Microsoft is killing its game-streaming service, folding it into Facebook’s

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Mixer, the game-streaming platform acquired by Microsoft in 2016, is done. Xbox team lead Phil Spencer confirmed the news on Monday, announcing a 30-day end-of-life period before Microsoft formally pulls the plug on July 22.

What’s more, Microsoft used the opportunity to offer all of its users, particularly its moneymaking “partner” members, a transition path to another streaming service: Facebook Gaming.

“Beginning today, Facebook Gaming will make it easy for anyone in the Mixer community to join, if they choose to do so,” Spencer writes at Xbox Wire. He guides affected users to check out a Mixer FAQ on the transition, but unsurprisingly, the guidance about jumping from Mixer to Facebook Gaming is full of caveats about “eligibility” and having financial agreements matched by Facebook “as closely as possible.”

Resources spent on Xbox One OS, exclusive streamers

Mixer’s death is a staggering development for three major reasons. First, Microsoft has emphasized the service as a

built-in, one-button streaming option on all Xbox One consoles for the past few years. This was arguably the whole point of Xbox acquiring the service (formerly known as Beam) in 2016: to keep Xbox users in a Microsoft ecosystem with a nifty, OS-level way to broadcast users' gameplay.

Users can still go into menus and set up other rivals' services, particularly Twitch. But as of press time, only Mixer works as a top-level, stay-in-your-game streaming option on Xbox One consoles. Comparatively, the Windows-level nags about using Microsoft Edge as a default browser are a cakewalk compared to this aggressive enforcement of what streaming app you might use on Xbox.

And all of that work to build a system-level streaming interface may be for nought. Mixer's help site about the transition instructs users to download and install the Twitch app, should they wish to continue natively streaming from their Xbox One consoles, instead of indicating that the built-in streaming service will redirect to anyone else's API.

This is pretty wild, considering the rest of the FAQ talks about the platform's formal transition to Facebook Gaming, which doesn't have a direct-from-console streaming solution as of press time. Instead of acknowledging the Xbox One OS' existing streaming options, Spencer instead hints to such services working on the cloud level in the future: "We're always testing new features and learning, and we're excited to explore further as we look to debut click-to-play scenarios within the Facebook Gaming and Instagram communities."

The second peculiar thing about Mixer's shutdown is that Microsoft had begun a bullish investment strategy to secure exclusive streaming partners in August 2019. This began with a massive, multi-year deal with popular Fortnite streamer Tyler "Ninja" Blevins signed only 10 months ago, and that deal was reportedly worth over $20 million. Microsoft followed its Blevins deal with others.

Microsoft has since confirmed that everyone signed to those Mixer exclusivity deals is now contractually free to stream wherever they see fit, though further terms—including any suspension of payment due to Mixer's impending shutdown—have not been confirmed.

As of press time, Blevins has yet to announce where he'll take his livestreamed gameplay sessions, either to Facebook, Twitch, or elsewhere.

"She CANNOT be racist… because she hired a black person"

The third peculiar thing about today's announcement is that it comes from Spencer, who less than 24 hours earlier acknowledged a glaring and embarrassing allegation about racist management practices at Mixer.

Milan Lee, a former business-development manager for Mixer, posted his allegations about his time with the company on Sunday as part of a rising tide of stories about racism and sexism in the tech industry. He described a troubling incident in which a female manager (not yet identified) called herself a "slave master" and all of Mixer's partner streamers her "slaves." Lee then described his attempt to formally complain about this incident—including an email he'd sent to Spencer himself—which was full of resistance from the reported manager, departments not communicating with each other, and time dragging on.

The internal investigation eventually concluded, Lee says, with the following determination from Microsoft's legal team:

> *The reason my manager was not penalized and the reason she still has her job today is because she CANNOT be racist. The reason she CANNOT be racist is because she hired a black person.*

Hours before confirming that Mixer was on end-of-life status, Spencer used Twitter to request a meeting with Lee.

This event followed months of reports about budget cuts, shrinking morale, and departing founders within Microsoft's Mixer division. In February of this year, employees began leaking their frustrations to the press alongside a recorded video from a Mixer "town hall" meeting, in which newly hired general manager Shilpa Yadla began openly and loudly dismissing the negative feedback she'd received from employees she'd spoken to during one-on-one meetings. OnMSFT published this video, which includes Yadla describing this feedback as "blah blah blah" and telling staffers she was not responsible for "sympathiz[ing] with anybody."

If you're wondering whether Mixer management turned the boat around in terms of employee management and communication, a post from an Xbox program manager on Monday suggests it had not. "We didn't know this [Mixer's termination] was coming," Tara Wake wrote on Twitter shortly after Spencer's announcement went live. "We found out right before you."

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