Definity-G(x) Demystified:
By Walt Medak

Q: We just noticed an alarm on our Definity Audix that indicated a backup had failed. I guess I should have been more pro-active in making sure it was working, because I noticed the alarm had been active for more than a month. I was able to get the tape back in service and run a set of backups, but I'm a bit concerned. Is this a common problem?

A: Your question came at a great time. Just recently, we started a project to look through all of our customer's voicemail systems and verify the automated backup processes were working properly. I was surprised by the number of systems that were not working like they should.

The Definity Audix systems that use the cassette-style tape cartridge are particularly at risk because those tape cartridges are almost impossible to find now. The easiest way to verify if the backups are running is to verify that the tape is in service. The command to check is "status tape". The resulting page should show "in-service/idle", or "in-service/busy" if a tape operation is in progress. If the results of the status show that the tape is out of service, the first step would be to try to add the tape back in service. That command is "add tape". It should eventually bring up a screen that shows the existing volume name of the tape in the drive. Be careful here, as changing the volume name of the tape will overwrite all data on the tape. It can take several minutes for the tape to finally come back into service. Once it does, you should run a set of backups to make sure the data on the tape is up to date. The most important backups to run are "save nightly", "save weekly" and "save voice". These backups are rather slow, and could take close to an hour to get them all done.

The Definity Audix R4 systems (commonly called Audix Slim) use a magneto-optical disk for storage rather than a tape cartridge. These have been quite a bit more reliable, but still aren't 100%. The commands are similar to the older Definity Audix, except that you replace "tape" with "mo-disk". So, to verify the disk is working, the command would be "status mo-disk". Again, the status will hopefully show "in-service/idle" or "in-service/busy". If not, the command to add the disk is "add mo-disk". There is also an option in the Audix Slim to use the command "add mo-disk initialize". This will overwrite all data on the disk, and is normally only used to try to correct errors on the disk. The same backups need to be run as on the older Definity Audix.

Intuity systems are a different creature all together. For time and space reasons, I'll concentrate on Intuity Audix R5.x systems that use the Travan tapes for backup purposes. Unlike the Definity Audix systems, there isn't a "status tape" command in the Intuity. The first thing I usually do when I look at an Intuity is pull the tape out and check to make sure the tape is not broken. I've been surprised by the number of broken tapes I've run across recently. When I put the tape back into the drive, I can usually tell by the sound the drive makes as it seeks the BOT marker if the tape drive itself is good or not. If the drive continues to seek back and forth for more than 10 or 15 seconds, chances are the tape drive itself is bad. To verify if the automated backups are working, go to Customer/Services Administration from the main menu and then choose "Backup/Restore". Once in that menu, choose the option "View Backup Log" and choose the most recent log to view. What you want to see at the end of the log is

"Backup completed successfully". You can also just try to run an attended backup by choosing "Backup" from the Backup and Restore menu. This will bring up a screen prompting you which files you want to back up. They should all default to "YES", so just press enter to begin the backup process.

I do have one quick note I want to mention on the Intuity LX systems. They use a CD-RW drive to backup data, so it would be a good idea to keep a supply of spare CD-RW disks on hand.