

Definity-G(x) Demystified:  
By Walt Medak

Q: We are currently looking at upgrading our Definity, and of course that means the ability to use VoIP. A couple of the vendors we have talked to keep pushing the idea of going to some kind of system that uses SIP protocol. We have another office with a newer Avaya system, and they told me it uses H.323 protocol for VoIP. I don't know enough about the differences between SIP and H.323 to know if one is really better than the other. Is one system really that much better than the other?

A: First, both H.323 and SIP are nothing more than protocols that equipment use to communicate on a network. H.323 is a protocol suite defined by the International Telecommunication Union, Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T). It has the largest installed base of any call-control protocol because it was the first developed. SIP is actually not a "standard" at this time since it is technically still under development. The latest version of the specification is RFC 3261 from the IETF SIP Working Group. If you decide to stay with an Avaya system, you can elect to have both protocols available. Avaya's IP phone sets will work with either protocol depending on which firmware files are loaded on the phone.

At the very simplest of terms, H.323 protocol uses the intelligence built into the phone system (media server) to operate the phone. SIP protocol moves that intelligence away from a centralized media server to the end point device itself. Either protocol will work well for you. If you want proven and reliable, go with H.323. If you want the newest technology available, go with SIP.

Q: I haven't had to write a vector in quite a while so I'm a little rusty. I'm trying to set up a vector for one of our departments that has different business hours than the rest of the company. Is there an easier way to handle the time of day other than having a line for each day and the hours they are available? We have a CM4 system.

A: Actually there is an easier way. The first thing you would need to do is fill out a form in the switch called "service-hours-table". There are 99 available tables, so just pick one that's not used. In this case, we'll assume table 1 is not already used. The command would be "change service-hours-table 1". In the table, you can enter the hours that department is open for each day of the week. Then in the vector you can decide if you want to check to see if the call is coming in during the time the department is open or closed. Let's say an off-hours call comes in and you want to send the caller to an announcement that says something like "The service department is currently closed. Their normal business hours are..." You would enter a line in the vector like "goto step 10 if service-hours not-in table 1". If you prefer to have your vector check to see if the call is within business hours, you could use something like "goto step 10 if service-hours in table 1".