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Azure

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Customer  
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Industry  
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Organization Size  
Corporate (10,000+ employees)

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# TimesGroup embarks on digital transformation journey with Microsoft Teams, unlocks seamless collaboration for more than 13,000 employees

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Leading Indian media conglomerate Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd., popularly known by the name TimesGroup wanted to empower its workforce with new-generation digital tools that would provide seamless collaboration and enhanced, enterprise-grade security. Migrating to Microsoft Teams enabled it to transform communication and collaboration. Moreover, taking advantage of other Microsoft technologies, like the Azure cloud platform, Azure Computer Vision, and Power BI, the company is now reimagining Indian Media Landscape by harvesting and enriching content, not just in print but in digital too.

For more than 180 years, Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd (BCCL) has been one of the most trusted players and largest Media in the Indian media industry. Popularly known as TimesGroup, it is the largest media conglomerate and a powerhouse of many successful brands in the country. Its brand portfolio includes *Times of India* (The largest English daily), *The Economic Times* (the largest business daily), *Mumbai Mirror* (the largest English tabloid), *Navbharat Times* (one of the largest circulated Hindi daily), Times Internet (Online News Publication), Times Now, Mirror Now (Television News channels), Zoom, Movies Now, Romedy Now (Infotainment & Entertainment channels) and ET Now (Business channel). Radio Mirchi 98.3 FM, the largest network of FM radio stations, owned by Entertainment Network India Ltd, is one of the group companies under TimesGroup. It's also the first privately owned radio station in India. TimesGroup also has many other lines of business in various sectors like education, business solutions, music and much more.

To maintain its position as a leading media house in the infotainment sector, TimesGroup has been at the forefront of innovation and technology adoption. The company has grown exponentially, driven by its resolute spirit to question conventional wisdom and out-of-the-box thinking, thereby setting innovative benchmarks for the

industry. It believes in shaping market trends and building a portfolio of solid, innovative brands that keep it ahead of the competition.

## Empowering its knowledge workforce

At the backbone of the company's vast operations is a talent pool of more than 13,000 users spread across the length and breadth of the country. However, an assortment of legacy email systems and tools was not conducive to seamless, secure cross-functional collaboration. In 2015, BCCL switched to Microsoft Office 365, and consolidated its communication platform under one umbrella.

The first step in its digital transformation journey was bringing together its entire workforce under the umbrella of a domain name. As employees had to collaborate extensively with agencies, clients and other stakeholders, the company went on to adopt Skype for Business as the unified communication platform. However, in an industry as fast-paced as media, its on-premises setup could not keep up with the required speed. The infrastructure hindered smooth collaboration, as teams often faced network issues at peak hours, when the demand and workload were the most pressing. Furthermore, file transfer was cumbersome, as people had to accept requests every time and delays would lead to a string of emails.

To address these challenges and empower its mobile workforce, BCCL adopted [Microsoft Teams](https://www.microsoft.com/en-in/microsoft-365/microsoft-teams/group-chat-software) in early 2020. Response, the key revenue generation team, switched to Teams and adopted Teams as the primary collaboration platform. This was followed by the editorial team, collaborating for their stupendous work of edition planning and various meetings. Results & Market Development Function (RMD), responsible for circulation and market development quickly adopted Teams for their internal and external collaborations. Other critical business functions, like Finance, HR, and IT switched to Teams and adopted Teams as the de facto collaboration platform.



The COVID -19 crisis paved way for new dimensions of working, with the entire workforce adapting to “work from home” or “remote working”— the new normal. Teams clearly stood tall with the fastest adoption rate, scaling new heights. Microsoft Teams platform has been resilient in ensuring that collaboration systems work seamlessly.

## Transforming with Teams

With Teams as the group’s hub for teamwork, cross-functional collaboration is now easier than ever. Since the group adopted Teams, communication metrics has grown exponentially, with 25,000 to 28,000 group calls in a month. On a monthly average, 80,000 one-to-one calls are recorded with more than 1.6 million chat messages.

“Microsoft Teams is an extremely useful tool for groups to remain connected, especially for groups that are spread across multiple locations, for their collaboration and branch coordination, explains Dhanush Singh, Associate Vice President, Response & Branch Head – Lucknow at BCCL. “The real utility of Teams has been proved and further established in the unprecedented times of lockdown and even to date, we are all able to continue to function, bringing out multiple editions from working from home. Microsoft Teams is not just a boon, but it is a critical tool for continuation of work and business. In particular, now with many clients using Teams, this has not just become a preferred means of communication, but a lifeline—we now connect regularly with our clients on Microsoft Teams. The compatibility to the mobile phone is also a real plus point.”

For the Human Resources (HR) team, the platform has unlocked new avenues for employee engagement. HR Learning & Development (L&D) has migrated to Teams as their primary online training platform, conducting a series of productivity sessions, managerial trainings, upskill programs, and even Yoga wellness programs. From an L&D perspective, Teams has transformed traditional classroom training into interactive online training.



"As a learning function, Microsoft Teams has become an effective platform to host our virtual learning sessions. It brings together large employee groups and allows for seamless exchange of ideas, data, and much more. The temporary group that gets created allows for more synergy and integration with mailboxes and calendars assists everyone to work efficiently and effectively," says Gaurika Tandon, General Manager, Head – HR Learning & Development at BCCL.

The Results and Market Development team, the frontline field force conducts daily virtual meetings and ensures smooth operations while working from remote and working from home. "Teams is a powerful and dependable empowerment tool for print media organizations like us which operate 24/7, with constant collaboration and time-critical tasks. Teams has empowered us, to set up a virtual office and ensure operations as usual, providing much-needed face-to-face time with clients for one-on-one dialogues and daily group meetings to review sales and distribution. Features like screen share and file sharing add significant value to conversations and presentations. The option to record and replay meetings that are missed out due to concurrent engagements is helpful, as it enables effective multitasking," says Sheik Uduman, Assistant Vice President, Regional Media Sales Head (Print) – Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh.

The Finance team largely adapted their operating model to Work from Remote mode, Teams has unlocked newer opportunities to stay connected with colleagues over quick calls and work together securely on the cloud. "Teams' functionality of creating theme-based groups from the address book is very useful. Another unique feature is that Minutes of Meeting can be recorded within MS Teams, which enhances transparency and accessibility. Moreover, we can also share files within designated folders, if needed, which reduces mail load and facilitates easy retrieval," says Rakesh Dhamani, Vice President – Finance at BCCL.

The IT team, which serves as the backbone onboarding new and latest technologies for business, has been the frontiers in migrating

to Microsoft Teams and transforming communication landscape to new dimensions. There has been a dynamic shift from threaded email communications chains to chat based hub, thus reducing the quantum of email transactions. Additionally, the chats have democratized information exchange. For instance, earlier, there used to be an email chain where only one person would respond. Now, it is a chat box where anyone can pitch in ideas, share information on incidents, or ask for guidance. Response times are much faster through chats and team-wise channels.

For the senior management and for the Organizations Executive committee, Teams has facilitated seamless interactions and paved the way for effective dissemination of internal communication. On virtual seminars, senior executives invite dignitaries and conduct panel discussions on varied topics. Town halls, powered with Teams live event are popular as well, with over 6000 people attending and interacting with the business leaders.

## Delivering high-quality journalism with cutting-edge technology

Along with Teams, BCCL has been incorporating various other Microsoft technologies in its IT framework.

- [OneDrive \(https://www.microsoft.com/en-in/microsoft-365/onedrive/onedrive-for-business\)](https://www.microsoft.com/en-in/microsoft-365/onedrive/onedrive-for-business) : With secure storage and remote collaboration on OneDrive, users are keeping track of critical documents and backing up important files in the cloud. The practice proved beneficial in challenging situations and enabled people to be productive anytime, anywhere, even from their mobile device app, whereas, previously, users were leaving their workstations on to access it remotely.
- [Azure cloud \(https://azure.microsoft.com/en-in/\)](https://azure.microsoft.com/en-in/) : Amid digital disruption, the content volume and quality expectations from trusted media houses like The TimesGroup have increased significantly. To forge positive consumer and contributor engagement as well as improve

the productivity of its content curation team, BCCL is taking advantage of the Azure cloud platform.

"A news article is valuable if it covers an event or incident that is relevant, impactful, and authentic. Though many events keep happening around us, not everything gets reported, even if it is relevant, which can be mainly attributed to reporters' unavailability at the place of incident. To address this challenge, we envisaged a trusted and collaborative platform that can help responsible citizens to become reporters. This was the genesis of our award-winning [Citizen Reporter \(https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/citizen-reporter/crstories.cms\)](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/citizen-reporter/crstories.cms) app. Our idea was to empower anyone with a smartphone to become a reporter," explains Santosh Shinde, Enterprise Architect at BCCL.

The group went on to create a mobile-native application with a cloud-first architecture. "We hosted the app on the Azure cloud and leveraged multiple functionalities to collate and analyze contributions from our readers, for publishing on print and digital mediums" he adds. "We launched the on-demand solution with minimal investment on Azure and later scaled up. This approach helped us keep the initial launch costs low and engage with our contributors, readers, and content curator communities in a meaningful manner."

- [Azure Computer Vision \(https://azure.microsoft.com/en-in/services/cognitive-services/computer-vision/\)](https://azure.microsoft.com/en-in/services/cognitive-services/computer-vision/) : With increasing creation and consumption of visual assets, manually cataloguing thousands of images was a complex, time-consuming task. BCCL automated the process by developing a platform that uses Azure Computer Vision to detect image content and associate meaningful metadata. "We used Azure Computer Vision to enhance discoverability of content through metadata inclusion in our enterprise digital asset management system. With this approach, we recorded a 60 percent increase in productivity in content metadata tagging and an improvement in tagging accuracy," Shinde remarks.
- [Power BI \(https://powerbi.microsoft.com/en-us/\)](https://powerbi.microsoft.com/en-us/) : Power BI has unveiled its dynamic data analysis capabilities with many groups in the



company. Production function of the flagship company BCCL has explored extensive usage of Power BI, facilitating with meaningful dashboards for various decision making in conserving consumptions for print.

- [Power Apps \(https://powerapps.microsoft.com/en-us/\)](https://powerapps.microsoft.com/en-us/) : In the next phase of its digital transformation, the company has plans to integrate line of business apps with Teams.

Technology drives Innovation. Innovation drives development and continuous growth. TimesGroup strongly believes in Innovation and encourages in applying latest technologies in its business, thus driving towards futuristic workplace.

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– Lucknow  
BCCL

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