TWILIO FLEX · SETUP GUIDE

From a US Number to a Working Contact Center

Setting up Flex when you already bought the number and have no idea what to do with it. Written from production, with the gotchas the quickstart skips.

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You bought a US number, you logged into the Twilio Console, and now you are staring at a dashboard full of products you never asked for. That is where most people get stuck. The number is sitting there doing nothing, and the docs assume you already know which of the twenty menu items you actually need.

This guide takes you from that exact point to a Flex instance you can call and text, with a real agent (you) picking up. It is the path from a raw number to a working contact center, not a Flex customization or plugin guide. Once inbound voice and SMS work, the interesting part starts, and I point you to it at the end.

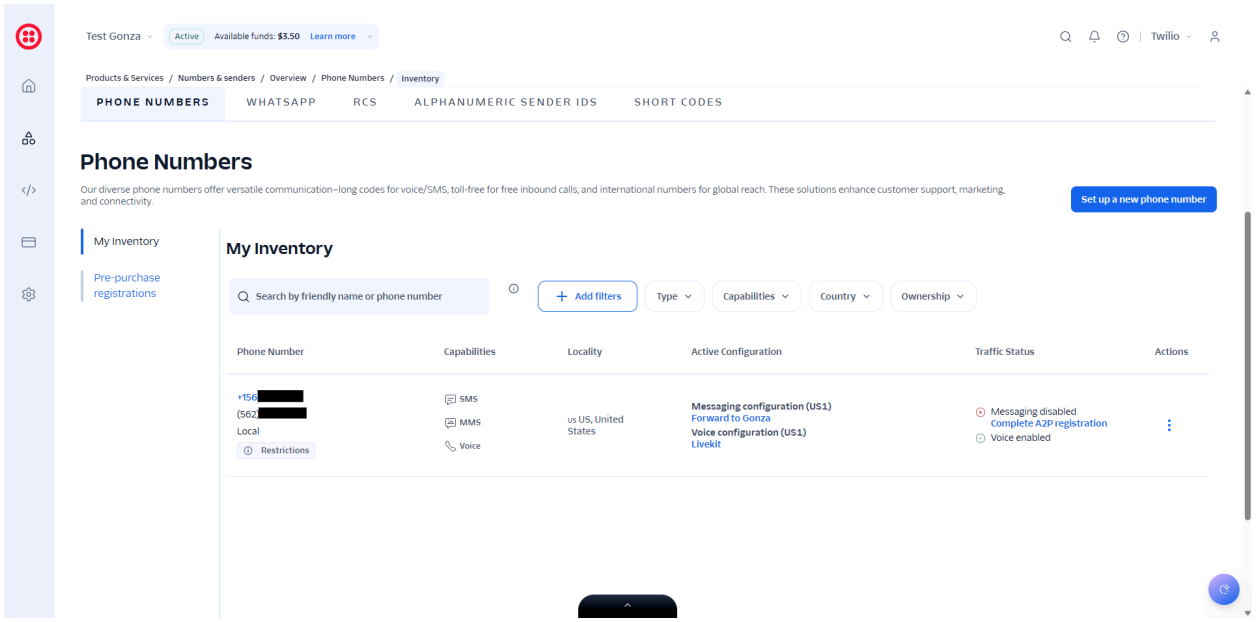
One thing before you celebrate the number you bought: in the US, a phone number is *not* plug-and-play for SMS. Voice works almost immediately. SMS does not, and the reason catches almost everyone. We deal with that early so you do not build on top of something that was never going to send a message.

1. What you actually bought

A US number comes in two flavors that behave differently, and the difference matters more than the price:

- **Local 10DLC long code:** a regular 10-digit US number. Cheap, fine for voice, but for US SMS it has to go through A2P 10DLC registration first.
- **Toll-free:** the 800/833/844-style number. Good deliverability for SMS once verified, but it uses a separate Toll-Free Verification, not 10DLC.

Open your number in the Console and look at its capabilities. A number can be voice-enabled, SMS-enabled, MMS-enabled, or some combination. If you plan to text from it, confirm SMS is actually on before anything else.



THE THING NOBODY WARNS YOU ABOUT

A US long code cannot send SMS to US phones until it is registered under A2P 10DLC. Unregistered US-bound messages are not delayed, they are **blocked**, and you get error 30034. Voice works right away. SMS waits. If you only need a call center or an IVR, you can skip the SMS pain entirely for now and come back to it.

2. The regulatory reality, before you touch Flex

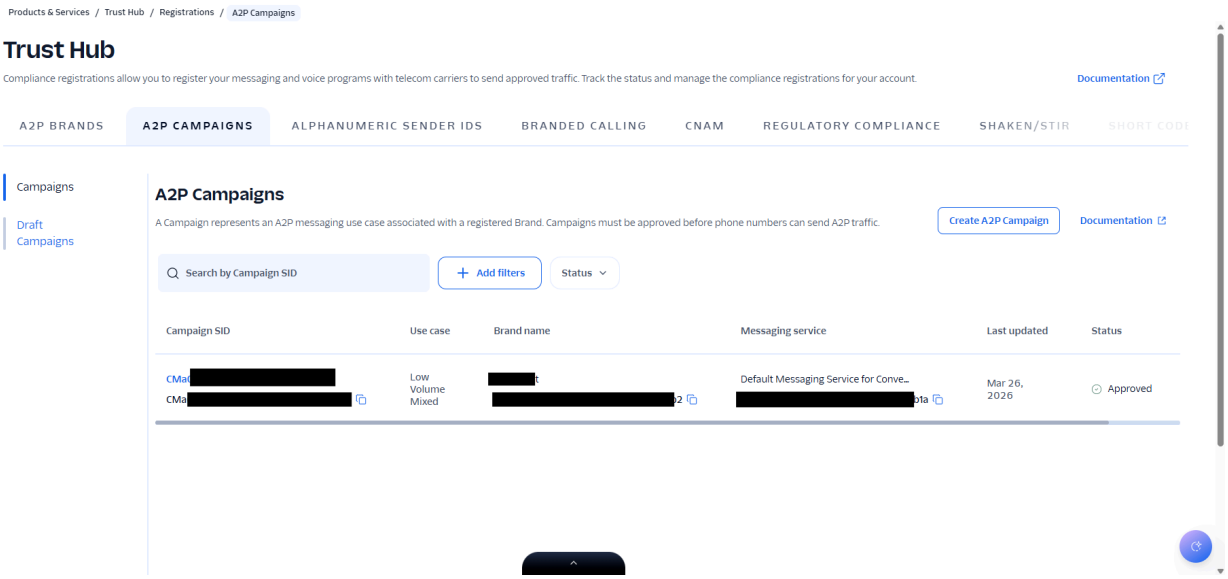
If you do need US SMS, get this out of the way first, because it takes time and it can be a hard wall depending on where you are. To send application-to-person SMS over a US long code you need three things lined up:

- **A Brand registration** (your business identity).
- **An approved Campaign** (your use case: notifications, customer care, 2FA, and so on).
- **Your number attached** to the Messaging Service tied to that approved Campaign.

Two details that decide whether this is a five-day annoyance or a blocker:

- **Campaign review takes roughly 10 to 15 days.** Plan around it. Do not promise a client SMS that goes live tomorrow.
- **A2P 10DLC needs a US tax ID (EIN).** There is a Sole Proprietor option that works with a US address, but it allows only one number per campaign. If you are outside the US with no EIN, this is the wall, and it is much better to hit it now than after you wired everything together.

Toll-free numbers skip 10DLC but need Toll-Free Verification, which is a different form and also required before carriers let your messages through.



NOTE

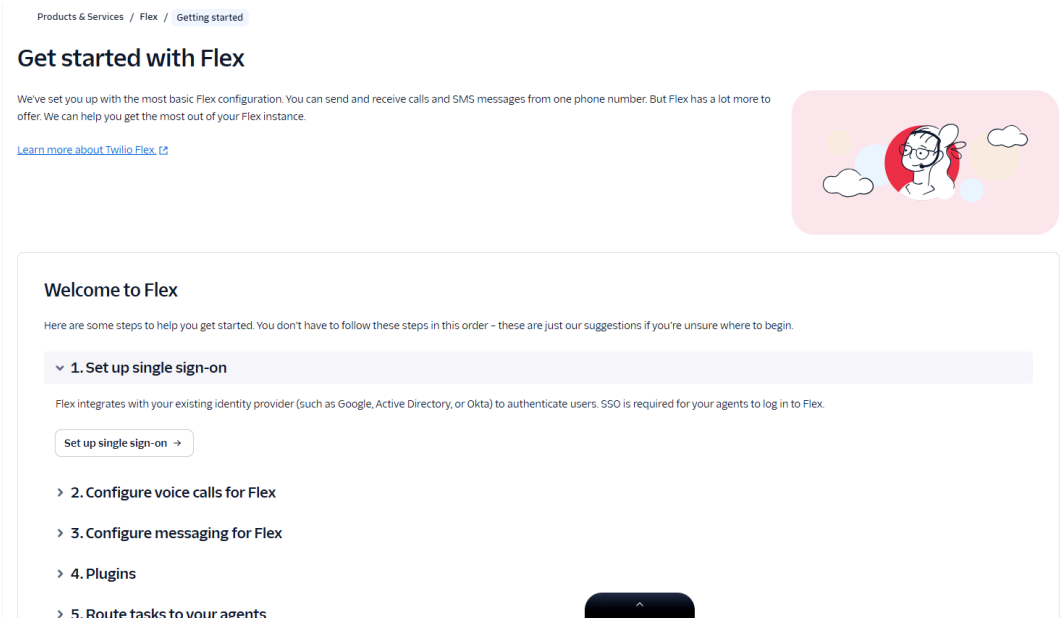
For a system I run that handles around 3000 messages a day, registration is not a checkbox, it is the foundation. Skip it and your messages quietly go nowhere while the dashboard still bills you. Carrier filtering does not send you a polite warning.

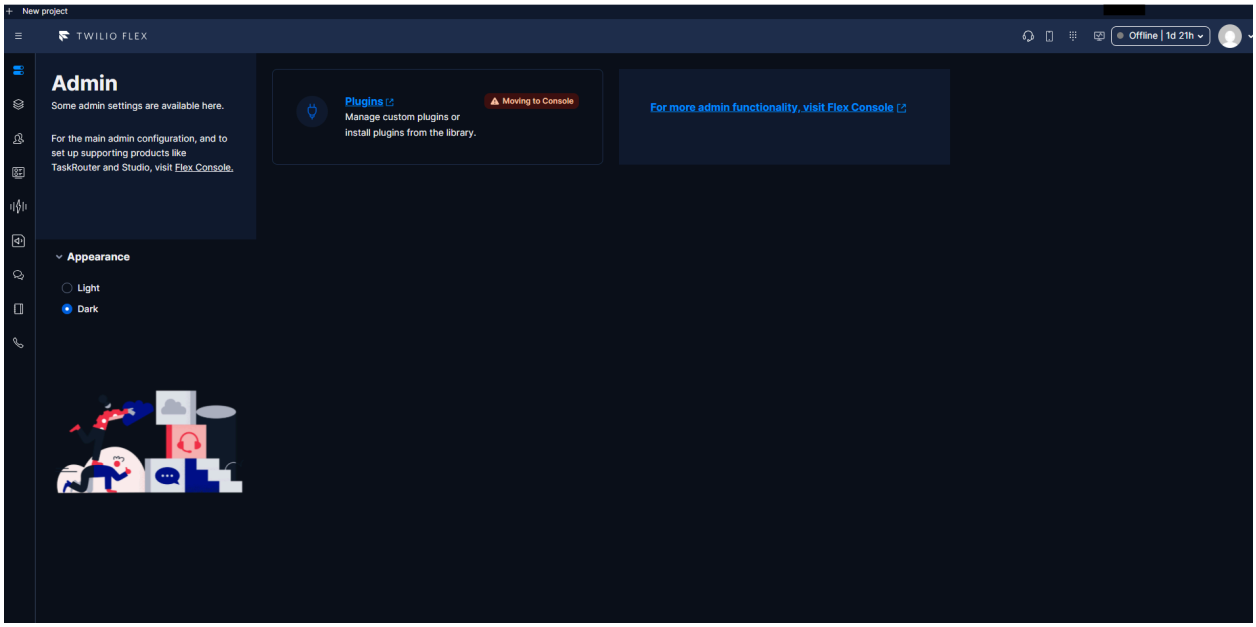
3. Create your Flex instance

With the number understood, you create the Flex side.

1. In the Console, go to the Flex Overview page and add Flex. Pick Flex as what you will use the account for.
2. When you create a fresh Flex account, Twilio auto-provisions a new number for you (voice and SMS). So you may end up with two numbers: the one you bought and the one Flex handed you. That is normal. Decide which one you will actually use.
3. If you want Flex to use the number you already bought, there is a public-beta option to give Flex access to your existing numbers and resources. Review the terms, agree, and add Flex.

From here on you live in two places, and mixing them up is a classic first-day confusion: the **Flex Console** (admin configuration, inside console.twilio.com) and the **Flex UI** (the agent desktop, at flex.twilio.com). You configure in one and you work in the other.





4. The moving parts (so the next steps make sense)

A call does not just ring an agent. Four pieces pass it along, and knowing the chain explains half of the cases where people think the setup is broken:

- **The number** is the entry point.
- **Studio** is the visual flow that decides what happens on an incoming call or message: the greeting, the IVR, the routing logic. It hands the conversation to Flex through the Send to Flex widget.

- **TaskRouter** turns each call or message into a Task and looks for an agent who is Available and matches the queue.
- **Flex UI** is where you, the agent, actually pick it up.

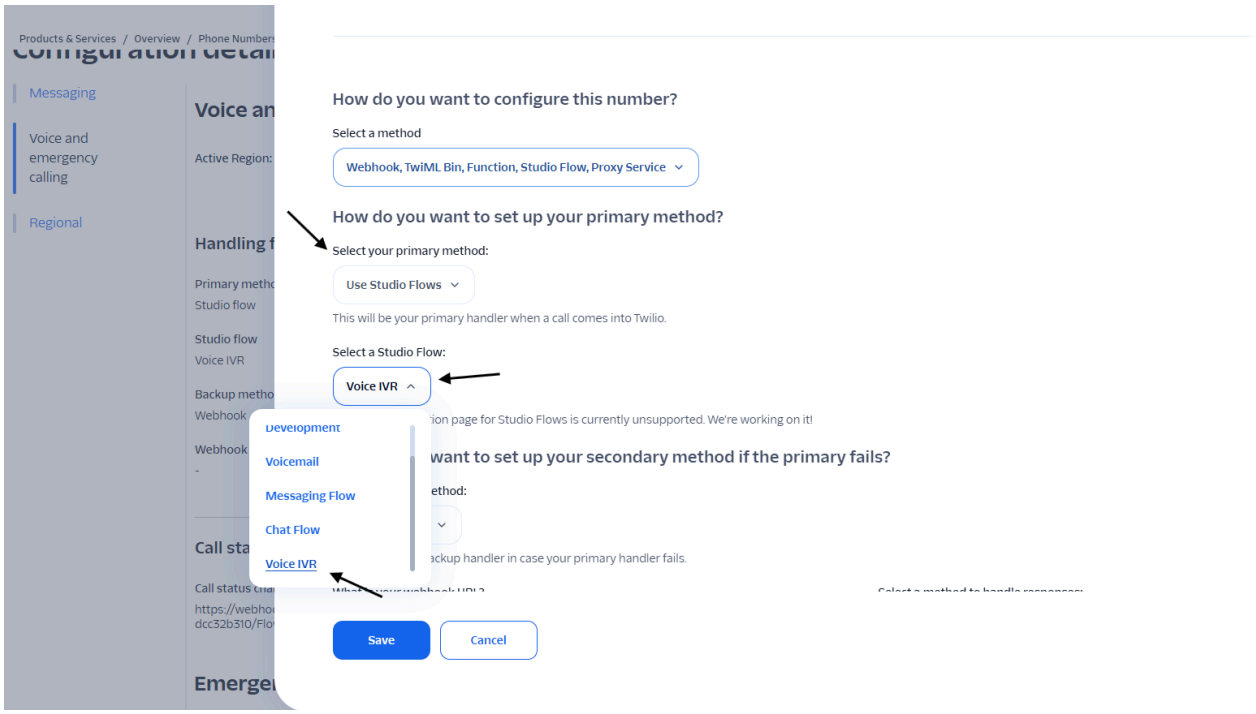
So the real sequence is: number receives it, Studio runs, Send to Flex creates a Task, TaskRouter finds an Available Worker, the Task reaches the Flex UI. If nobody is available, nothing routes and everything looks dead even though it is wired correctly. Keep that in your head, you will need it in the test step.

5. Wire your US number into Flex: Voice

Voice is the easy half. You point the number at the Studio Flow that already knows how to reach Flex.

1. Console > Phone Numbers > Manage > Active Numbers, and open your number.
2. Under Voice, set Configure With to Webhooks, TwiML Bins, Functions, Studio, or Proxy.
3. Under A Call Comes In, choose Studio Flow, then select Voice IVR. That is the default flow Flex created for you, and it already ends in the Send to Flex widget.
4. Save.

On a free Flex account you are limited on how many numbers you can run. The number that came with Flex is already wired to this flow. What you are doing here is pointing *your* purchased number at the same flow so it behaves the same way.



6. Wire your US number into Flex: Messaging

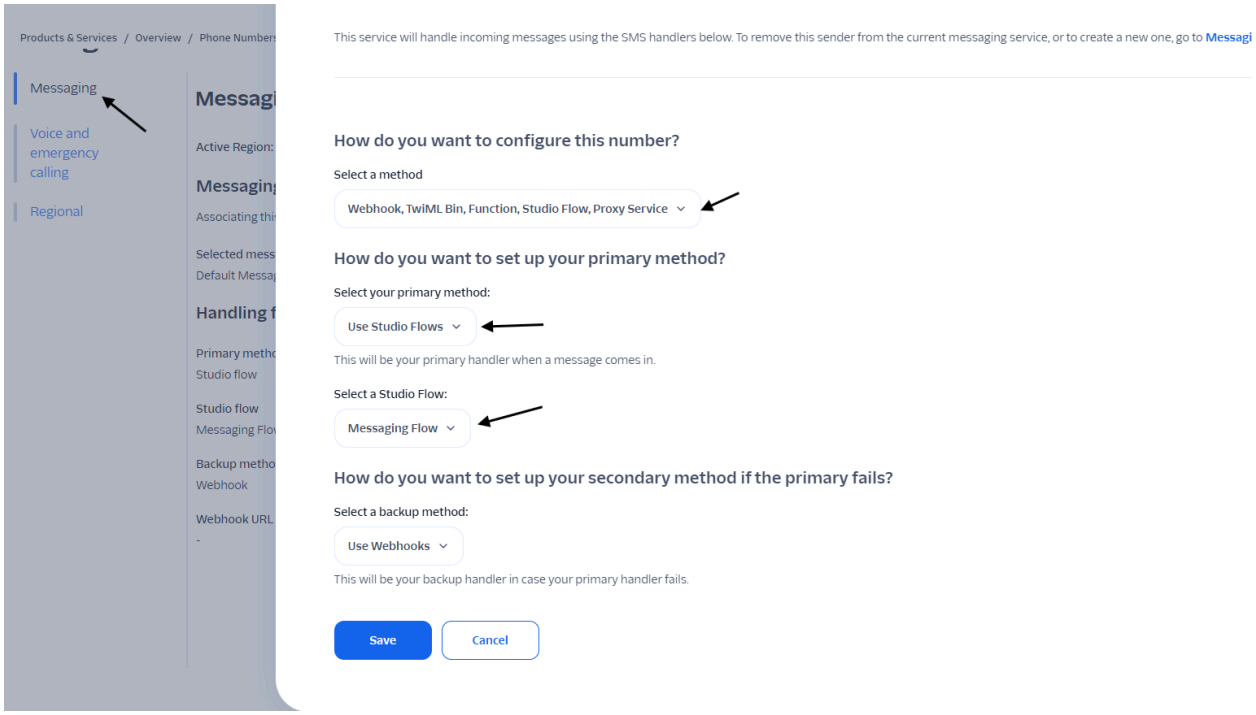
Inbound SMS takes a slightly different route. Flex routes messages through an Address (also called a Flex Flow), which points to a Flex Proxy Service and to a Studio Flow that invokes Send to Flex.

The clean way to set it up is from the Flex Console, because doing it there wires the Proxy Service for you instead of leaving you to connect it by hand.

1. In the Flex Console, go to Messaging (Addresses) and create a new SMS Address.
2. Map your purchased number to that Address.
3. Set the integration to Studio Flow, and pick the default Messaging Flow that came with your account.
4. Submit. Text the number to confirm a Task lands in the Flex UI (only once A2P is approved, see below).

> **DO NOT FOLLOW OLD TUTORIALS HERE**
> Programmable Chat for Flex reaches end of life on June 1, 2026. If you are starting now, build on **Flex Conversations**, not Programmable Chat. A lot of older guides still use Chat and will send you down a path that is already being shut off.

Reminder, because it is the most common dead end: none of this sends or receives US SMS until your A2P registration is approved. Voice already works. SMS sits silent until the campaign clears.

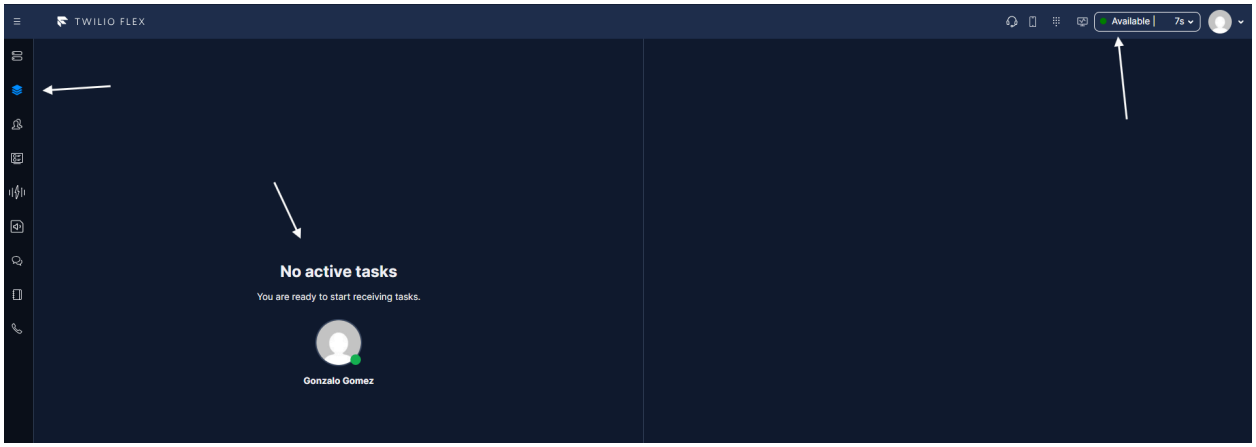


7. Become an agent and go Available

This is the step people skip and then spend an hour debugging a setup that was fine.

1. Open the Flex UI at flex.twilio.com. Accept the browser notification prompt, you need it to get popups for incoming calls and texts.
2. Set your activity status to Available at the top of the UI.

If your status is Offline or Unavailable, TaskRouter will never route a Task to you, the call will sound like it goes nowhere, and you will be convinced the wiring is broken. It is not. You are just not *Available*.

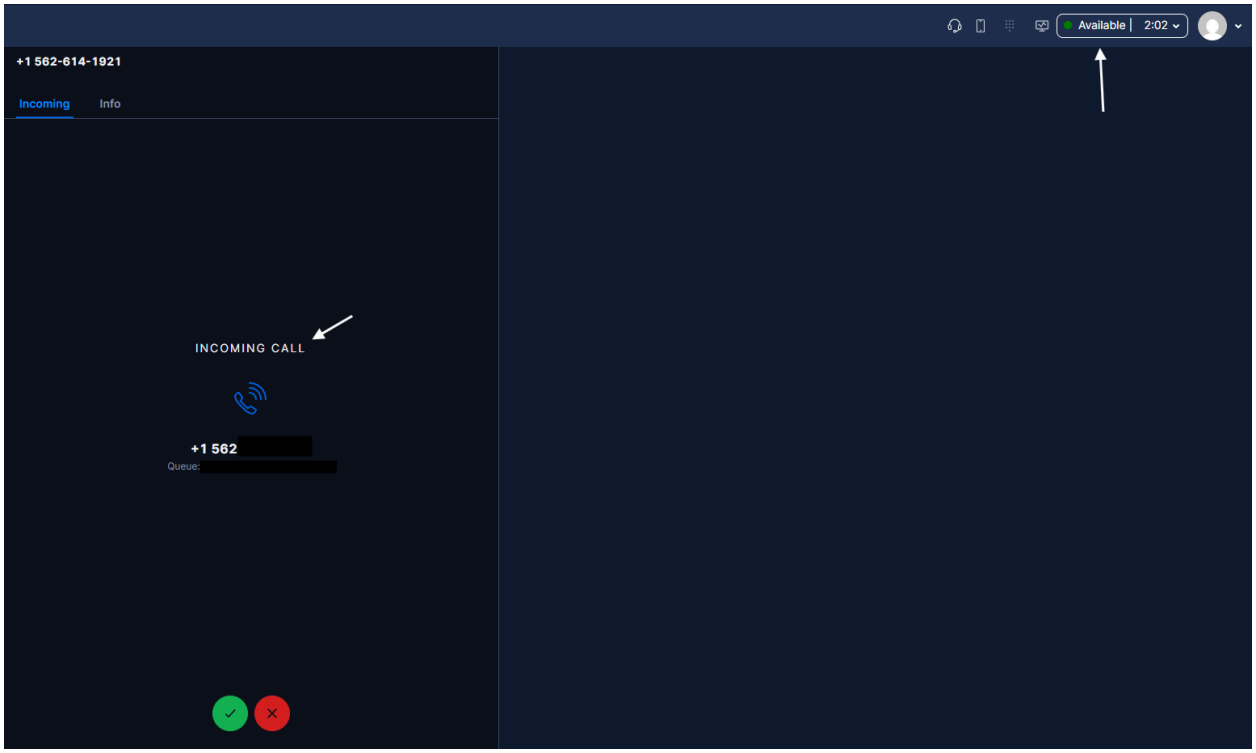


8. Your first inbound test

Now you prove the chain end to end.

- **Call your number from your phone.** You should hear the Voice IVR, make a selection, and the call becomes a Task that lands in your Flex UI. Accept it.
- **Text your number** (only if A2P is approved). The message becomes a Task in Flex the same way.

If the call connects but never reaches you, walk back through the chain: are you Available, does the number point to the right Studio Flow, and does that flow end in Send to Flex. One of those three is almost always the answer.



9. Outbound, and the caller ID gotcha

Outbound calling from Flex needs your number set as a verified or owned caller ID and outbound dialing enabled in the Flex configuration. That part is straightforward. The part that wastes hours is geographic permissions.

Twilio blocks dialing to countries you have not explicitly enabled. If an outbound call fails for no visible reason, check Voice Geographic Permissions and confirm the destination country is turned on. This one looks like a bug and is actually a setting.

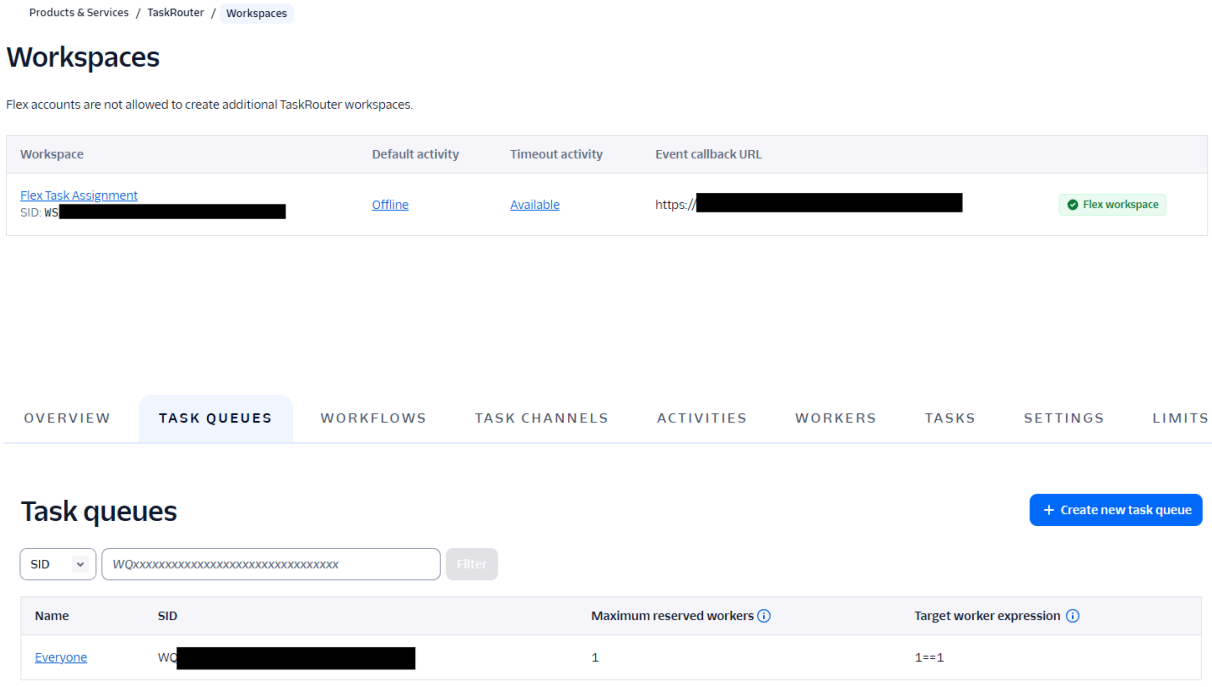
10. TaskRouter routing (the part you grow into)

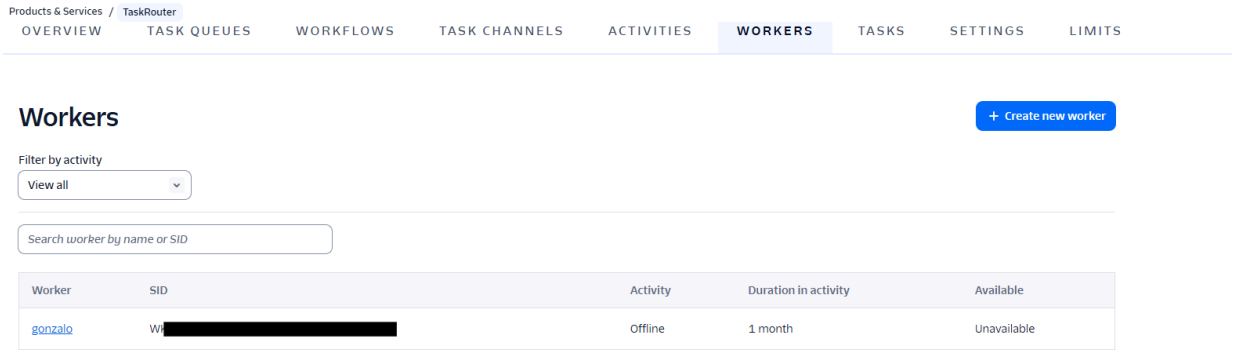
Out of the box you already have a Workspace with a default queue and workflow, and everything goes to a single queue (the Everyone queue). For one number, one agent, one type of conversation, that is all you need.

When you genuinely have more than one kind of conversation, you add structure:

- **Skills** attached to Workers (for example, Sales or Support).
- **Task Queues** that filter by those skills.
- **A Workflow** that sends each Task to the right queue, and a Studio IVR that asks the caller what they need and routes accordingly.

Do not build this on day one. Get one number, one queue, one agent answering first. Add routing when you actually have something to route, not before.





11. What Flex costs in production

Flex is not free at scale, and the model you pick matters more than the sticker number. These are the three I have worked with:

- **Pay per use:** charged per active user-hour. Ten agents online for one hour each is about ten dollars. Good when usage is spiky.
- **Flat seat / subscription:** a fixed monthly price per named user (around 150 dollars when I set mine up) with unlimited hours. Good when agents are online all day.
- **Free development plan:** includes a block of free active user-hours per month (5,000 in my case), which is plenty to build and demo. You lose some of the smarter call analytics, but for development and small projects it is more than enough.

Pricing shifts, so check the current Flex pricing page before you commit anything to a client. The takeaway is the shape of your usage: spiky traffic and always-on traffic want different plans, and picking the wrong one is where margins quietly disappear.

12. When NOT to use Flex

This is the part the tutorials never tell you, and it is the most useful section here. Flex is a full contact center. That is a lot of machines, and a lot of cost, for a problem that often does not need it.

- **If all you need is to send an SMS from your app,** or run an automated WhatsApp assistant with no human on the other side, Flex is overkill. Programmable Messaging or a Studio flow on its own does the job and costs a fraction.

- **If you have no human agents and never will,** you do not need an agent desktop. The whole value of Flex is the human handoff, a person picking up the Task. No humans, no reason.
- **If your volume is a handful of conversations a day,** the per-seat or per-hour cost plus the setup overhead are not worth it. Start simpler.

Flex earns its price when you have real agents handling real volume and you want routing, queues, supervisor views, and one place where automation and humans share the same conversation. That last part, an AI handling the first 80 percent and a human taking the rest *in the same thread*, is the actual reason to reach for Flex instead of stitching it yourself.

13. Errors you will actually hit

The five that come up most, and what they really mean:

SYMPTOM / CODE	WHAT IS ACTUALLY WRONG
30034 (SMS)	Your number is not registered or not attached to an approved A2P campaign. Finish 10DLC. Voice works, SMS is blocked.
30125	The number could not be registered, often a second number added to a Sole Proprietor campaign, which only allows one.
Call connects, no agent	You are not Available, or the Studio Flow does not end in Send to Flex.
Outbound fails silently	Voice Geographic Permissions for the destination country are turned off.
Works on trial number, not mine	You wired the Flex-provisioned number, not the one you bought. Point your number at the same Studio Flow.

14. Where to go next

Once inbound voice and SMS work, you have the boring half done. The interesting half is the pre-agent flow: an IVR or an AI assistant in Studio that handles the routine stuff and only escalates to a human when it actually has to. That is the system worth building, and where most of the value (and most of the bad design I see) lives.

If you want the architecture side, how I design the handoff between automation and humans, and the cases where I tell clients *not* to automate, that is what I cover at ggomez.dev and on @ggomezdev.

-Gonza