

Q: We are getting alarmed and confused as to the need to upgrade our Definity system to the CM4 IP system. We have no additional requirements of our current system, but we are told that it will no longer be supported, that we don't have the option to upgrade to the Definity software version that is still supported, and that we will need to upgrade to the completely new CM4 IP system. Because of this, we are looking at competing systems because we're not eager to upgrade to another system that will, in time, also be among those no longer supported by the OEM. What are our options?

A: The above question is a compilation of a couple of questions we've been asked by several companies. And without a lengthy conversation either in person or over the phone, it's not easy to answer. But we'll try.

First options first. If you have the system that suits your operations, and have no need of major changes to it, you have two options. First is to change your maintenance coverage to a provider that has the capability to fully cover your existing Definity and it's peripherals. The OEM is not the only game in town. There are several who are fully capable, and some who offer better service than you're accustomed to getting, and probably at a reduced price. We include ourselves at that level.

Second is do the upgrade as has been suggested to you, thus continuing your ability to get coverage from the OEM. If you choose the upgrade option, you don't need to throw everything from your current system out of the window and start over with a completely new system (which is what you would have to do if you decide to go with any other competing vendor, i.e., Cisco). You will be able to continue using your existing voice terminals (telephones), probably your port carriers (your Common Control carrier (A) would be changed to interface with the CM4 processing element), your circuit packs and any peripherals, i.e., AUDIX Voicemail, CMS, etc. This is a huge consideration when having to replace 100% of it by going with a competing system. This constitutes roughly 70%-to-90% of the cost of getting to a system supported by their OEM's. Note that above I mentioned "probably" when referring to the port carriers. As of 2009, the OEM has projected to cease supporting the MCC (Refrigerator-size) cabinet. Even if this becomes the case for you, it's merely a change of carrier types, as there is just the requirement to change to 19" rack-mounted carriers, a fairly easy and straight-forward change, and not overly costly. If you decide to do this upgrade, you will have your basic existing system, but a new processing element of the CM4, which essentially just replaces three or four circuit packs in your Definity (Processor, Network Control, Tone-Clock and perhaps a Processor-Interface or a daughter-board of one of the previous circuit packs. In the past an upgrade might only consist of software changes, or at most, the replacement of the circuit packs just mentioned. Once this upgrade is accomplished you should be good for OEM support for some years to come.

But, then, don't forget you can opt out of upgrading and still get coverage for your existing Definity for many years to come also (option 1), and if you still don't want to interface with the OEM, many of us are able to upgrade you to the CM4 if that's your decision.

And finally, we have noted that virtually all of the OEM's are dropping coverage/support for their classic systems, so to move to another manufacturer's platform won't remedy that problem at all. As always, if I haven't convinced you that sticking with your existing system either through the OEM or some of us who will still support the Definity, give me a call to further discuss it.