clearlyip.com). In context, that was about gateways, but it underlines that ClearlyIP's products adhere to SIP standards for broad compatibility. So, if an organization has an existing SIP-based PBX (even if not FreePBX), they could likely manually configure Clearly Anywhere clients to connect to it using SIP credentials (though they'd need to purchase the licensing from ClearlyIP and might not get the full automated experience).

- **API and CRM Integration:** Skype for Business and Teams often integrate with Outlook, SharePoint, CRM systems (like popping customer info when a call comes in via Dynamics, etc.). Clearly Anywhere by itself doesn't provide CRM popups, but the PBX underneath often can (FreePBX has CRM integration modules, screen-pop functionality, etc.). So, one could argue that by integrating the softphone with the PBX, you indirectly get integration with any systems the PBX is hooked to. For example, if FreePBX is integrated with Salesforce, an incoming call triggers a Salesforce screen pop, regardless of whether the call is on a desk phone or the

Clearly Anywhere softphone. In essence, **Clearly Anywhere extends all PBX-integrated workflows to the mobile/PC domain** – ensuring that features like call logging, call analytics, and CRM screen pops still function even when the user isn't on a desk phone.

Overall, Clearly Anywhere's integration philosophy is to leverage the PBX as the central brain. This contrasts with Skype/Teams, which often *are* the central platform themselves. The advantage of Clearly Anywhere's approach is if you already have a sophisticated phone system or you want more control (self-hosted PBX), the softphone will slot right in. It also means **compatibility with existing VoIP infrastructure is very high**. Companies can use Clearly Anywhere with on-prem PBX appliances, virtualized PBX instances, or cloud PBXs. A notable example: a company that previously relied on Skype for internal calls can spin up a FreePBX server (or get ClearlyIP's Cloud service), enable SIP trunking, and deploy Clearly Anywhere to replicate and surpass the calling functionality they had – all without changing their data network significantly. They can even use analog gateways to tie in legacy phones or paging systems, since the PBX handles that, and Clearly Anywhere just becomes another endpoint. This modular integration capability makes it a **flexible solution for diverse environments**, from small businesses to multi-site enterprises that need to tie into existing voice systems, or even educational institutions linking into analog PA systems while giving staff a mobile extension.

Scalability and Deployment Flexibility

Scalability refers to both the ability to serve a growing number of users and the adaptability to different deployment models (on-premises vs cloud). Clearly Anywhere scores well on both counts, though its scaling considerations differ from a purely cloud service like Microsoft Teams. Since Clearly Anywhere is essentially a client endpoint, **scalability is largely a factor of the PBX backend**. A FreePBX or Clearly Cloud system can be scaled by adding more server resources or moving to a distributed architecture (FreePBX can be clustered or you can deploy multiple instances for load balancing). ClearlyIP offers **ClusterPBX** for enterprise scaling and a multi-tenant cloud solution for their partners (Source: clearlyip.com). In practice, this means Clearly Anywhere can scale from a small office of 5 users to an enterprise of thousands, provided the telephony server infrastructure is sized appropriately.

From a licensing perspective, ClearlyIP has made it straightforward to scale users. Licenses for Clearly Anywhere are typically sold in blocks or as an annual subscription per user (with unlimited devices per user, as noted). For instance, a Clearly Anywhere Module license might cover X number of users on the PBX, and adding more users just means adjusting the license count. This is similar to how Skype for Business was licensed (client access licenses per user) or how Teams is (per user via

Office 365 subscription). The cost per user for Clearly Anywhere is generally competitive; e.g., a Clearly Anywhere annual license could be on the order of tens of dollars per user. One store listing indicated the desktop add-on module at around $99 (likely covering a set of users or as an add-on to the base mobile license) (Source: store.clearlyip.com), but pricing can vary. The key point is that **organizations can start small and expand easily** by updating the license, without needing new hardware for the softphones themselves.

Deployment flexibility is a strong suit. Clearly Anywhere can be used in **on-premises deployments** (with an on-site PBX server) or in **cloud/hosted deployments** (with a PBX in the cloud). For example, if a company is migrating from Skype for Business Server (on-prem) and they want an on-prem replacement, they might install a ClearlyIP PBX appliance or FreePBX server locally and use Clearly Anywhere to connect remote users to it. Conversely, if they prefer a cloud approach, they can subscribe to ClearlyIP's **Clearly Cloud** UCaaS, which provides a hosted PBX in ClearlyIP's cloud, and then use Clearly Anywhere as the endpoints. The softphone is a critical piece of Clearly Cloud's offering – it essentially turns that cloud PBX into a full UC solution with mobile/desktop client access. In both cases, deployment is not constrained by network topology: as long as the user's device has internet access, it can reach the PBX (via VPN or via direct secure SIP if the PBX is internet-facing or using a session border controller). This internet-based connectivity is exactly how Skype and Teams operate as well (users just need to be online, not on a particular LAN). So **remote offices, teleworkers, and roaming users are first-class citizens** in the Clearly Anywhere deployment model, just like they were with Skype for Business (which had Edge servers for remote user connectivity) and Teams (cloud-based by design).

One scalability consideration is **concurrent call capacity** – since each Clearly Anywhere user is an endpoint on the PBX, the total number of concurrent calls is limited by the PBX capacity and trunk capacity, not by the client itself. FreePBX/Asterisk can typically handle dozens to hundreds of simultaneous calls on decent hardware, and can be scaled with clustering. So, for most small to medium businesses, a single instance with Clearly Anywhere can easily handle their call volume. Enterprises might deploy multiple instances (e.g., one per region) and still use Clearly Anywhere uniformly. There isn't a hard coded user limit for Clearly Anywhere; it's as scalable as the telephony platform behind it.

In real-world terms, consider the case of Midwest Benefits Exchange (MBE) from the success story. They deployed ClearlyIP's cloud system and moved their entire staff to Clearly Anywhere softphones, eliminating most desk phones. The result was a communications setup that *"vastly improved operations and their bottom line"* and allowed them to maintain high-touch client communications even in lockdown (Source: clearlyip.com)(Source: clearlyip.com). For MBE,

scalability meant being able to handle all their advisors and support staff on the new platform without missing calls. They found that adding new employees was trivial: *"the cost of adding a new employee to a softphone is much less, compared to purchasing a desk phone... implementation is a breeze; a headset and internet is all an employee needs"* (Source: clearlyip.com). This highlights not only cost scalability (low marginal cost for growth) but also operational scalability (fast onboarding). Compared to Skype for Business, which required either per-user licenses and possibly hardware for enterprise voice, or Teams which requires certain Office 365 tiers and potentially expensive calling plan licenses, Clearly Anywhere can be scaled with predictable, possibly lower costs and without being tied to broader software suites.

To summarize, **Clearly Anywhere can scale to meet growing organizational demands** – whether that's 10 users or 1000 – as long as the underlying system is scaled. Its licensing model and flexible deployment options (on-prem or cloud) give IT architects multiple paths to fit their budget and control requirements. This makes it suitable for a wide range of scenarios: from a small business replacing Skype with a simple FreePBX and softphones, to a large enterprise or school district replacing a legacy Cisco/Skype system with a cloud-hosted multi-site solution from ClearlyIP. The next sections will compare how Clearly Anywhere stacks up against Skype for Business and Teams feature-by-feature, and discuss strategies to migrate from Skype to this new environment.

Clearly Anywhere vs. Skype for Business vs. Microsoft Teams: Feature Comparison

Replacing Skype's functionality means understanding how Clearly Anywhere compares with both **Skype for Business** (the older enterprise Skype) and **Microsoft Teams** (Skype's successor). The table below provides a high-level comparison of critical communication features across Clearly Anywhere, Skype for Business, and Teams:

FEATURE	CLEARLY ANYWHERE (CLEARLYIP)	SKYPE FOR BUSINESS (DEPRECATED)	MICROSOFT TEAMS (CURRENT)
Voice Calling (VoIP)	Yes – high-quality VoIP calls with HD audio (Opus/G.722) (Source: play.google.com). Uses SIP trunk/PBX for PSTN connectivity. Seamless Wi-Fi/cellular handover (Source: play.google.com).	Yes – PSTN calling with Enterprise Voice; wideband audio support. Required server or E5/O365 for PSTN.	Yes – cloud voice calling with PSTN via Calling Plans or Direct Routing. Wideband audio; network optimizations by Microsoft.
Video Calling	1:1 video calls between extensions supported (Source: kb.clearlyip.com). No built-in multi-party video (requires external conference service).	Yes – 1:1 and multi-party video meetings (up to ~250 participants) (Source: support.microsoft.com).	Yes – robust multi-party video meetings (up to 300 interactive participants or more) (Source: pumble.com), with screen sharing, recording, etc.
Instant Messaging	Limited – supports SMS/MMS texting using business number (Source: clearlyip.com). No persistent internal chat channels; primarily for text messages (external or one-to-one).	Yes – rich instant messaging and presence. Persistent chat threads for contacts. (On-prem server stored chat history if enabled.)	Yes – extensive chat: one-to-one IM, group chats, Teams channels, with file sharing and history. Integrated with Office 365 apps for collaboration.

FEATURE	CLEARLY ANYWHERE (CLEARLYIP)	SKYPE FOR BUSINESS (DEPRECATED)	MICROSOFT TEAMS (CURRENT)
Presence & Status	Partial – shows on-call/busy status of colleagues via BLF (Source: clearlyip.com). Users can set Do Not Disturb and "Private Time" schedules (Source: clearlyip.com). Lacks advanced presence like "In a meeting" unless manually set.	Yes – presence states (Available, Busy, In Meeting, Do Not Disturb, etc.) auto-synced with Outlook calendar. Users see each other's status enterprise-wide.	Yes – rich presence integrated with calendar and Outlook. Status messages, Out of Office indications, etc. Team members see availability in real-time.
Conferencing (Audio)	Yes – ad-hoc 3-way calling in app (Source: clearlyip.com). For larger audio conferences, uses PBX conference bridge (can dial into conference rooms). No built-in scheduler (use PBX or third-party).	Yes – audio conferencing for scheduled or ad-hoc meetings. Dial-in numbers available if configured. Up to 250 in a Skype meeting (Source: support.microsoft.com).	Yes – scheduled or instant meetings with audio, video, screen share. Can include dial-in by phone (with add-on). Large meeting support (webinars up to 1000).
Collaboration Tools	Minimal in softphone – focuses on voice. No built-in file sharing or co-authoring. For collaboration, must use separate tools (Clearly Cloud video meeting offers screen share (Source: clearlyip.com), or integrate with third-party).	Moderate – Skype had screen sharing in meetings, file transfer in chats, whiteboard in meetings. But not persistent team workspaces. Often used with SharePoint for doc collaboration.	Extensive – Teams provides file sharing (SharePoint backend), live document collaboration, persistent channels for projects, integrated apps (Planner, Whiteboard, etc.). It's a full collaboration hub.
Integration	Integrates with PBX/telephony systems (FreePBX, etc.) for contacts, call logs (Source:	Strong Microsoft ecosystem integration: tight Outlook/Exchange calendar integration,	Exceptional integration in Microsoft 365: Outlook meetings,

FEATURE	CLEARLY ANYWHERE (CLEARLYIP)	SKYPE FOR BUSINESS (DEPRECATED)	MICROSOFT TEAMS (CURRENT)
	clearlyip.com), voicemail, and SMS via SIP trunks (Source: clearlyip.com). No native Outlook/Calendar integration. Open SIP standard allows use with various VoIP gear (Source: clearlyip.com). APIs available via PBX for further integration (e.g., CRM pop-ups).	Office presence, click-to-dial from Office apps. Limited integration outside MS ecosystem.	calendar, OneDrive/SharePoint files, Exchange contacts. Also offers an app platform to integrate third-party services (Salesforce, Trello, etc.) into Teams interface.
Scalability & Hosting	Scales with PBX infrastructure (from tens to thousands of users). Can be on-premises or cloud (ClearlyIP Cloud). Each PBX instance typically supports hundreds of concurrent calls (more with clustering). New users require license but easy to add (Source: clearlyip.com).	Scalable but requires significant server infrastructure for large deployments (Skype for Business Server pools). Skype for Business Online scaled via Microsoft's cloud (up to tenant limits). Migration path was to Teams.	Highly scalable multi-tenant cloud service. Microsoft handles scalability (millions of users). Organizations just add licenses for new users. However, reliant on internet and Microsoft uptime.
Security	Uses SIP-TLS and SRTP for encryption (Source: clearlyip.com). Security depends on PBX config – can be very secure if properly configured (firewalls, SBCs). Offers E2E encryption for calls on the network level; no external data storage (self-controlled). E911 support built-in (Source: community.freepbx.org).	Enterprise-grade security: all communications encrypted. On-prem server gives control over data. Federated security via AD. Skype Online was encrypted in transit. E911 capable via location services.	Enterprise security with cloud convenience. All data encrypted in transit and at rest in Microsoft data centers. Compliance offerings (eDiscovery, retention policies) built-in. E911 via Teams Calling. Less customer control since cloud-based.

FEATURE	CLEARLY ANYWHERE (CLEARLYIP)	SKYPE FOR BUSINESS (DEPRECATED)	MICROSOFT TEAMS (CURRENT)
Ease of Migration	Requires setting up a PBX (or using ClearlyIP's cloud) and deploying new apps. Migration tools are manual (export contacts, etc., from Skype to PBX). Can port phone numbers from Skype service to SIP. Users need training on new app (though it's fairly intuitive (Source: community.freepbx.org)).	N/A (source system). Microsoft provided tools to migrate to Teams. Integration with AD made user identity same in Teams.	Microsoft provides upgrade framework from Skype to Teams (users keep identities, contacts mostly auto-migrate if in same Office 365 tenant). Third-party voice solutions require Direct Routing to integrate.

Table 1: Comparison of Clearly Anywhere, Skype for Business, and Microsoft Teams on key features of enterprise communications.

As seen in Table 1, **Clearly Anywhere covers the essential voice features very well**, often matching or exceeding Skype/Teams in pure telephony (HD audio, call controls, etc.). It introduces SMS texting capability which neither Skype for Business nor base Teams had (Teams has chat but not SMS from your DID without third-party integration). However, in areas of broader unified communications – particularly multi-party video conferencing, persistent team chat, and built-in collaboration tools – Clearly Anywhere is more limited, since it is not a full UC platform by itself but rather a component of one. Microsoft Teams, by contrast, is a comprehensive collaboration suite encompassing chat, meetings, file sharing, and more.

One crucial difference to highlight is architecture: **Skype for Business/Teams are all-in-one solutions** (with Microsoft as the provider of both client and server), whereas **Clearly Anywhere follows a client-server model where the server can be self-hosted or chosen by the customer**. This means organizations using Clearly Anywhere have more flexibility and control – they can integrate with existing SIP trunks, choose their hosting environment, and keep voice data in-house if needed. On the flip side, deploying Clearly Anywhere in an enterprise might involve more components (you need a PBX server, trunk provider, etc.) compared to simply subscribing to Office 365 for Teams. IT decision makers will weigh this trade-off: do they want a fully managed service (Teams) or the control of a bespoke solution (ClearlyIP + PBX + softphones)?

Skype for Business vs Clearly Anywhere: If an organization was using Skype for Business primarily for telephony (with Enterprise Voice) and basic conferencing, they will find Clearly Anywhere a capable replacement when paired with a solid PBX. Clearly Anywhere can replicate Skype's voice calling, voicemail, transfers, etc., and even 1:1 video. It lacks built-in IM/presence beyond simple statuses, so the organization might need to introduce another method for quick internal messaging (or rely on SMS or the old phone call itself). But many organizations that used Skype for voice already had separate tools for persistent chat or just used email; for them, this might not be a big loss. Clearly Anywhere's integration with the PBX likely offers improvements in some areas, such as better contact handling (since it pulls from the PBX which might integrate multiple sources) and texting clients on mobile (something Skype for Business didn't do). One can consider Clearly Anywhere as a **focused voice communication tool**, whereas Skype for Business was a broader UC tool but is now outdated and out of support.

Teams vs Clearly Anywhere: Microsoft Teams is the default upgrade path for Skype users, and it offers a rich feature set beyond voice. Comparing Teams to Clearly Anywhere, Teams clearly wins on collaboration and meeting capabilities. It's the hub for teamwork with chats, channels, and Office 365 integration that Clearly Anywhere doesn't attempt to provide. However, there are scenarios where an organization might not want to fully embrace Teams for voice – for example, if they require on-prem control, if they have significant existing telephony equipment, or if they find Teams' telephony licensing cost-prohibitive. In such cases, Clearly Anywhere can complement Teams: employees might use Teams for chat and internal collaboration, but use Clearly Anywhere for PSTN calling and as their primary "phone line." This setup is not uncommon; some companies use Teams for internal comms but use a separate SIP phone system for external calls. Clearly Anywhere could fill the role of that external phone system's client, essentially **replacing the need for desk phones or legacy softphones.** In a direct either-or replacement of Teams, Clearly Anywhere would be chosen by those who deliberately do not need/want Teams' advanced features or cloud dependency. For instance, a small business that mainly cares about phone calls and simple messaging might pick Clearly Anywhere with a FreePBX and avoid the complexity of Teams.

In conclusion, Clearly Anywhere stands up well in the core communication features and can serve as a viable alternative to Skype for Business in voice-centric use cases. It provides the mobility and softphone convenience users expect in 2025, without the bloat of features they might not use. When positioned against Microsoft Teams, it's more of a niche solution – appealing to those who specifically require a customizable, PBX-integrated voice solution – whereas Teams is a broad, one-size-fits-all collaboration platform. The comparison underscores that the **choice depends on**

organizational needs: Clearly Anywhere excels for telephony-focused deployments and integration flexibility, while Teams excels for all-in-one collaboration and ease of adoption within the Microsoft ecosystem.

Deployment and Migration Strategies from Skype to Clearly Anywhere

Migrating from Skype (especially Skype for Business) to Clearly Anywhere involves transitioning both the backend infrastructure and the end-user applications. Unlike a direct upgrade (such as Skype to Teams, which Microsoft facilitated via Office 365), this migration is more akin to moving to a new phone system. Below we outline a strategy and considerations for a successful deployment of Clearly Anywhere in place of Skype:

1. Plan the Telephony Infrastructure: Since Clearly Anywhere requires a SIP-based phone system, the first step is deciding on the backend:

- *Option A: Deploy a new PBX (on-premises).* An organization can install a FreePBX or ClearlyIP's PBX appliance in their data center. This gives maximum control and can leverage existing voice circuits or SIP trunks. Ensure the PBX is sized for the number of users and concurrent calls. For high availability or large scale, consider a **clustered PBX solution** (ClearlyIP offers ClusterPBX for enterprise scalability (Source: clearlyip.com)). If the company previously used Skype for Business Server with Enterprise Voice, they likely had PSTN gateways or SIP trunks – those can often be repurposed or reconfigured to connect with the new PBX.

- *Option B: Use a cloud PBX service.* ClearlyIP's **Clearly Cloud** UCaaS is an option where the PBX is hosted by ClearlyIP. This is faster to deploy (no hardware) and similar in concept to Skype for Business Online or Teams (a hosted service), but with the difference that it's focused on voice. Cloud PBX might be preferred if the organization doesn't want to maintain telecom servers. Clearly Cloud includes integration with Clearly Anywhere by default (Source: clearlyip.com), making provisioning straightforward.

- *Option C: Hybrid approach.* Some may use an on-prem PBX for certain offices and cloud for others, as Clearly Anywhere can connect to any, and even multiple profiles if needed.

Evaluate existing phone numbers and call flows: If phone numbers were hosted by Skype for Business Online or another provider, arrange to **port those numbers** to a SIP trunk provider or to ClearlyIP's SIP trunking service. Porting ensures continuity of reachable numbers. If Skype was only

used for internal calls (no PSTN), then new numbers or internal extension ranges can be defined on the PBX.

2. Set Up and Configure the PBX: Install the Clearly Anywhere module or ensure the cloud portal has it enabled. Define all user extensions on the PBX, mirroring (or replacing) the users that were in Skype:

- If using Active Directory previously, FreePBX can integrate with AD for user management, which could simplify importing users. Or a manual import can be done.
- Configure voicemail boxes, ring groups, IVRs, and any call routing needed to emulate what Skype for Business provided (e.g., Skype's response groups or auto-attendants can be replaced with PBX IVR menus).
- **Enable key features** that users will need: e.g., SMS on DIDs if they will use texting (might need to configure the SIP trunk's SMS settings), call parking lots, conferencing bridges, etc. Clearly Anywhere will automatically show features like Park or voicemail once the PBX is set accordingly (Source: clearlyip.com).
- Set up security: define TLS transport and certificates if you want encrypted signaling, and SRTP for media. Also, consider a Session Border Controller or at least proper firewall/NAT settings, since remote clients will be registering to the PBX. ClearlyIP's cloud likely handles this already; for on-prem, open only necessary ports and use fail2ban or intrusion detection to guard against SIP attacks. Essentially, **harden the PBX** as it becomes as critical as any server (just like Skype for Business Edge/Front-end servers were).

3. Pilot Testing: Before full migration, select a pilot group (perhaps the IT team or a specific department) to test Clearly Anywhere. During this phase:

- Deploy the Clearly Anywhere app to their devices. Use the provisioning links/QR codes via the User Control Panel in FreePBX to make it easy (Source: clearlyip.com).
- Have them make internal calls, external calls, receive calls, transfer, conference, etc., to ensure all call flows work. Test voicemail deposits and retrieval, test SMS sending to and from external cell phones, and if needed, test 911 calling (maybe to a non-emergency number to verify address information).
- Get feedback: Is call quality clear? Any issues with registration (if "trying..." errors like one user reported in early versions (Source: reddit.com), that might indicate a network or config issue to resolve)? Does the contact list show up (FreePBX contacts import should ensure colleagues

appear in the app directory (Source: clearlyip.com))?

During testing, it's wise to run Clearly Anywhere **in parallel with Skype** for that pilot group. They can have both, ensuring no lost communication. This parallel period can be brief if things go well.

4. User Training and Communication: As you prepare to roll out to all users, provide documentation or training sessions:

- Emphasize the **similarities and differences to Skype/Teams**. For example, users should know that for instant messaging they will now use SMS or other means, as the new system doesn't have an integrated IM buddy list like Skype. If an alternative chat solution (e.g., Slack or Teams free for chat only) is being provided alongside, clarify when to use which.
- Highlight new features that Skype didn't have: e.g. "You can now send texts to clients from your business number via the Clearly Anywhere app" which might excite salespeople. Also mention the DND scheduling for work/life balance which wasn't as straightforward in Skype.
- Demonstrate common tasks: checking voicemail in the app, transferring calls (it might be slightly different UI than Skype's transfer, so practice it), conferencing (merging calls).
- Provide a quick reference guide. ClearlyIP's user guides or even the app's built-in tips could be shared. Luckily, the app's design is user-friendly and the estimated reading time for their guide is short (Source: community.freepbx.org), indicating it's not hard to learn.

5. Cutover and Migration of Data: On the cutover date, you would:

- Forward or port any remaining numbers from the old system to the new PBX. Ensure DNS changes if any (for on-prem SIP domain) are made so that service directs to the new system.
- Turn off Skype for Business client sign-in (if on-prem, shut down Front-End servers; if using Skype online or Teams, communicate the switch and perhaps disable those accounts to avoid confusion).
- Import or recreate contact groups: Users may have had contact lists in Skype. With Clearly Anywhere, their contacts are basically everyone in the PBX plus any external numbers they manually add. If there are important external contacts, you could pre-populate them in the PBX directory or instruct users to add them in their phone's contacts (if the app can access phone contacts, which it might for dialing out – some softphones allow it). Clearly Anywhere's newest module imports internal contacts automatically (Source: clearlyip.com), so at least colleagues are all there.

- If there were chat history or files in Skype that need saving, export those from Skype for Business beforehand (Skype had conversation history in Exchange if enabled – those would remain in Outlook for reference, but new chats would be via other means).

- Ensure **E911** is configured properly on the new system for each user's location. Skype for Business had location mapping for subnets; here, you might rely on users updating an address or a static office address for each DID. ClearlyIP's E911 handling can be configured per device/extension in their trunking portal (Source: community.freepbx.org).

6. Post-Migration Support: After cutover, monitor call quality and usage:

- Use the PBX's call logs to verify calls are flowing as expected. If any user reports an issue (e.g., not receiving calls), check their extension registration status. Clearly Anywhere uses push, so sometimes there's a slight delay for incoming call on mobile – set expectations accordingly (though push generally works quickly).

- Get user feedback in the first days. Some might miss certain Skype features (like screen sharing). If screen sharing is critical, consider training them to use an alternative (maybe ClearlyIP's conference tool or even ad-hoc use of Teams free or Zoom for screen sharing alongside a phone call).

- Provide additional training if patterns of misuse are seen (for example, if people aren't answering because they didn't realize the app must stay logged in – though push means it can be closed, so that's good).

Migration Example: The Midwest Benefits Exchange case is instructive – they moved from a traditional setup to ClearlyIP's cloud and Clearly Anywhere. Their staff quickly adjusted and found that *"the Clearly Anywhere softphone [served] as a complete replacement for a desk phone"*, even after returning from lockdown (Source: clearlyip.com). This demonstrates user acceptance when the solution is implemented well. They noted improved availability and **geographic flexibility** (advisors can now take calls anywhere) which was a big win for their business (Source: clearlyip.com). We can glean that a positive framing of the migration (focus on benefits like mobility, cost savings, keeping your business number, etc.) helps user buy-in.

Integration with Existing Tools: During migration, consider how Clearly Anywhere will coexist with other tools:

- If the organization is also using Microsoft 365, they might keep using Outlook for calendar and email. That's fine – it just won't sync presence with the phone system. Some companies operate with separate email and phone systems without issue. Users just need to manually manage DND or note if they're in a meeting.

- For any line-of-business apps that integrated with Skype (like a CRM dialing out via Skype), those would need re-integration. Often CRMs can be pointed to a SIP URI or a dialer software. Clearly Anywhere on desktop might register a protocol handler (TEL: or SIP:) for click-to-call (Source: clearlyip.com). Actually, one feature listed is *"Click to Call (from your laptop or desktop)"* (Source: clearlyip.com), implying that the app can initiate calls when the user clicks a phone number in a supported format (perhaps via a browser extension or OS association). Ensure this is set up so that any web-based contact lists or CRM tools can launch calls on Clearly Anywhere, similar to how Skype for Business allowed "click to call" from Office applications.

Phasing Out Skype: One advantage of doing a careful migration is avoiding disruption. There might be an overlap period where some users still have Skype accounts active (especially if communicating with external Skype contacts or federations). You can maintain both until all partners and external contacts have your new numbers or know to use phone/email instead of Skype IM. Eventually, decommission the Skype servers or subscriptions to cut costs.

In summary, migrating from Skype to Clearly Anywhere requires **implementing a new backend phone system, deploying the new softphone to users, and training them on the differences.** While it's a significant change, it can be managed smoothly with a phased approach. Many organizations have performed similar migrations – essentially adopting a modern SIP UC solution in place of legacy Microsoft UC. The reward is greater ownership of your communication platform, often lower recurring costs, and the freedom to tailor features to your needs (for instance, choosing what phones or endpoints you use, integrating SMS, etc.).

Use Cases and Industry Adoption

Clearly Anywhere has been adopted in various industries as companies pivot to more flexible communication tools. Its strengths in remote work enablement have been recognized with industry accolades and positive case studies. Here we highlight some use cases and testimonials:

- **Remote Work Enablement in Professional Services:** The **Midwest Benefits Exchange (MBE)** case study showcases Clearly Anywhere in action. MBE is a financial/insurance services firm that needed to maintain client communications when COVID-19 lockdowns hit. They had a traditional on-prem phone system that wasn't friendly to remote work (employees were resorting to personal phones). By deploying ClearlyIP's cloud system with Clearly Anywhere softphones, MBE's advisors were able to work from home or on the move while still using the office number and extension (Source: clearlyip.com)(Source: clearlyip.com). This gave clients a seamless experience – calling the same business number reached the advisors wherever they were, and outbound calls showed the company Caller ID for professionalism (Source: clearlyip.com)(Source: clearlyip.com). The staff benefited from features like visual voicemail and having one device for both office and mobile calls. The result was improved operations and continuity: *"the new communication strategy vastly improved operations and their bottom line"*, and even post-pandemic, they kept using Clearly Anywhere as a full replacement for desk phones due to its convenience (Source: clearlyip.com)(Source: clearlyip.com). This case underlines how Clearly Anywhere can replace Skype/Desk phones in a client-focused business – providing mobility, privacy (no personal numbers given out), and productivity.

- **Education (K-12) and Multi-site Organizations:** There are reports of school districts adopting ClearlyIP solutions including Clearly Anywhere to modernize their telephony. In one anecdote, a K-12 district moved from a legacy Cisco system to ClearlyIP hosted PBX with softphones for remote learning phases (Source: reddit.com). They appreciated the idea of softphones but encountered early issues like call reliability and a lack of contact search in initial versions (Source: reddit.com). ClearlyIP addressed many such issues in subsequent updates (e.g., adding contact integration, improving stability), and over time these organizations saw the benefit of easier scaling (adding a new softphone for a teacher is simpler and cheaper than wiring a new phone). The **education use case** often values cost savings and emergency features: Clearly Anywhere's support for E911 location and integration with paging/alert systems (via the PBX) is a boon for schools that need to ensure safety communications. ClearlyIP even won an award for emergency communication add-ons (like CodeX for school lockdown alerts) (Source: clearlyip.com), which can work alongside Clearly Anywhere on teacher devices for emergency notifications.

- **Distributed Teams and MSPs:** Managed Service Providers (MSPs) and IT consultancies have picked up Clearly Anywhere as part of their offering to clients who need voice solutions. For example, an MSP can run a multi-tenant PBX (or ClearlyIP's white-label ClusterPBX) and give each client company their own tenant with Clearly Anywhere softphones. This is an alternative to reselling Microsoft's Calling Plans – instead, the MSP controls the telephony. This appeals to

clients in industries with compliance needs or those who prefer not to depend on Microsoft's cloud. One such adoption earned ClearlyIP recognition when **TMC named Clearly Anywhere (and Clearly Cloud) a Remote Work Pioneer Award winner in 2023**, citing the innovation and excellence it brings to the market for distributed workforces (Source: clearlyip.com). The award indicates industry analysts see Clearly Anywhere as a noteworthy tool enabling remote work, likely due to its ease of provisioning and use in any location.

- **SMBs Replacing Skype or RingCentral:** Small-to-medium businesses that may have used Skype or other cloud PBX like RingCentral have found Clearly Anywhere attractive for its integration with open-source PBX and cost model. User forums show discussions where companies compared softphone options (Zoiper, Bria, etc.) and found Clearly Anywhere appealing because of its **tight FreePBX integration and push notifications** (uncommon in many generic SIP apps) (Source: community.freepbx.org)(Source: community.freepbx.org). One user in the FreePBX forum mentioned it as a good option "if you want something tightly integrated" for a seamless experience (Source: community.freepbx.org). Another mention in Reddit praised it as *"INCREDIBLE"* in the context of an IncrediblePBX setup (Source: voip-info.org), illustrating that hobbyists and open-source telephony enthusiasts also see value in it.

- **Call Centers & Sales Teams:** While a full call center might use dedicated software, Clearly Anywhere can be part of a call center solution by allowing agents to work remotely. Its support for call queues (via the PBX's queue agent login) and agent features like pause/unpause through feature codes means a call center rep could operate via the softphone. ClearlyIP's Call Panel (web interface) can complement this by showing queue statuses (Source: clearlyip.com). A sales team example: field salespeople can use the mobile app to make calls that look like they're from HQ, and receive calls from their direct office line on their cell. They can also text customers from the business number. This maintains a professional image and logs all interactions in the company system (the PBX can log call detail records and even recordings). A testimonial from a sales manager might note that using Clearly Anywhere "maintains professionalism with our outbound caller ID and keeps our personal and business communications separate, all while on one device" – exactly as observed in the MBE case (Source: clearlyip.com)(Source: clearlyip.com).

In terms of **limitations noted by users**:

- Early adopters pointed out issues like difficulty with call connectivity and app stability on certain platforms (Source: reddit.com). For instance, an early 2021 comment mentioned the Windows app sometimes froze while the Mac app was fine (Source: reddit.com). ClearlyIP has actively updated the apps (the Google Play store shows updates as of June 2024 (Source:

play.google.com)), addressing many bugs. As of 2025, the app stores ratings are modest (~3.2/5 on iOS with 20+ ratings) (Source: apps.apple.com), indicating a decent but not flawless user satisfaction. Some reviews likely reflect initial hiccups, whereas current versions are more polished.

- A noted limitation is the absence of advanced UC features (as we've discussed in comparison). If a company heavily uses Teams or Slack for persistent group collaboration, Clearly Anywhere won't replace that – it would be voice-focused. Many organizations end up using Clearly Anywhere **alongside** such tools: e.g., use Slack for team chat and Clearly Anywhere for voice, rather than expecting one tool to do everything.

- Compatibility with non-FreePBX systems, while possible via SIP, isn't officially supported. So a company with, say, a legacy Avaya might not be able to easily plug Clearly Anywhere in unless they move to a SIP core. In contrast, Skype for Business could federate or connect with some PBXs via gateways. That said, most modern telephony is SIP-based now, so this is a minor issue and often the migration to Clearly Anywhere implies migration to a SIP PBX anyway.

Despite these considerations, the overall **testimonial tone for Clearly Anywhere is positive**, especially regarding how it **enabled remote/hybrid work and reduced hardware dependency**. Companies report cost savings (no desk phone hardware, no separate conference phone service needed, etc.), and employees appreciate the flexibility. ClearlyIP's success stories and awards reinforce that it's a credible solution in the business communications market, not just an experimental tool. For many, it strikes a balance: it's more feature-rich and integrated than generic VoIP apps, but lighter-weight and more customizable than monolithic solutions like Teams.

Limitations and Potential Drawbacks

No solution is without drawbacks, and it's important to consider where Clearly Anywhere might fall short or pose challenges as a Skype replacement:

- **Limited Native Collaboration Features:** Clearly Anywhere focuses on telephony and basic messaging. It does *not* provide the rich collaboration ecosystem that Skype for Business (with Office integration) or Teams does. There are no built-in virtual meeting rooms with dozens of video feeds, no persistent group chat channels, no file storage. If an organization needs those, they will need to supplement Clearly Anywhere with other tools. For example, one might use Zoom or Teams (free) for large video meetings, or Slack for team chat, alongside Clearly

Anywhere for voice. This means potentially **juggling multiple applications**, whereas Teams tries to be a one-stop-shop. For some IT environments, introducing multiple apps can be a drawback in terms of user training and support.

- **Reliance on PBX Infrastructure:** Unlike Skype for Business Online or Teams which are cloud services, Clearly Anywhere by itself is not a service – it's a client. The organization or provider must have a PBX/server in place. This adds complexity: you have to maintain that system (or trust a vendor like ClearlyIP to host it). If something goes wrong in the PBX (misconfiguration, server crash), the whole phone service is affected. With Teams, Microsoft handles uptime (which has been generally very high). That said, many businesses are comfortable running their own phone systems or using third-party hosted ones. But for a small company that has zero IT staff, adopting Clearly Anywhere might require outsourcing PBX management to an IT partner. In short, **the DIY or managed PBX approach is less hands-off than a pure SaaS solution**. Organizations should assess if they have the resources or partners to manage it. The flip side is control; but the drawback is responsibility for maintenance, backups, security patches (especially if on-prem).

- **Learning Curve and Change Management:** Users accustomed to Skype or Teams might find some features missing or different:

  - No presence status tied to calendar – users have to manually set DND or rely on BLF indicators which only show phone use. People might initially message a colleague on Teams expecting a quick reply, whereas in Clearly Anywhere the only equivalent is calling or SMS, which are different modes. This could require a cultural adjustment.

  - The interface, while intuitive, is still new to users – they need to get used to a new app for calls. Some might initially find it less convenient than Skype's integration in their PC (for instance, clicking a link in Outlook to join a meeting won't launch Clearly Anywhere because it's not a meeting platform – it's a different workflow to join conference calls via dial-in).

  - Features like screen share or sending a file in chat were present in Skype; with Clearly Anywhere, a user would have to use email or another method to send a file while on a call.

- **Mobile App Limitations:** Mobile VoIP softphones inherently depend on network quality. Clearly Anywhere uses push to help with battery and reachability, but calls on mobile data may still face quality issues if coverage is poor. A Reddit user noted they sometimes had crystal clear calls on cellular, other times not (Source: reddit.com) – this isn't unique to Clearly Anywhere, but it's a limitation of any mobile VoIP vs. a cellular call. Additionally, when the mobile app is ringing, if the phone is locked, the user has to deal with it like any call app – push makes it possible, but on

some devices there could be notification delays (rarely). Overall, the mobile experience is good, but **users must have decent internet and possibly adjust phone settings to allow VoIP notifications** reliably (e.g., not using battery saver that kills background data).

- **Desktop App Maturity:** The Clearly Anywhere Desktop app was introduced in 2021 (Source: clearlyip.com) and while it has matured since, it may not have all the bells and whistles of older softphones. For example, some advanced settings or customizations might be limited because it's designed to be simple. Early versions didn't allow custom SIP accounts outside the module, which might still be true (i.e., you can't just use it like X-Lite with any random SIP account unless the PBX knows about it via the module). If an organization has multiple PBX systems, using the desktop app might require multiple instances or logging out/in to switch (the mobile app might allow multiple profiles – unclear, but often softphones do). This is a minor limitation but worth noting if, say, a receptionist had to monitor two phone systems – Clearly Anywhere might not support multiple simultaneous registrations in one interface (aside from the "unlimited devices" aspect, which is different).

- **Integration Gaps:** While we lauded the integration with PBX, it doesn't integrate with Microsoft 365 or Google Workspace out of the box. So things like clicking a Teams meeting link obviously won't involve Clearly Anywhere. Or if you have a CRM that pops a Skype call, you'd need to rewire it for SIP URI or phone dial. There might be some growing pains reconnecting those integrations. Microsoft has also deeply integrated Teams with Windows (e.g., presence tied to Outlook, the Teams button in Office apps, etc.), which you lose when switching to a separate system. Some companies won't mind; others might find these little conveniences hard to give up. Essentially, **if you leave the Microsoft ecosystem for comms, you lose the native integration that was built-in** – that's a drawback if your workflow depended on it.

- **Cost Considerations:** Clearly Anywhere itself is not expensive, but it isn't free. Skype for Business Online Plan 2 was around $2/user when it existed (plus needed other licenses), Teams comes bundled in many Office subscriptions which companies already pay for. If a company is already paying for Microsoft 365 E3/E5, using Teams might seem "no additional cost" (except perhaps phone minutes or some add-ons). Adopting Clearly Anywhere means paying for the PBX (if hosted, maybe a monthly fee; if on-prem, server and support costs) and a license for the softphone users. ClearlyIP's pricing is competitive, but an organization should crunch the numbers. In some cases, if they ditch E5 licenses for E3 without Teams Voice and go with ClearlyIP, they could save money. In other cases, if they already have everything Microsoft, adding a separate system might seem like an extra cost. Also, if using ClearlyIP's cloud, it's a new vendor relationship to manage (though that can be a positive if you want personalized

support). Basically, **justify the cost vs benefit**. Clearly Anywhere's benefits like no desk phone hardware (save $$) and possibly cheaper telephony minutes (SIP trunks vs MS Calling Plans) can offset the license costs, but it's something to evaluate per case.

- **Support and Ecosystem:** Microsoft's solutions come with large community and certified support channels. ClearlyIP is smaller (though their team is experienced). While they do have support and a partner network, an IT team might worry about vendor lock-in or the longevity of the platform (however, since it's based on open SIP and FreePBX, even if ClearlyIP vanished, you could likely continue with another SIP client – albeit losing integration). The ecosystem for third-party add-ons might not be as big as for Teams (which has hundreds of apps/plugins). If a business used plugins in Skype/Teams (like polling apps, or translation services), those would be lost or need alternatives.

- **User Reception:** Change can bring initial discontent. In one story, the district IT admin was "very disappointed" early on (Source: reddit.com) – partly due to issues, partly maybe because expectations were not met. Users might initially complain that "this isn't as slick as Skype" especially if they miss visual features like emoticons in chat (since SMS is plain text essentially) or presence info. It's important to manage expectations and highlight that what they lose in fluff, they gain in reliability of calls or new SMS capability or cost savings that might translate to other benefits.

In evaluating these limitations, it's clear that **Clearly Anywhere is not a like-for-like replacement of every Skype/Teams feature** – nor is it meant to be. It zeroes in on voice communications. For organizations whose primary use of Skype was as a phone system, Clearly Anywhere can fit like a glove. But for those who used Skype for a mix of chat, meetings, and collaboration, a migration to Clearly Anywhere should be paired with a re-evaluation of how to handle those other functions (perhaps keeping Teams just for meetings and chat while using Clearly Anywhere for voice – a hybrid approach some companies adopt).

Ultimately, the decision might also factor in **strategic alignment**: some businesses prefer not to be too tied to Microsoft or want more control over data – for them, the trade-offs of fewer built-in features are worth the autonomy of their own communication stack. Others may find the convenience of an all-in-one platform outweighs the benefits of a custom solution. Clearly Anywhere fills a niche for those prioritizing a **customizable, voice-centric, and open communication solution** as opposed to a monolithic, one-size-fits-all service.

Conclusion

As Skype for Business fades into history and organizations chart their future communication strategies, ClearlyIP's Clearly Anywhere emerges as a compelling option, especially for those seeking to reclaim control of their voice infrastructure while accommodating modern work patterns. Clearly Anywhere effectively transforms any laptop or smartphone into a full-fledged business phone, delivering on the promise of **"Your Extension, Everywhere"**. Its core strengths lie in VoIP call quality, a unified experience across devices, and tight integration with flexible PBX systems – all of which make it a potent replacement for Skype's telephony functions. In head-to-head feature comparisons, Clearly Anywhere holds its own in the telephony domain, offering HD voice, call transfers/conferencing, voicemail, and even SMS texting – areas where it meets or exceeds what Skype for Business provided.

That said, Clearly Anywhere is part of a broader ecosystem rather than a standalone UC silo. This brings both opportunities and responsibilities. Organizations adopting it have the opportunity to tailor their communication environment: they can choose on-premises or cloud, integrate with existing tools, and avoid overpaying for features they don't use. However, they also take on the responsibility to ensure the surrounding pieces (PBX, trunking, adjunct collaboration tools) are in place to meet all user needs. For IT architects, Clearly Anywhere offers a *"building block"* approach to unified communications, in contrast to the *"walled garden"* approach of Microsoft Teams. Neither is universally better – it depends on the enterprise's priorities around flexibility, cost, and feature set.

In the big picture, the deprecation of Skype has led many to assume Teams is the only viable path. Clearly Anywhere demonstrates that **alternative paths exist** – ones that leverage open standards and perhaps align better with certain organizational goals (such as data privacy, bespoke integration, or budget constraints). Companies that have invested in SIP-based telephony or that want a smooth bridge between traditional phone systems and future-proof softphones will find Clearly Anywhere particularly attractive. Its successful deployments in industries like finance, education, and professional services testify to its practicality. Users gain the freedom to work anywhere without losing connectivity to the office's communication hub, which in today's world is not a luxury but a necessity.

In conclusion, while Clearly Anywhere may not replicate every feature of Skype for Business or compete with the breadth of Microsoft Teams, it excels as a **focused, professional-grade voice solution** for the post-Skype era. It empowers businesses to keep their phone numbers ringing no matter where employees are, ensures customers and colleagues can reach staff with a single work

identity, and does so with a simplicity that belies the sophisticated telecom infrastructure under the hood. For IT decision-makers evaluating a Skype replacement, Clearly Anywhere should be viewed as a **viable and in many cases advantageous option** – one that pairs the reliability of a business phone system with the agility of modern software. By carefully considering the needs for voice, video, and collaboration, organizations can decide if Clearly Anywhere alone or in combination with other tools best fills the void left by Skype's departure. In the domain of voice communications, Clearly Anywhere certainly makes a strong case as a worthy successor.

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Tags: voip, softphone, clearly anywhere, skype for business, unified communications, microsoft teams, sip, migration strategy, telephony

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About ClearlyIP

ClearlyIP Inc. — Company Profile (June 2025)

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1. Who they are

ClearlyIP is a privately-held unified-communications (UC) vendor headquartered in Appleton, Wisconsin, with additional offices in Canada and a globally distributed workforce. Founded in 2019 by veteran FreePBX/Asterisk contributors, the firm follows a "build-and-buy" growth strategy, combining in-house R&D with targeted acquisitions (e.g., the 2023 purchase of Voneto's EPlatform UCaaS). Its mission is to "design and develop the world's most respected VoIP brand" by delivering secure, modern, cloud-first communications that reduce cost and boost collaboration, while its vision focuses on unlocking the full potential of open-source VoIP for organisations of every size. The leadership team collectively brings more than 300 years of telecom experience.

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2. Product portfolio

- **Cloud Solutions** – Including *Clearly Cloud* (flagship UCaaS), **SIP Trunking**, **SendFax.to** cloud fax, **ClusterPBX OEM**, **Business Connect** managed cloud PBX, and **EPlatform** multitenant UCaaS. These provide fully hosted voice, video, chat and collaboration with 100+ features, per-seat licensing, geo-redundant PoPs, built-in call-recording and mobile/desktop apps.
- **On-Site Phone Systems** – Including CIP PBX appliances (FreePBX pre-installed), ClusterPBX Enterprise, and Business Connect (on-prem variant). These offer local survivability for compliance-sensitive sites; appliances start at 25 extensions and scale into HA clusters.

- **IP Phones & Softphones** – Including CIP SIP Desk-phone Series (CIP-25x/27x/28x), fully white-label branding kit, and *Clearly Anywhere* softphone (iOS, Android, desktop). Features zero-touch provisioning via Cloud Device Manager or FreePBX "Clearly Devices" module; Opus, HD-voice, BLF-rich colour LCDs.
- **VoIP Gateways** – Including Analog FXS/FXO models, VoIP Fail-Over Gateway, POTS Replacement (for copper sun-set), and 2-port T1/E1 digital gateway. These bridge legacy endpoints or PSTN circuits to SIP; fail-over models keep 911 active during WAN outages.
- **Emergency Alert Systems** – Including **CodeX** room-status dashboard, **Panic Button**, and **Silent Intercom**. This K-12-focused mass-notification suite integrates with CIP PBX or third-party FreePBX for Alyssa's-Law compliance.
- **Hospitality** – Including **ComXchange** PBX plus PMS integrations, hardware & software assurance plans. Replaces aging Mitel/NEC hotel PBXs; supports guest-room phones, 911 localisation, check-in/out APIs.
- **Device & System Management** – Including **Cloud Device Manager** and **Update Control (Mirror)**. Provides multi-vendor auto-provisioning, firmware management, and secure FreePBX mirror updates.
- **XCast Suite** – Including Hosted PBX, SIP trunking, carrier/call-centre solutions, SOHO plans, and XCL mobile app. Delivers value-oriented, high-volume VoIP from ClearlyIP's carrier network.

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3. Services

- **Telecom Consulting & Custom Development** – FreePBX/Asterisk architecture reviews, mergers & acquisitions diligence, bespoke application builds and Tier-3 support.
- **Regulatory Compliance** – E911 planning plus **Kari's Law**, **Ray Baum's Act** and **Alyssa's Law** solutions; automated dispatchable location tagging.
- **STIR/SHAKEN Certificate Management** – Signing services for Originating Service Providers, helping customers combat robocalling and maintain full attestation.
- **Attestation Lookup Tool** – Free web utility to identify a telephone number's service-provider code and SHAKEN attestation rating.
- **FreePBX® Training** – Three-day administrator boot camps (remote or on-site) covering installation, security hardening and troubleshooting.
- **Partner & OEM Programs** – Wholesale SIP trunk bundles, white-label device programs, and ClusterPBX OEM licensing.

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4. Executive management (June 2025)

- **CEO & Co-Founder: Tony Lewis** – Former CEO of Schmooze Com (FreePBX sponsor); drives vision, acquisitions and channel network.

- **CFO & Co-Founder: Luke Duquaine** – Ex-Sangoma software engineer; oversees finance, international operations and supply-chain.
- **CTO & Co-Founder: Bryan Walters** – Long-time Asterisk contributor; leads product security and cloud architecture.
- **Chief Revenue Officer: Preston McNair** – 25+ years in channel development at Sangoma & Hargray; owns sales, marketing and partner success.
- **Chief Hospitality Strategist: Doug Schwartz** – Former 360 Networks CEO; guides hotel vertical strategy and PMS integrations.
- **Chief Business Development Officer: Bob Webb** – 30+ years telco experience (Nsight/Cellcom); cultivates ILEC/CLEC alliances for Clearly Cloud.
- **Chief Product Officer: Corey McFadden** – Founder of Voneto; architect of EPlatform UCaaS, now shapes ClearlyIP product roadmap.
- **VP Support Services: Lorne Gaetz** (appointed Jul 2024) – Former Sangoma FreePBX lead; builds 24×7 global support organisation.
- **VP Channel Sales: Tracy Liu** (appointed Jun 2024) – Channel-program veteran; expands MSP/VAR ecosystem worldwide.

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5. Differentiators

- **Open-Source DNA:** Deep roots in the FreePBX/Asterisk community allow rapid feature releases and robust interoperability.
- **White-Label Flexibility:** Brandable phones and ClusterPBX OEM let carriers and MSPs present a fully bespoke UCaaS stack.
- **End-to-End Stack:** From hardware endpoints to cloud, gateways and compliance services, ClearlyIP owns every layer, simplifying procurement and support.
- **Education & Safety Focus:** Panic Button, CodeX and e911 tool-sets position the firm strongly in K-12 and public-sector markets.

In summary

ClearlyIP delivers a comprehensive, modular UC ecosystem—cloud, on-prem and hybrid—backed by a management team with decades of open-source telephony pedigree. Its blend of carrier-grade infrastructure, white-label flexibility and vertical-specific solutions (hospitality, education, emergency-compliance) makes it a compelling option for ITSPs, MSPs and multi-site enterprises seeking modern, secure and cost-effective communications.

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