

Definity-G(x) Demystified:
By Walt Medak

Q: We had a power failure and when the Definity rebooted we found we had lost much of the recent changes we had made. When the changes were made, everything we had programmed worked fine, but after the reboot they were no longer in the switch. It's my understanding that the system is supposed to save to the flashcard every night. What do you think is our problem with this reboot?

A: As we are, among all the other normal interconnect functionalities, an alarm reporting facility, it has been our privilege to watch over many hundreds of Definity systems over a period of fourteen years. The one identifiable reason as to why translations are not saved to the flashcard each night is System Administrator error. That sounds harsh, as most System Administrators take pride in fulfilling their job descriptions to the fullest. One of the things that is seldom mentioned, and easily forgotten, is that when an Administrator needs to view a page, that they need to do one of two things correctly or it will impact the translation saving schedule that occurs in the middle of the night (normally at 1:00AM local time). If you, in the course of viewing the page from which you need to find information, use the command "Change" or "Add" instead of "Display" AND you leave it in that command, i.e., not canceling the command before leaving the System Administration terminal, you have just set your Definity in a mode whereby it will not save the translations nightly. The terminal has control of the Definity and no maintenance functions will take place while in the middle of a "Change" or "Add" command. When this occurs, at the scheduled update time the Definity will initiate a Minor Alarm to the reporting facility such as WMA or Avaya notifying the inability to perform the daily update of translations. Since we've never had a report of a client getting a report of such from Avaya, we'll assume they have the same attitude to these occurrences as we do. We have told some System Administrators of the occurrence and what to do to prevent it, and then we continue to get the same alarm night after night, so we assume the System Administrator doesn't feel it's that serious of a thing, so we just disregard the alarms also. Now when a power failure occurs, depending on how long the system gets left in that state, any of the translation changes performed since the last daily translation update will be lost. We see several of these nightly. For the most part, the ones we see are temporary as they normally only occur one or two nights, but some go on and on, and eventually get caught. This is usually the necessary condition to get those Administrators to change their policies to our recommendation AND to educate other System Administrators in their organization. To answer your question, I've not witnessed the lack of daily translation updates for any other reason if the translation media (flashcard or tape) is functioning properly, and if they aren't, that invokes a Major alarm to the reporting facility that will be pursued to repair. Short answer..... it's probably human error.

Comment: It's another New Year, and time to think about routine maintenance issuers. One of the most destructive things to which a Definity PBX and its peripherals can be subjected, is extreme temperatures. If your system isn't in a controlled climate, i.e., a "computer room" (a Definity IS a computer!), special attention should be paid to the filters. Even in controlled atmospheres filters should be checked regularly, but many Definity systems are not located in such. Filters are located in different places for each Definity PBX. In the MCC cabinet (refrigerator size) there are filters both just above and just below the fan assembly in the middle of it (just under Carrier A). For the SCC cabinets (stackables) they are located just at the top of the circuit packs, one for each carrier. For the Prologix they are located just under the circuit packs, one for each carrier. Prolonged exposure to normal conditions will clog these filters at times to a point of restricting airflow through the carrier(s) allowing heat generated by the Definity to become excessively high, literally baking the components in the system. This will have a direct effect on the performance and life of the Definity, and is probably the most overlooked maintenance issue, especially for "self maintained" systems. I have witnessed systems crashing due to the extreme temperature generated by the switch, and come back to life with no more than pulling out the filters. Needless to say, the condition of the switch and it's life expectancy were drastically diminished. Let's clean those filters!