Definity-G(x) Demystified:
By Walt Medak

Q: It has come to our attention that our failed attempts at telephoning both our clients and our employees is because our Definity-G3V6 is identifying us with the telephone number of the trunk upon which we are calling out instead of our main-listed number. Our clients and employees don't answer numbers they don't know when presented to their caller-id devices. We have been told by our service provider that the only way we can accomplish being identified by our main-listed number is to install ISDN-PRI T-1's. There is a large cost increase for the ISDN-PRI service. Can our Definity do anything to assist us here?

A: I'm sorry, but the Definity can't help. However, I think I can. There is no reason in the world that you should need ISDN-PRI for Listed-Directory-Number identification for a call emanating from your Definity. You will need a T-1, but if you have any more than a dozen or so analog trunks, this should actually wind up costing you less. What you don't need is the ISDN-PRI service over that T-1. A Plain-Jane T-1 (called a DSS type by most providers) can identify all calls over it with your Listed-Directory-Number. If your provider tells you they can't, it's actually a case of they won't. One of their excuses I have heard is that it would leave the user (you) unable to control whether the number shows or not as an ISDN-PRI would do. I have two reflections on that answer. First, if you asked for it specifically, it's obvious you could care less if you have control to show or not show the number on your calls. Secondly, it's an obvious smack of marketing driving the service, or in this case, lack thereof. You have options. Call some of the other companies in your area offering service. In the past, we have all used the local company that has been the service provider for the past hundred years or more, but today there are new companies able to offer all of the services that the old ex-monopoly companies could, plus they have a unique advantage. It's called Attention-to-Service. Some of the ones I'm familiar with are Electric Lightwave and Integra, but I'm sure there are many out there ready to serve you with the products you want, not just the ones they deem that you need.

Q: Over the past several years I have received several questions and comments relating to "old" Definity or System75 systems that are not doing what the end-users want. There have been overatures from marketing people who advise them that they need to upgrade their systems to relieve the problem(s). Sometimes it's for group-call scenarios (call-centers), others for trunking issues, also for call-flow problems (call-coverage), etc. The following is the advice I have for those whom continue to use the earlier versions of Definity/System75, mostly with success, but with slight wish-lists.

A: First of all, there are two very necessary requirements: 1) If you are using any version of System75 or a Definity-G1 or Definity-G3v1 (tape media), you may not need to upgrade for usability reasons, but it would be a good idea to do so for continued use, as it's getting harder and harder to find usable copies of the tapes needed for both system functionality and translation back-up. 2) If you haven't been trained properly for the system administration, lobby your manager for that opportunity. I can't tell you the number of companies if have witnessed either upgrading or replacing their telephone systems because a marketing type was able to convince them it was necessary, and the system administrator didn't know the system well enough to question it and pass the proper information to the company's decision maker(s). If the decision for training is still negative, before upgrading or replacing your system on the advice of one salesperson, do like you should for a doctor's diagnosis. Get a second opinion from someone who's not in a position to benefit from the outcome.

It's my opinion that most systems in-place for over five years need a thorough re-implementation. In some cases it may be discovered there is very little to do to streamline a system's operational capabilities, but in many, if not most, there will be many things discovered that will help both internal and outside voice communications to a degree well worth the re-implementation process and expense. A knowledgeable consultant or service company specializing in your system could accomplish both the training and re-implementation process, usually on-site, for comparatively (to upgrading/system replacement) little expense and probably suit your needs to a "T". When your company first installed the system, you or your predecessor was given a brief overview of the systems features, and then was asked to define what every user in the system was going to want to suit their needs in every aspect. An impossible task. Now with several years of usage and a better understanding of the system's features (and perhaps some training), you would be better able to advise both the end-users and the re-implementation person(s) as to the configuration of the system. A good service company could do this without disturbing your system during the process by doing any reprogramming on a separate system loaded with your translations, usually in

their facility, and then providing a flashcard (or tape) at the "cutover" so as to make that process a matter of minutes, not hours.

This process may seem extreme and costly until you compare it with an upgrade/system replacement, but the outcome will benefit the end-users with better functionality, the system administrator with accurate records and translations, management with possible huge cost savings, and the company overall.

Don't forget to look over the trunking for the system, too. The most expensive part of any telephone system is the recurring monthly expenses, and trunking costs have dramatically changed in the past several years. If you are using out-dated and over-priced trunking, you can be sure you won't be notified by your network provider of how to pay them less for more service. Ain't gonna happen! Do this even if you're not going to re-implement your total system.

There may be a need for upgrading because of some necessary feature that's not available on your system. There are alternatives to upgrading to the latest version of software, which is the only option offered by the OEM. The secondary market is full of systems with just the right version you need, and at pricing that won't make management gasp. Again, a good service company can provide you with the proper hardware and complete the process on a separate system so as to make the down-time measure in minutes, not hours.

If I've forgotten anything, or didn't cover a specific issue on this topic you need answered, please contact me for further or more in-depth information.