

Definity-G(x) Demystified:
By Walt Medak

Q: As the administrator for our Definity PBX, on occasion, I would dial into the system from my home to make minor changes and additions. Since our system was upgraded last spring, I haven't been able to do this. I get a message to the effect that I am now denied that access. Do I have to activate something in software to regain permission to dial into my system?

A: You have been treated to one of the "enhancements" of the newer Definity software releases. I bet you thought all of those enhancements were supposed to benefit you, didn't you? Sorry! It would seem that's one of the benefits the O.E.M. included for their advantage. You must contact them and have them activate that for you in the "system maintenance" screen. For some unimaginable reason, they have defaulted your access to your system as denied when trying to access it via the INADS port. It has been noted on most occasions when a company decides to change maintenance providers, or is self maintained, they change that ability back to "no", along with the ability to have "craft" permissions on the "cust" logins removed. On the face of it, it would appear that anyone without *their* maintenance program is being punished, presumably to encourage them to return to the flock. If this is your predicament, try to find a provider in your area to help you resolve it. There are PBX access devices on the market to help with this problem.

Q: There have been changes made on the system I administer that I'm not aware of being made. Nothing major, but it's a puzzle to me how this was done. Is there any way of detection for these changes?

A: If you have a Definity, yes. On a System75, you cannot. A Definity has the command "list history" to show you the last several incidents recorded by the system. It varies in volume by the release of software you have. For instance, the Definity-G1 may contain the last 100-to-200 incidents, while the newer releases show upwards of 500 or so. The information contained in the list is the date, time, login being used, the port (either local - "Mgr. 1", or remote - "INADS") and the command requested. It's an invaluable aid for knowing what's going on in your system, along with frequently checking the "list measurements security" command. Use them both at least weekly, if not more often.

Q: Our remote sales offices have the old style Merlin systems with just a dozen or so telephones in each. We have the budget to upgrade them, but we want to make sure we can administer them from our corporate office. We have seen the preliminary info on the Definity-One, and also the Merlin-Legend. What are our other options, if any?

A: I, too have looked at the promotional information on the Definity-One, and it looks like an interesting system for small offices needing sophisticated features. The Merlin-Legend is also remotely administrable, but, not being a fan of that architecture, I couldn't recommend it. Have you looked into a secondary market Definity, or even the older System75? Their pricing would rival, if not handily beat the smaller systems, plus you'd get the remote administration, sophisticated features, ability to later network to your corporate system if you so choose, and, you would be able to utilize the existing Merlin system's telephones, saving even more on an upgraded system.

Q: We have been told by our vendor that they need to have the dial-up line connected to our system in order for them to be able to properly service our system. In the past, we have disconnected that line to prevent unauthorized access. How can we prevent unauthorized access, and still comply with our vendor's requirement?

A: There are a couple of ways. First, you can control access with a switch that disconnects the line in one position and connects it in the other position. This would require that your vendor call you each time they want to dial into your system, and may not be suitable for their purposes. This also negates the ability of your system to dial out and report a maintenance diagnostic error. The best way, is with a security device installed ahead of the PBX on the INADS line. There are varying degrees of sophistication with these devices. One, called "The Stick", gives a fairly simple password protection ahead of the normal login and password of the PBX. Another, and probably the best, is the one distributed by Lucent known as their "RPSD" (Remote Port Security Device). It uses a very sophisticated algorithm based on a very long PIN that needs to be programmed in both their "Lock" and "Key", and if not matched, will deny access. It is also available on the secondary market, but you will find it difficult to find a vendor that knows much about them. It's a good barometer for determining the proficiency of vendors, too!