Definity-G(x) Demystified:
By Walt Medak

Q: We have been told that our voice mail system, an AUDIX we have had for 10 years, must be replaced. Reasoning, we are told, is because of the expense of upgrading for Year-2000-compatibility would be a significant amount that would be better applied to a new system, and the technology is much stronger and advanced in the new Intuity-AUDIX system. We have certainly gotten our return on our investment from this system over the past 10-year period, but to upgrade just for the sake of acquiring new technology is not high on our priority list. Is the Y2K issue going to cause a system failure in our current AUDIX?

A: You are asking a question loaded with legal implications only the OEM would dare address with authority. However, with the understanding that I do not have all the information I might possibly need to answer you with any degree of definitive accuracy, I will give you my personal opinion, and what I am recommending to our maintenance clients (now that we have the legal disclaimer garbage out of the way, let's continue…..). I join the camp that believes, though I will not be in one at the time, that at Midnight, January 1, 2000, contrary to stories making the rounds these days, elevators will not fall and airplanes will not crash due to the fallibility of processor driven equipment programming problems. I am going to take the chance that neither will the AUDIX systems we maintain. There has been a theory circulating around that setting the time on the system back to the year 1972, the first year back in time that perfectly overlays 2000 for days of the week in a leap-year, will give unnoticeable operation of the system. This may be true, but for one small technicality. Not all processor driven equipment has the ability to go back that far in time. Some programmers used date calculations that assumed the beginning of time was actually 1980, a memory saving calculation-base used during the design of much of today's computerized office equipment. You will have to test that on your system by setting the date back and running with it for awhile to see if you suffer problems. We tried it, and it worked just fine for us. And just like the hype of a few years back during the "North American Numbering Plan" expansion that allowed numbers other than "0" or "1" as the middle digit of an area code, it may be a moot point. The NANP expansion gave rise to the biggest stampede of software upgrades short of this Y2K scare, and to that time, unprecedented. Most people didn't need the Automatic Route Selection (Least-Cost Routing) function of their systems, as changes in methods of trunking had virtually eliminated the need for differing trunk-types, i.e., WATS, 1-Way-DID, etc. By changing to just one trunk group, many systems were able to eliminate the need for ARS, and thus the need for the several thousand dollar upgrade. Several of our clients did just that, and are still functioning just fine today, as they will into the next century. Just as the NANP hype had people rushing to upgrade before the "deadline" because of marketing driven "consulting(?)" practices, so, I believe, is the stampede mentality falling prey to those same practices. <u>Do you really care upon what date your AUDIX says the message came in?</u> Have you ever even heard it specify a date? Many users only have two basic requirements of a voice mail system….. voice mail box, and auto-attendant functions. The AUDIX -Small (your system) can accomplish both, and I surmise, will, no matter what it's programming says the date is. Usually the only timing concern for the operation of a voice mail system is the time of day, and I haven't heard any marketing types claiming changes in that regard, so all must be OK there. If you truly need the functions of the new technology offered by a new system, that's a reason to upgrade. Keep in mind, since the divestiture of the telephone system in 1984, the government controls over the practices of equipment vendors has been released to an open market policy, and those vendors use people paid by commission. That always has been, and always will be, the prime impetus to get you to buy something, whether you need it or not. A good sales person will encourage those tendencies in you that make you think you need what they are selling. Maybe you do, and maybe you don't, and that's the <u>real </u>answer to your question, and only you can come up with the right answer for you! **Keep in mind that with the migration of so many people to other systems, there will be a large inventory of AUDIX equipment hitting the secondary market, and that, coupled with fewer buyers, the cost of additional or replacement equipment will decline drastically in your favor!** Of course, this will eventually work against you, as with a lower margin, it will eventually go the way of the Dimension System, which is getting almost impossible to find equipment for these days. But there are probably a few years of life left before that should happen. Many of our clients are going to either upgrade to version 8.2 and get the Y2K patch offered by the OEM, and some are just going to chance it with their current lower version, as they have no

concern of the date of their messages. A few are going to replace their systems with today's technology, and we're indebted, literally, to our sales staff for helping them come to that conclusion! As always, if I can be of any further help, feel free to call me at the number below.