Definity-G(x) Demystified:
By Walt Medak

Q: We have just changed our maintenance agreement from a charge for all installed ports to one that charges only for ports being used (assigned ports). Our system is nearly 15 years old, and I'm sure there are many ports assigned that are not actually being used any longer. Is there any easy way of finding out which ports these might be so we might clear them from the system and thereby any charges for them?

A: This has been of interest to me since I heard about the "assigned" vs. "installed" port charge concept. It was my bet that the gamble by the vendor was that there were more unused ports that were still assigned in translations than unused ports unassigned in most systems. The quick answer to your question is yes. You find the unused assigned ports by looking at the error log. Do this using the command "display errors" and at the next page hit "enter". Those with the maintenance name of the station types you suspect will be listed. Not all of them will necessarily fit the category you are looking for, but all of the ones your are looking for will be listed here. Be careful you don't remove something that's assigned that's still actually being used but for one reason or other has a connectivity problem. If you are not comfortable removing the ones you suspect that are on the list, give me a call and I'll walk you through it.

Q: We would like to cover calls to the attendant console at different times of the day to various other places. How is this accomplished?

A: This is something the OEM decided years ago would not be required. Their philosophy was that an Attendant position was to be just that. An Attendant position for answering and directing phone calls. PERIOD. Over the years there have been some attempts to outwit the software with work-arounds that met with some limited success, but now there is finally a good solution. It requires Version 8 or above (you might check this out, as I'm not 100% sure of the exact version requirement) and having Vectoring and Attendant-Vectoring activated. When Attendant vectoring is activated, there is a field in the Console-Parameters in which a VDN can be entered. Once that's done, calls to "Attd" or "0" will be directed to that VDN, which will then direct the calls to a Vector in which you can direct a call to whatever extension you want whether it be an Attendant Console's extension number or any other extension number in the system utilizing all the power of the Vectoring commands. Finally, a very useful tool for routing calls needing Attendant handling that has some flexibility. Contact me for any further information if I haven't made it clear enough here.

IT'S The end of another year, and the beginning of the new one. A good time to take stock of your Definiity system and it's peripherals. If it's not a Definity, but still a System-75, you need to think very hard about an upgrade. Ditto the early Definity-G1 and the Definity-G3i V1 (Tape backup version). Those systems have been cast adrift unsupported by the OEM, and though they are still supported by likes of we "Definitely Not an Authorized Dealer" secondary market (or "Gray Market, as the OEM likes to scare you with) dealers, the heart and soul of those versions, the tapes and tape-drives, are getting harder and more expensive to source. The main difficulty therein is that without a functional tape system, the PBX comes up completely dumb. There is no ability to just reprogram it. All of the Operating System, the Application and the Translations are on the tape. In a Definity G3V2 and above everything but the translations are stored in flash-ram on the processor leaving a possibility to reprogram in the event of lost translations which are all that's stored on the flashcard backup media. It's not a question if the tape versions will fail, but when. While you still have a usable tape, the data therein can be streamed to the newer flashcard media in short order. If the information on the tape is lost, you will wind up with a completely new implementation project with all hand-entered programming requiring several days instead of a half-day or less. Good reason for upgrading to at least a G3V4 or G3V6, not to mention the added features of the newer system.

Also, there are still many of the original AUDIX voicemail systems (AUDIX Small) still out there humming away, also cast adrift with no support by the OEM, that have the same jeopardy concerns as above. The equipment has almost no retail value, so is therefore not kept in stock by distributors. If your vendor doesn't have the hardware to support you, then your voicemail is also subject to several days outage while you replace it upon failure.

We are still not recommending general upgrading to the versions supporting Voice-Over-IP because of transmission limitations (bandwidth) and other bleeding-edge of technology concerns, however there are a three good scenarios in which it is viable. One is in a campus environment with a single-mode fiber-optic

backbone for a LAN. No bandwidth problems there. Second is for Remote IP-Agents in a call-center. It's a bit of a Rube Goldberg haywire network connectivity design, but it works, and works well. The third is for nearby small remote offices with a dozen or fewer telephones and other data requirements that will utilize a T-1. Other than those, we'll wait and let the companies that buy the marketing hype work out the experimentation for these systems. Eventually the bandwidth limitations will be worked out either by better compression technology or network media with greater bandwidth at acceptable cost. In any event, Voice-Over-IP is coming. It's time is just not quite here yet.

May you all enjoy a Happy and Prosperous New Year exempt from system outages!