

Review of Martello Vantage DX

By: *Brien M. Posey*

The abrupt transition to remote work that has occurred over the past few years has caused Microsoft Teams to become an indispensable application for many companies. As such, it is absolutely imperative to make sure that Teams users have a good experience, particularly with regard to call quality. Herein lies the problem. Although Microsoft has provided some rudimentary tools that can be used for user experience monitoring, those integrated tools are inadequate for enterprise use.

Fortunately, there are third-party solutions available that far exceed the native tool's capabilities. **Martello's Vantage DX** is easily one of the best and most comprehensive solutions for Microsoft Teams user experience monitoring and root cause analytics. In this review, I will be taking a look at Martello Vantage DX.

Martello Vantage DX vs the Teams Call Quality Dashboard

There are three main things that separate Martello Vantage DX from Microsoft's Call Quality Dashboard. First, Martello Vantage DX is capable of proactively monitoring your Teams environment without the need for additional software. While Microsoft's call quality dashboard does provide a variety of call quality metrics, the tool is lacking from a performance and data analytics standpoint. To unleash the Call Quality Dashboard's full potential, admins will need to download the Power BI Query template. This of course requires a Power BI license and a degree of Power BI expertise. In contrast, Martello Vantage DX includes several dashboards that can be used to analyze data without the aid of Power BI.

The second big advantage that Martello Vantage DX has over the Microsoft Call Quality Dashboard is that it provides monitoring and reporting capabilities that are far more granular than that of the Call Quality Dashboard. It is worth noting that Martello Vantage DX does not limit you to passively monitoring call quality data. The software allows you to create alerts that can notify you in the event that performance drops below a predefined threshold.

A third benefit that Martello provides over the native tools that are included with Microsoft Teams is that Martello Vantage DX is able to perform root cause analysis. This is important because Teams performance problems are rarely caused by issues on Microsoft's network. Having root cause analysis capabilities gives organizations a way to figure out if performance problems are tied to conditions on their own network, on their ISP's network, or somewhere else.

Where Does the Monitoring Data Come From?

As previously mentioned, Martello exposes a mind-boggling volume of data. This data can be viewed at a high level, but you can also drill down to see individual users' experiences, even going so far as to examine individual calls. You may be curious however, where all of this monitoring data actually comes from.

One of the things that makes Martello Vantage DX so unique is that it works as a monitoring data aggregation tool. In other words, every enterprise class organization uses monitoring tools to keep tabs on its IT infrastructure. These might be tools such as the Microsoft Call Quality Dashboard that are native to the Microsoft 365 ecosystem, or they could be third party monitoring tools. Martello Vantage DX is designed to work with whatever monitoring tools your organization is already using. The software aggregates the data from an organization's monitoring tools and paints a comprehensive picture of an organization's Teams environment based on that data. This is not to say that Martello Vantage DX does not collect monitoring data on its own. Martello Vantage DX captures rich monitoring data and is fully capable of acting as a standalone tool. If you do have other monitoring tools in place however, Martello Vantage DX is able to use the data from those tools alongside what it captures itself to paint a comprehensive picture of your Teams environment.

It is worth noting that Martello does not simply ingest logging data, it can also ingest alerts produced by monitoring tools. It then prioritizes the alerts, while filtering out alerts that are essentially just meaningless noise, thereby helping admins to avoid being bombarded with an overwhelming amount of information.

Using Martello Vantage DX

My evaluation of Martello Vantage DX began with examining some real-world call data, as displayed within the Vantage DX Analytics interface. As you can see in Figure 1, the interface is color coded, distinguishing between good and poor experiences, as well as failed calls and meetings. The dashboard shown in the figure breaks down calls and meetings by type, thereby making it easy to see if one type of call is performing better than another. The dashboard also allows you to see how the overall call volume fluctuates over time and you can visually assess whether or not most of the calls are of good quality.

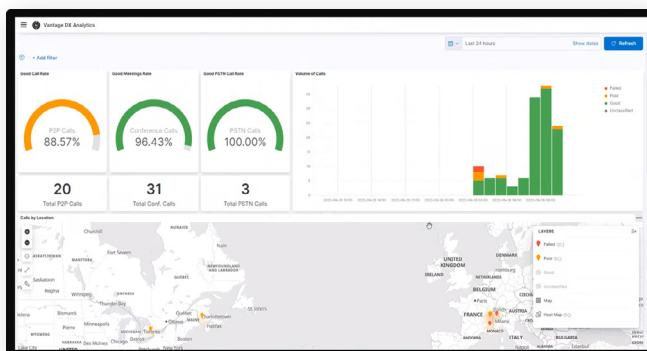


Figure 1: The Vantage DX Analytics dashboard gives you an overview of the end user experience.

As you look at the figure above, you will also notice that the bottom half of the screen is filled with a map that displays call quality by location. As helpful as this capability might be, there is more to this feature than meets the eye. Large global enterprises typically have more than one Microsoft Teams subscription. Such an organization might for example, have a separate subscription for each region. Martello Vantage DX supports multitenancy, meaning that it can simultaneously monitor the resources associated with multiple subscriptions.

Of course, Martello Vantage DX's real strength lies in its ability to drill down into the infrastructure and pinpoint the underlying cause of poor quality calls. If you look at Figure 2, you can see that in this particular case most calls were good, but there were a few calls that suffered from poor quality. Martello Vantage DX Analytics was able to examine the calls and determined that all of the poor quality calls were being routed through the same ISP network. The bottom portion of the interface indicates that the reason for the poor call quality is that packet loss is occurring on the network.

The takeaway from the figure above is that Martello isn't providing meaningless performance statistics as some monitoring products do, but is instead producing actionable insights. If the problem shown in the figure above were to persist then a technician would be equipped with all of the information that they need in order to contact an ISP about the problem. In fact, the information provided would make it nearly impossible for an ISP to deny that a problem exists or to blame someone else. In other words, Martello gives IT pros the tools that they need in order to hold their ISPs accountable for outages or SLA violations.

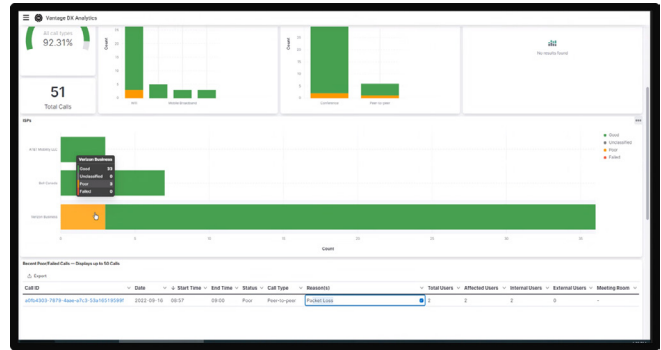


Figure 2: Martello Vantage DX provides detailed information as to why some calls are suffering from poor quality.

But what if call quality problems cannot be attributed to an ISP? In those types of situations, Martello Vantage DX allows you to perform a deeper root cause analysis.

At one point during my review process, users in a London office began to experience some call quality issues that were not caused by the ISP that services that office. As you can see in Figure 3 however, the Martello software was able to analyze the entire communications path between the London office and the Microsoft Teams servers in western Europe. The software quickly discovered that the problem stemmed from a regional network used by the ISP. Additionally, Martello Vantage DX was able to report on the number of hops, the round trip time, and any jitter or packet loss that might have been occurring.

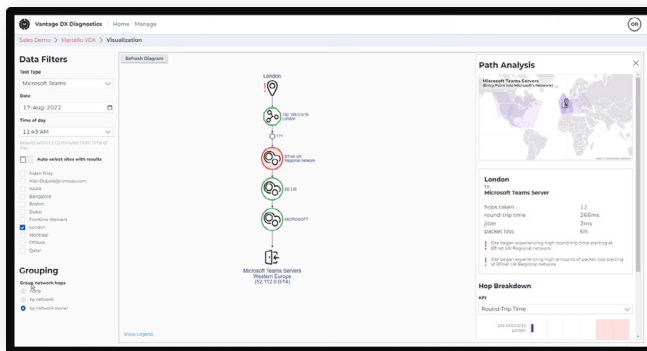


Figure 3: Martello Vantage DX can analyze the entire communications path and determine what is causing poor quality.

The idea behind doing so is that if a problem does exist somewhere, one of the robots is likely to encounter the problem before an end user does. This gives the IT staff a chance to address the problem before it begins to impact users. Figure 4 displays some of the metrics that have been gathered by robots.

Proactive Monitoring

One of the big things that really sets Martello Vantage DX apart from some of the other monitoring solutions that are available is that Martello allows for proactive monitoring. Performance monitoring, by its very nature tends to be reactive. After all, you can't observe a problematic condition until it happens.

The thing that makes Martello Vantage DX different from other monitoring solutions is that it uses bots (which Martello refers to as robots) to continuously make short calls.

Microsoft 365 Monitoring

Although I really wanted to focus this review solely on Microsoft Teams call quality monitoring, I would be remiss if I did not point out the fact that Martello Vantage DX is capable of monitoring far more than just Microsoft Teams. In the next figure for example, you can see that Martello is able to monitor other Microsoft 365 applications such as Exchange Online, OneDrive, and SharePoint Online.

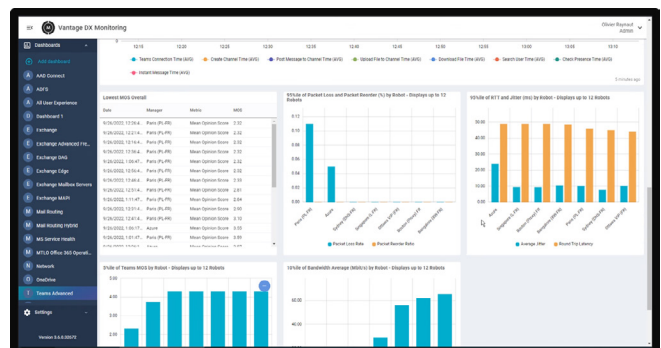


Figure 4: Martello uses robots to proactively test call quality on an ongoing and automated basis.

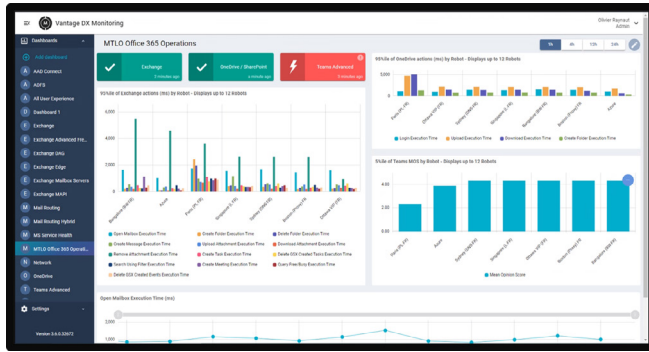


Figure 5: Martello is able to monitor a variety of Microsoft 365 applications.

The Verdict

Typically when I write a product review, I like to conclude the review process by giving the software a star rating between zero and five stars, with five stars being the highest possible score. With that said, I am giving Martello Vantage DX a score of 4.8 stars.

Martello Vantage DX does a great job of making monitoring data digestible and of surfacing actual problems while suppressing noise alerts. I also found Martello's root cause analytics capabilities to be really impressive.

In evaluating the software, I found that there is a bit of a learning curve associated with its use, but that learning curve is minimal. I'm guessing that most experienced IT pros will probably be able to learn how to navigate the software in less than an hour.

About the Author

As an internationally best selling technology author and **19 time Microsoft MVP**, Brien Posey has written or contributed to dozen **books**, and created numerous full-length video training courses on a huge variety of IT and space related topics. In addition, Brien has published over 7000 technical articles and white papers for various Web sites and periodicals. Brien has received Microsoft's MVP award numerous times for his work in Windows Server, IIS, Exchange Server, File Systems / Storage, Cloud and Datacenter Management, and Windows and Devices for IT.

In addition to his writing, Brien routinely records webcasts and speaks internationally at various live events IT on subjects ranging from information technology to astronautics.



About Martello

Martello Technologies Group Inc. (TSXV: MTLO) provides Microsoft 365 and Teams monitoring solutions including the Vantage DX SaaS platform, which optimize the modern workplace. The company's products deliver end-to-end visibility of the entire IT infrastructure supporting Microsoft 365 and Teams, empowering IT teams and service providers to deliver stellar user experiences. Martello Technologies Group is a public company headquartered in Ottawa, Canada with employees in Europe, North America and the Asia Pacific region.

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