

REVIEW OF MARTELLO'S VANTAGE DX

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★★★★★ 4.9 / 5 stars

Although the pandemic ended several years ago, most larger organizations still allow users to either work remotely or to work on a hybrid basis, where they spend a few days each week working from home. While Teams does indeed allow users to participate in calls and meetings even when they are working remotely, remote users often experience problems such as choppy video, desynchronized or distorted audio, or an inability to share their screens. Such problems can be hugely disruptive, making calls and meetings far less productive.

Microsoft does provide its customers with some basic user experience monitoring tools such as the Teams Call Quality Dashboard, Teams Room Pro dashboard and the Admin Center and Service Dashboard. These tools are designed to give you a sense of your organization's overall Teams quality, by comparing the number of good quality calls and meetings against the number suffering from poor audio or video quality.

While those and other native Teams tools can be used to confirm whether or not any calls are suffering from poor quality, the built-in tools have limited monitoring and alerting capabilities and do little to help you with actually troubleshooting and fixing the problem. Troubleshooting a problem involves using multiple, disparate tools, and even then, you might not have enough data to find the root cause.

Fortunately, there are some really good third-party tools that can help organizations to improve their overall Teams call quality. In fact, I recently had the opportunity to take a look at one such third party solution – Martello's Vantage DX.

For those who might not be familiar with Martello's Vantage DX, it is designed to make troubleshooting and resolving problems much easier than it would otherwise be. It does this by bringing all of the Teams data into one place, correlating the Teams data with network data to eliminate blind spots, and then presenting the data in a way that simplifies the troubleshooting process. In other words, you don't have to dig through multiple tools and dashboards in order to figure out what's wrong.

I first discovered Martello's Vantage DX a few years ago while exploring various options for third party Teams monitoring. Vantage DX was impressive back then, but Martello has done quite a bit of work since the last time that I reviewed it.

WHY USE A THIRD-PARTY SOLUTION?

As previously mentioned, Microsoft Teams does provide basic call quality and diagnostic information through the Call Quality Dashboard and through various reports. As such, it seems fair to question why an organization should opt for a third-party monitoring solution, as opposed to relying on the tools that are built-in.

Martello's Vantage DX ingests data from native Microsoft tools like the Call Quality Dashboard. However, it doesn't just mirror the information that Microsoft is already providing you, instead, it is augmented with network path tracing data, thereby giving you end to end visibility. Vantage DX also performs proactive monitoring, which can help you to easily detect and resolve issues before they impact users.

COMPREHENSIVE MONITORING

One of the things that really impressed me about Martello Vantage DX is that it is able to provide you with holistic monitoring as opposed to separate dashboards for each Teams service, so you can see the performance of all Teams services in use across your organization in one place.

The monitoring process actively monitors Teams collaboration meetings, Teams Rooms and Teams Phone. Drill down dashboards let you see this data from any perspective by drilling into a certain office, just remote users, a specific geography or even your VIP users for example. This lets you understand the scope and impact of problems and prioritize accordingly.

Vantage DX also provides you with detailed insights into the types of connections that are being used. You can immediately tell, for example, if a user is local or if they are working remotely. Additionally, Vantage DX tells you whether a user is using a wired connection, Wi-Fi, mobile broadband, or even a Teams Phone. Similarly, you can see the types of calls being made and the networks used, including ISP networks.

Vantage DX has some unique capabilities that help it monitor Teams Phones just as well as it monitors other types of Teams services. If a Teams Phone user is experiencing choppy audio for example, you can diagnose and resolve the problem in exactly the same way that you would for any other type of Teams service. by adding visibility of the Session Border Controller, SIP trunks and PSTN. This is important because organizations are increasingly adopting Teams Phone to consolidate systems and improve user experience.

PROACTIVE MONITORING

The issue that I personally have with the Microsoft Teams tools is that while the charts graphically depicting calls of both good and bad quality are undeniably useful, the information that is displayed on the Call Quality Dashboard always reflects a period of time in the recent past. It was never designed to proactively anticipate issues that have not yet impacted users. or to assist with Troubleshooting.

Vantage DX proactive monitoring keeps you ahead of any Teams issues that might arise, before they impact large numbers of users. In my opinion, these proactive alerts are what makes Vantage DX an essential tool for anyone who depends on Microsoft Teams.

Vantage DX robots automatically set up and start meetings, every 2 minutes, 24 hours a day, in an effort to discover any new issues that have not yet been reported. If Vantage DX does detect an issue, it proactively alerts you so that you can take action and correct the problem before it affects your end users, and this proactive monitoring capability is now supported for Teams Phone as well, so that robots place automated calls out to numbers on the PSTN to proactively identify problems.

COMPLETE VISIBILITY

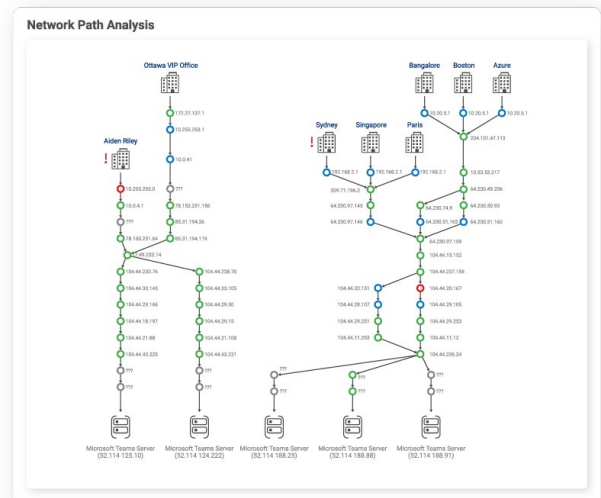
Vantage DX eliminates visibility gaps with network path tracing, so you can see everything impacting your Teams performance from the user all the way to the Microsoft data center. This is extremely important, because it means that Vantage DX can help you to definitively determine the source of a problem. When Microsoft is causing the issue, you will automatically receive an early warning, usually about 1 hour before, Microsoft acknowledges a problem, and Vantage DX can also identify which of your sites are impacted, and let you know when they are back online. This means you won't waste time trying to fix a problem that is out of your control.

If on the other hand, your ISP is experiencing a problem, or the problem is local, then the software will identify the source of the problem and give you the information that you need in order to fix it. It accomplishes this by testing the path from your network to the Microsoft Teams data center and all of the hops along the way. If an issue is discovered, then Vantage DX identifies the part of the network where the problem resides. That way, you can quickly address the problem, whether it's with your ISP or your own network. Better still, being able to definitively identify the source of the issue can put an end to frustrating vendor finger pointing.

One of the things that really impressed me about Vantage DX's monitoring capabilities is that Martello doesn't present you with raw monitoring data and leaves you to figure out what it all means, as so many other enterprise software vendors do. Instead, the software does its best to help you to figure out why various call quality issues are happening.

“The biggest thing that makes Vantage DX so worthwhile is that it allows IT and MSP teams to be proactive, efficient and effective. It provides detailed insights into the user experience to pinpoint the cause of issues and fix them before they become disruptive.”

As a case in point, during my evaluation, a call was flagged as having poor quality and the software listed “round trip” as the underlying cause. The software was able to provide a visual network path trace, showing the specific hop where the problem was occurring. For greater context though, I clicked on the words “round trip” and was presented with a help screen that described what round trip time means, what constitutes excessive round trip time (more than 500 milliseconds) and some common root causes. One of the things that I liked about this chart is



that because the chart lists the threshold values, making it easy to tell whether the call that was flagged as being of poor quality was just barely outside of the good quality threshold range, or if there was a more serious condition that needed to be addressed.

Of course, Vantage DX did more than just tell me that a call was suffering from poor quality because the round-trip packet travel time was more than 500 milliseconds. With just a few mouse clicks, I was easily able to identify the network that was responsible for the problem.

IMPACT ON PRODUCTIVITY

The biggest thing that makes Vantage DX so worthwhile is that it enables you to improve productivity for both your end users and for your IT team. Vantage DX provides you with detailed insights into user experiences, thereby giving you the chance to address any issues before they can become disruptive.

By improving both IT and end user productivity, Vantage DX can potentially generate an almost immediate ROI. Additionally, Vantage DX may also be able to reduce your costs by helping you to manage Teams Phone licenses more effectively. Vantage DX gives you visibility into the number of licenses purchased, assigned, and used, allowing you to optimize your license usage. This helps you avoid unnecessary costs, while also making sure that your users have the tools they need in order to communicate effectively.

THE VERDICT

When I write a product review, it has become customary for me to conclude the review by rating the product on a scale of zero to five stars, with five stars being the highest possible rating. The last time that I reviewed Vantage DX, I awarded it 4.8 stars. This time I am giving Vantage DX a score of 4.9. However, this slight increase in score from the previous review should not be taken to mean that the product has only slightly improved. Martello has actually done a lot of work on Vantage DX and I consider it to be a top tier product.

**Martello's
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4.9 / 5 stars**

