1Stream

A 1STREAM GUIDE FOR MSPs

Turning Communications Into Recurring *Revenue.*

Why the phone line sitting in every one of your clients is one of the stickiest, most defensible recurring-revenue streams you are not yet running as a managed service, and how to change that.

THE REFRAME

You are already in the communications business. You are just not being paid like it.

Most managed service providers back into voice. A client asks for phones, so you find a way to deliver them, resell someone else's dial tone, or stand up a system and hope it behaves. It becomes a favor you do, or a thin line item you would rather not think about. Meanwhile, the thing you actually handed the client is one of the most operationally critical, deeply embedded, hard-to-remove services in their entire business. That is not a favor. That is a managed service, and it should be run like one.

This guide makes a simple argument: communications, sold and integrated the way an MSP is uniquely positioned to sell and integrate it, is among the stickiest and most defensible recurring-revenue streams available to you. The MSPs winning with it are not selling phones. They are selling an outcome they own and manage. Here is why that model works, and what it takes to run it.

> *The MSPs winning with voice are not selling phones. They are selling an outcome they own.*

WHY VOICE IS DIFFERENT

The stickiest line in the stack

Recurring revenue is not all created equal. A backup contract can be swapped over a weekend. A security tool can be traded for a cheaper one at renewal. But communications wires itself into the way a business actually operates every single day. Consider what a phone system is genuinely connected to:

Daily dependence. Every call in and out of the business runs through it. There is no quiet week where nobody notices it.

Operational memory. Call flows, routing, voicemail trees, and integrations encode how the business runs. Rebuilding that elsewhere is painful and risky.

Identity. Phone numbers are effectively permanent. A business will change a lot of vendors before it will risk its main line.

Integration. Once calls are flowing into the PSA, the CRM, and the documentation your client's team uses, the phone system stops being a standalone box and becomes part of the connective tissue of the operation.

That last point is the one MSPs are positioned to exploit and almost nobody else is. A generic voice provider sells a dial tone. You can sell dial tone that is wired into the exact tools the client already lives in. That integration is what turns an ordinary phone service into something a client cannot easily walk away from, which is the definition of durable recurring revenue.

THE MARGIN STORY

Owning the relationship versus renting it out

There is a meaningful difference between reselling a commodity and owning a managed service, and it shows up directly in your margin and your leverage.

When you resell another provider's platform as a pass-through, you are a middleman. Your margin is whatever spread the provider allows you, the pricing is effectively set by them, and the client relationship is only half yours. When you own communications as a managed service, you are pricing the outcome, the reliability, the integration, the fact that you are the one who answers when something goes wrong, not a box on an invoice. Outcomes command better margin than commodities, and always will.

The shift in one line

Reselling dial tone: you compete on price against every other reseller of the same dial tone.

Owning integrated communications: you compete on outcome, relationship, and how deeply it is woven into the client's stack. Only one of those is a race to the bottom.

The illustrative economics matter less than the structure. Whatever your exact numbers, an integrated, owned service supports a healthier and more defensible margin than a resold commodity, because you are no longer selling the same undifferentiated thing as everyone else. [Partner example: typical margin uplift when moving a client from resold voice to fully managed, integrated communications.]

THE RETENTION STORY

Integrated services do not churn

Every MSP knows the quiet math of the business: it is far cheaper to keep a client than to win a new one, and churn silently eats growth. Communications, done as an integrated managed service, is one of the strongest retention anchors you can put in place.

The reason is switching cost, in the healthiest sense of the term. When a client's calls are flowing into their PSA, generating tickets, logging against contacts, and surfacing documentation to their technicians, unwinding all of that is a project nobody wants to take on. The service is not sticky because you trapped anyone. It is sticky because it genuinely works and is genuinely woven in.

That is the good kind of lock-in: the client stays because leaving would mean giving up something valuable that works.

Stack that on top of the other services you provide, and communications becomes one more reason a client renews without a second thought, and one more thing a competitor cannot easily peel away.

> *The service is not sticky because you trapped anyone. It is sticky because it is genuinely woven in.*

THE EXPANSION STORY

Voice is a door, not a destination

Adding communications is rarely the end of the conversation with a client. More often it is the opening of several new ones. Once you are the party responsible for how a business communicates, you have a natural, credible reason to be involved in adjacent decisions: call analytics and reporting, workforce visibility, AI-assisted handling of calls, integrations with new tools the client adopts, and the ongoing optimization of how their teams actually work.

Each of those is a potential expansion of the relationship and the recurring revenue, and each one deepens the integration, which loops straight back into the retention story above. Owned communications is not a single line item. It is a platform for the relationship to grow on.

WHAT OWNING IT ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE

From box on an invoice to managed outcome

Running communications as a managed service, rather than reselling it, comes down to a few practical shifts:

- You own the relationship. You are the one the client calls, and the one who resolves it. The value you provide is visible and yours.
- You integrate, you do not just connect. Calls flow into the PSA, the CRM, and the documentation the client already uses, so the phone system becomes part of the operation rather than a silo beside it.
- You price the outcome. Reliability, integration, and support are the product. That is what earns margin a commodity never will.
- You work with a partner that keeps you in the middle. The platform you build on should be structurally committed to the channel, so it strengthens your position with the client instead of quietly competing for it. (More on that risk in a companion guide on buy, build, and resell.)

THE MODEL BUILT FOR THIS

Where 1Stream fits

1Stream is AI Integrated Communications built exclusively for MSPs and IT service providers, and delivered only through the channel. That last part is not a tagline; it is the whole point. Because 1Stream sells only through partners and never direct, its entire model depends on your success with the client. The platform is designed to wire calls into the PSA, CRM, and documentation tools your clients already run, so communications becomes the integrated, owned, hard-to-remove service this guide has been describing, with your name on it.

If the argument here lands, the natural next step is to see what integrated, owned communications looks like against your own stack and your own clients.

Ready to run communications like the managed service it is?

See 1Stream against your own stack. Book a walkthrough with our team, or find a partner path that fits how you want to sell.

1stream.com · Book a demo

This guide is educational and reflects general industry dynamics and 1Stream's point of view. Figures shown as examples are illustrative. Bracketed placeholders indicate where your own partner results can be added.