



Message Taking Systems

March 2005 issue

By Peter DeHaan

Whether you are an outsourcing call center processing calls for your clients, or an in-house operation taking messages for co-workers, having the right equipment and software to do the job well makes all the difference. Today's timesaving functions and keystroke reducing features of advanced message taking systems can shave several seconds off each call. When you consider the thousands of calls every agent takes each month, saving a few seconds on every call really adds up.

However, greater efficiency is only part of the picture. Finding the right message processing solution will also increase agent accuracy, reduce errors, provide more options to clients and their callers (be they internal or external), reduce agent stress, and increase worker satisfaction. With all of this at stake, finding the right solution and staying within budget is a critical decision.

Even if your center has a computerized message processing system, it may lack the latest features and services. A good rule of thumb is that if you haven't had a software update in the past year, you are likely missing some key opportunities. There could be a variety of reasons for missing an update, including budgetary and support issues. However, if it is because the vendor has simply stopped issuing updates for your equipment – then a new system is definitely in order.

Aside from software, there is the issue of hardware. Fortunately, the core technology used in call processing systems has a much longer viable life span than a typical office PC. Still, old hardware can be a limiting factor and presents another reason to consider newer alternatives. Of course, for those call centers using manual systems, it is past time to update.

Here are leading vendors to consider:

Alston Tascom, Inc.
 866-282-7266
www.alstontascom.com

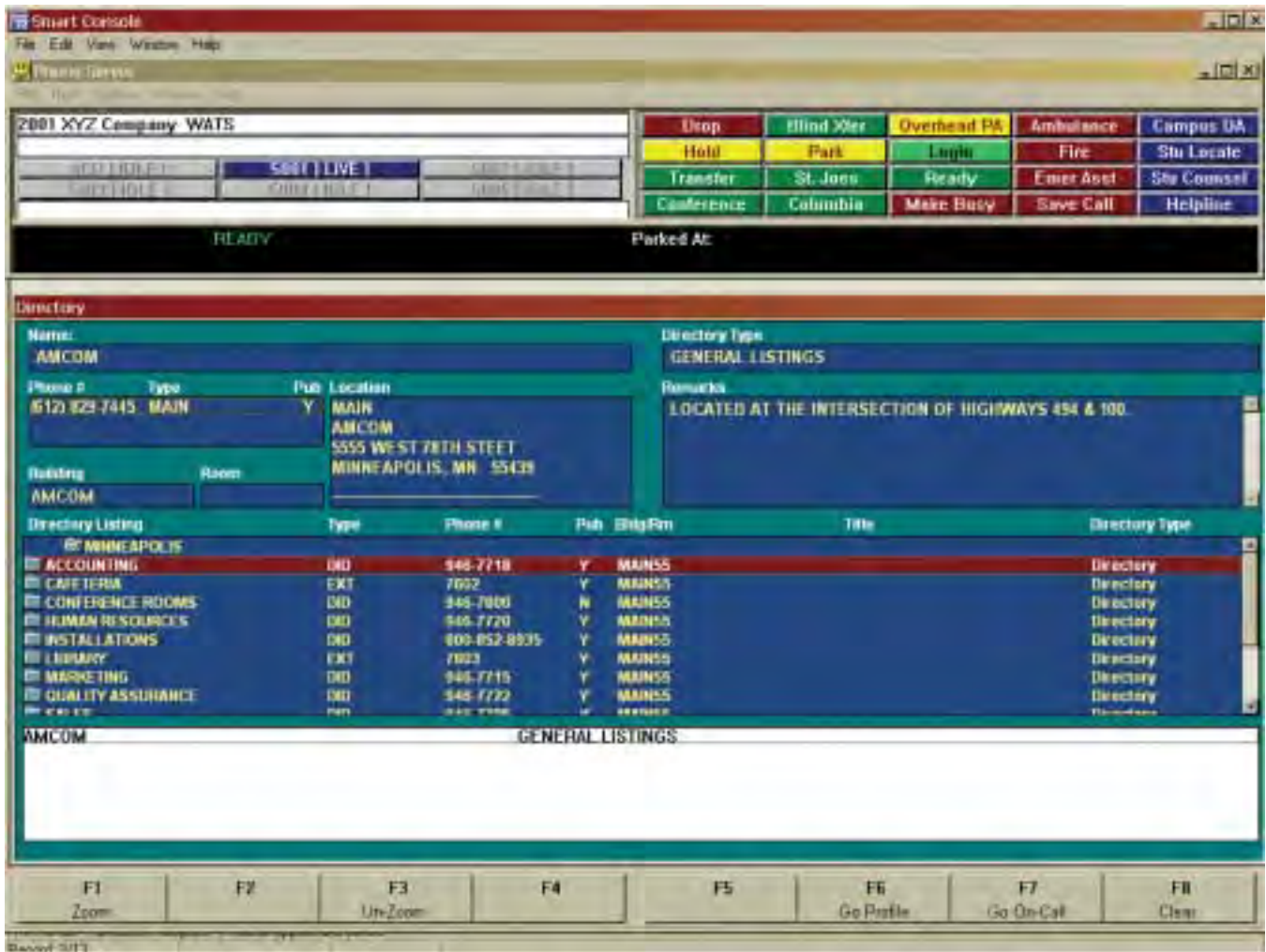
The Evolution communications system is a complete system including the core engineering of database-driven switching and data. It has a client/server architecture throughout the system and in all delivery servers. Evolution also allows call centers to purchase all their own “commercially off the shelf” hardware, as there is no proprietary hardware or operating system.

The screenshot shows the Alston Tascom software interface, titled "Alston Tascom - Shared by WebInterpoint". The interface is divided into several sections:

- Top Left:** A green bar displays "GOOD MORNING." followed by "OFC (909)548-7300". Below it, a green bar contains the text "Downtown Medical Clinic, May I help you?". Further down, it lists "Medical Clinic (Ped, Int.Med., Gen Prac)" and "Instructions for the account that opr needs immediately go here." At the bottom of this section, it shows "MON-FRI 8AM-5PM SAT 8AM-2PM NO SUN".
- Bottom Left:** A table with columns "Ln", "Type/ID", "Status", and "Time". The first row is highlighted with "1". Below the table is a "MEDCLINIC" button and the name "joanne".
- Center:** A clock showing "9:17:03 Mon 31 Jan 2005" and a small icon of a telephone.
- Right Panel:** A detailed call log for "Extend". It shows "IN 01/31/05 09:13 OPR joanne MSG 24" and "DL OPR TO". Below this, it lists "Caller: JANE DOE" with phone number "909-333-4567 (Caller ID)". "Phone: 909-333-4567_HOME". "Dr: JONES ROBERT". "Specialty: PEDIATRICS". "Patient?: NO". "Patient Name: SON JAMES". "Message/Problem: SEVERE FLU, FEVER 102". Below this is a "Who Is On Call" section with "PATEL GEORGE". "ON 01/01/2005" and "OFF 02/28/2005".
- Bottom Right:** A status bar showing "SysHold: 0" and "Calls Waiting: 0".

Amcom Software, Inc.
 800-852-8935
www.amcomsoft.com

Amcom's CTI Smart Center streamlines operations, thereby saving money while improving the speed and quality of centralized attendant services. The company's speech recognition modules process routine calls automatically. For calls requiring agent assistance, Amcom's attendant workstations automate manual tasks and integrate caller and directory information in a PC-based system. Amcom web applications make information and data easy to access and manage. Plus, the Amcom emergency notification and response system automates the notification process, freeing key personnel for other critical activities.



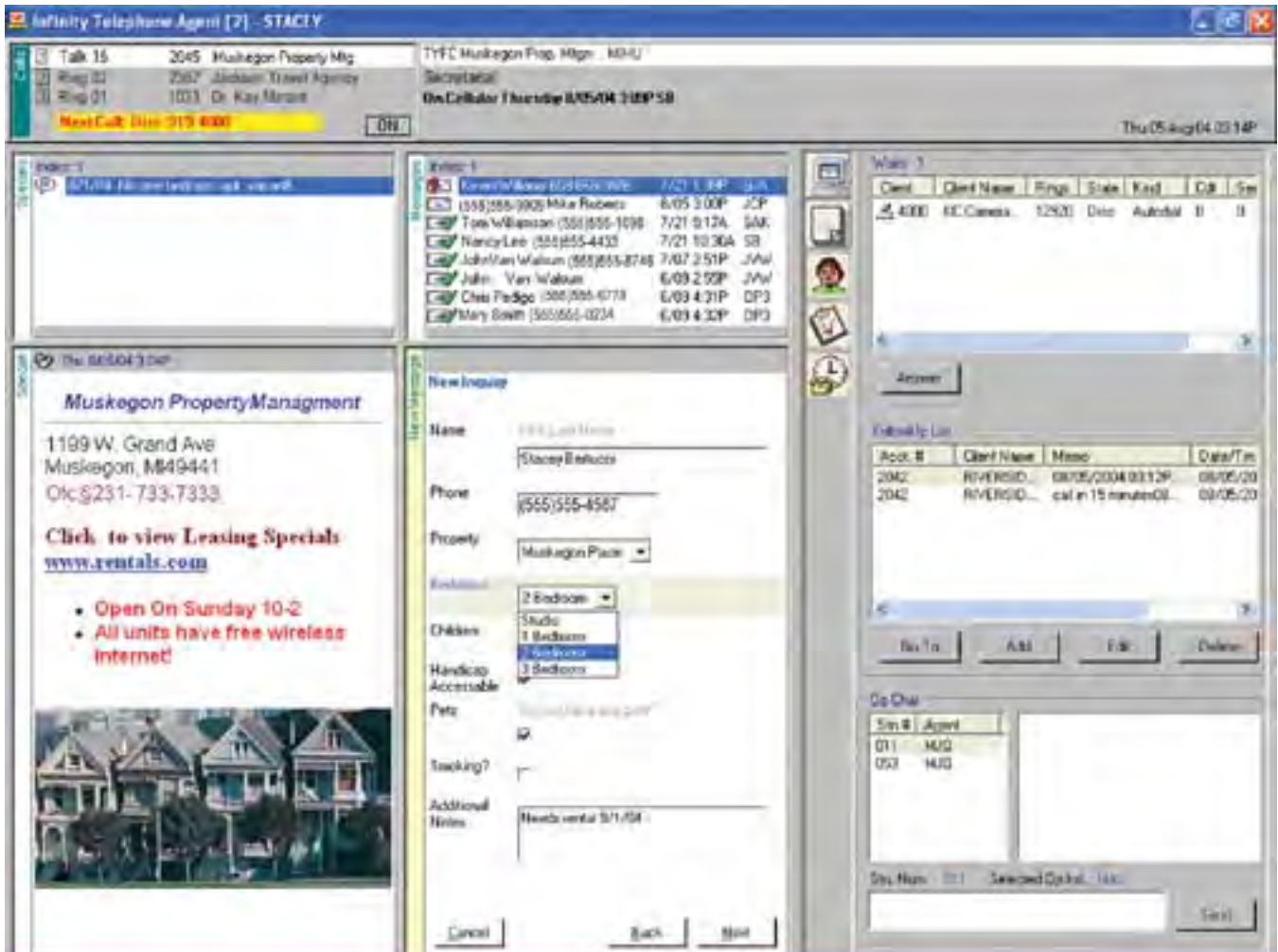
Amtelco
 800-356-9148
callcenter.amtelco.com

Amtelco's Infinity system is entirely PC-based and combines automated call distribution with skills-based routing, automated outbound dialing, and state-of-the-art voice processing, all in one integrated system. Options include:

- eConferenceLink and Conference Bridge
- On-scheduling
- eResponse (automatic retrieval and dispatch of e-mail)
- WAV file import and export
- Abandon Eliminator, which uses callers' ANI to automatically place a call back to callers who hang up before their call is answered

"Adding these new features will make a huge difference for our business," said Dennis Fisher, owner of Always At Your Service, in Staten Island, NY. "Our operators have made an easy transition to Infinity. In fact, while we were training with live calls before the cutover, the operators didn't want to go back to the old system."

Due to the single server architecture of Infinity, all outbound and inbound call processing time is captured, with and without operator involvement. Having statistics for all call center activities helps to increase billing accuracy and thoroughness.



Morgan Comtec

800-239-3949

www.morgancomtec.com

A-NET II is an integrated ISDN message taking system available to the telemessaging and call center industries. Morgan developed a sophisticated ISDN "telephone" that, when two or more "telephones" are networked, forms a telemessaging system utilizing the telephone company's switching power. This networked array is integrated with software for client accounts and automated message dispatch via fax, e-mail, alpha pager, and other conventional means.

All call-handling actions generate data logs for extensive statistics and report generation. By utilizing the telephone company's ISDN switch protocol, DID trunks and numbers are replaced by cost-effective, advanced ISDN BRI lines and features.

Line	Trm	Acct	WS 02	Opr 20	(Class)	(68% Mem)	Tue 12/17/97	10:24 A
7					1002	Fmt: 00	TN: 0001	12/17/97 10:24 A 20
6					Name	Mr. Orr		
5					Caller #	(321) 886-2345	ext	433
4					Call Bk #	(905) 559-8899	ext	
3					Company	Orr Insurance		
05	2	2	0101	"Gaston C	Address			
03	1	3	0133	"Good AM	Msg for	Jim		
					RE BUILDING ON SO 7TH ST. ?? FOR SALE?			
					IF: Mr. Orr calls, refer to Ofc hrs 8-5 M-F Emerge Back Ph # 448-7008 NGC			
09	1	7	0199	"Good A/T	PAGE	{1A444-1122}	Alarm	15
2							12/17/97	10:28 A 20
3					Card 1 0155 "L.A. Real Estate -- May I help you?"			
4					Al Williams res sales {C445-7793} Jim Patrin commercial sales {C445-9007}			
5					See schedule for on call agent. Only call Mr. Anz if emerg.			
					His lake house # {C449-8876} NGO Cell # {555-7788}			
POS 1								
03	CALLED 905-886-7788			CALLER 321-886-2345		I.D. CFA		

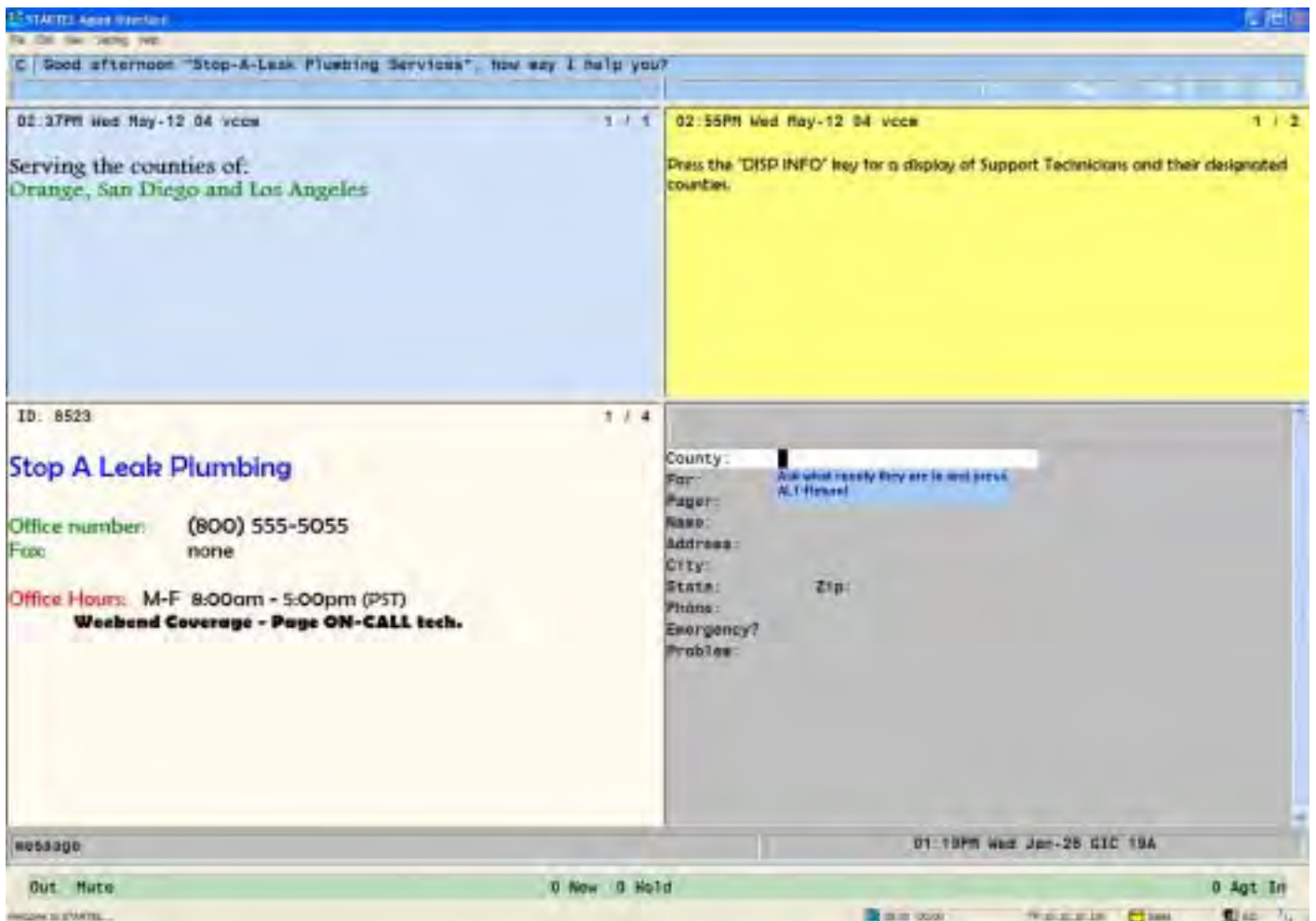
Startel

800-782-7835

www.Startelcorp.com

Startel's 5700T5 and Startel's CMC message taking systems are optimized to make call processing easy for agents via single keystroke call processing and using the call distribution of Startel's 5700 Digital Switch. The screen layout of Startel's message taking systems enables agents to easily locate and access clients' specific information.

Startel's CMC platform utilizes the intelligent form routing capabilities in their message taking system to offer scripting capability. It has an intuitive GUI interface for easy setup, even for complex accounts, while helping agents to be more efficient and effective and reducing errors. Startel's CMC system provides more labor-enhancing, error-reducing benefits when coupled with their intelligent dispatching features that allow customized dispatch scripts to be created based on various criteria defined by clients.



Szeto Technologies

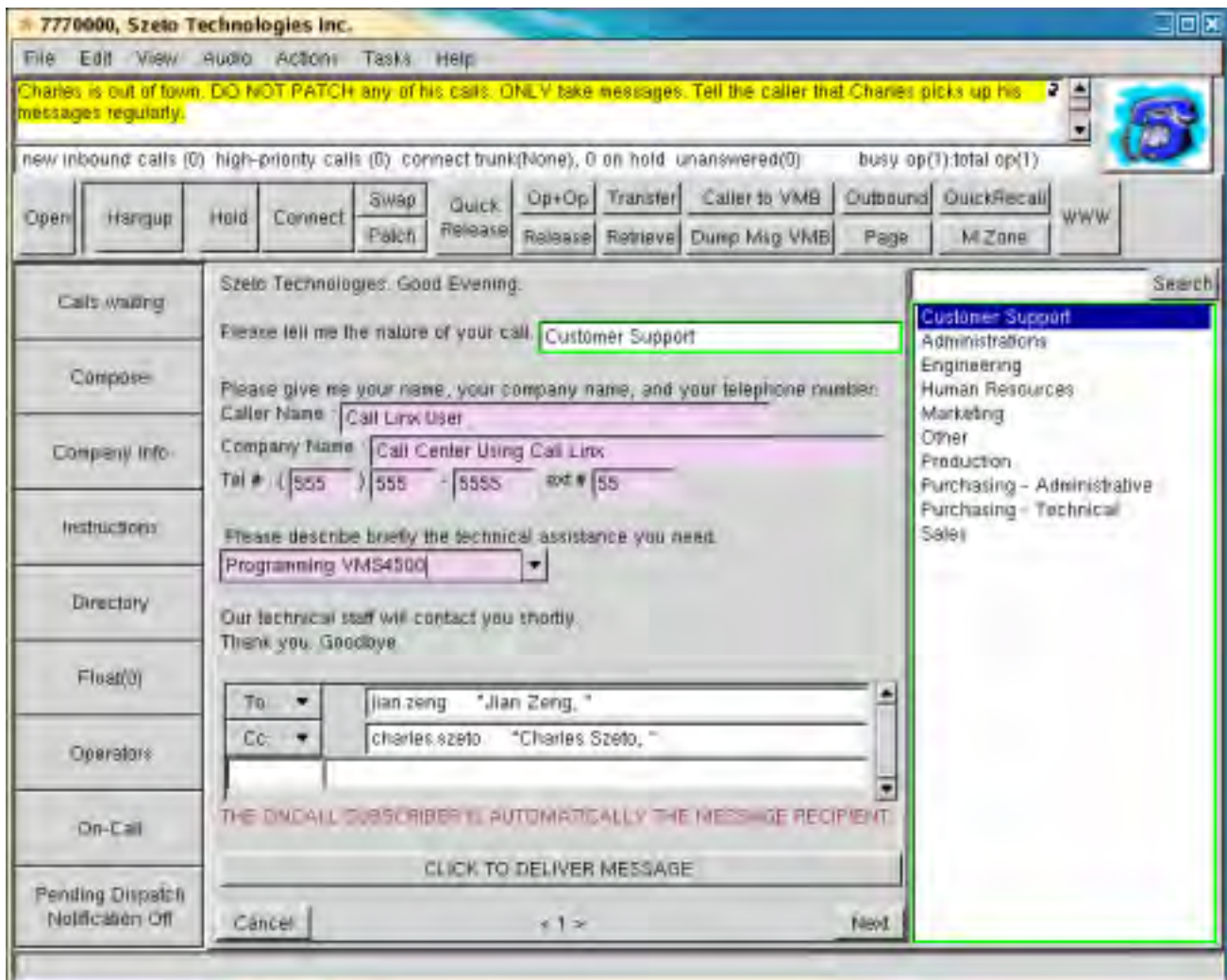
888-421-3737

www.szeto.ca

Szeto Technologies' Call Linx operates on a license-free Linux operating system, which is noted for its stability and universality. The price includes customized hardware configurations and software versions that are privileged to individual customers. Every additional system module can be implemented easily, independent of software versions.

In 2003, Call Linx was enhanced to interface with VMS4500, a web-based call center switch; an appointment-scheduling module allows teleservice providers to host a shared database within Call Linx; and Linx Wizard Scripting, a script-processing module has been added. Caller-agent conversation is guided in a question/answer format, including branching and running external programs. There is no script language to learn; programming involves mouse clicking on the buttons of a simple-to-use menu. Management tools include call throttling, staff efficiency control, logging of database changes, call-by-call statistics, and supervisory safeguards such as pending dispatch and delivery review.

"Mr. Szeto and his staff have provided our company with a state-of-the-art system and old fashioned service, which to date is unrivaled," said Bob Fitz Simmons, General Manager of Quattra SCS Ltd. in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario.



Telescan Corp.
 800-770-7662
www.telescan.net

Spectrum, Telescan's message taking system, combines a database server with complete networking and reporting capabilities, controlling access to all client information. The features of the Spectrum system are expandable capacity and a list of services, including messaging and dispatching capabilities, support for multiple time zones, remote agent workstations, integrated order entry, on-call scheduling, and instant messaging.

Last year Telescan added redundant critical systems. Bob Vornberg, Telescan's Director of Product Development, said, "We believe this update makes the most reliable system in the industry even more reliable. We have also improved the speed of the system, allowing agents to accomplish more in less time and speeding the delivery of information to clients."



CadCom Telesystems, Inc.

800-422-3266

www.cadcom.com

The AccuCall call center system provides call centers with automatic call distribution (ACD), PBX capabilities, and digital switching. It is designed with tools to help outsourcing call centers be successful. CadCom's CTI-enabled solutions thrive on meeting customer satisfaction goals, while improving call center operations.

AccuCall users have found that the system can help them significantly. "AccuCall's on-call scheduler has improved and simplified the task of scheduling thousands of our medical professionals. Since we have implemented the feature on-call scheduling, mistakes have virtually been eliminated," said Scott Richardson, Vice President at The Doctors' Exchange, in Metairie, LA.

Call Response Consultants

866-292-1947

www.CallResponseSoftware.com

TAS Call Response Software (CRS) is a combination of non-proprietary hardware, Artisoft's award-winning TeleVantage switch, and Microsoft SQL Server database. This provides a scalable system that is suitable for both small and large telemessaging operations. TAS CRS's color-coding and user-friendly interfaces allow current agents to expediently handle calls and prospective agents to train in a short time.

Professional Teledata, Inc.

800-344-9944

www.proteledata.com

Pinnacle is an open architecture system with account scripting and programmability coupled with customizable dispatch and message delivery capabilities. Pinnacle incorporates the complete PI-2000 inbound call processing system for scripted call processing including inbound applications, order entry, reservations, and outbound campaigns.

Pinnacle supports multiple dispatching actions such as phone, fax, e-mail, or pager to execute and archive automatically on individual messages. Appropriate dispatch actions are automatically determined based on script responses or system settings such as on-call schedule, time-of-day, and so forth. Also, multiple message templates can be designed for each client.

Agent assistance is available at each query in the script or by global help screens organized by topic. Changes and updates are effected instantly, even with calls in progress.

"Pinnacle has introduced call control and automation to our operation beyond our expectations," said Lisa Mills, Vice President of Quick Connections, Greenbelt, MD.

The Amanda Company

800-410-2745

www.taa.com

The Amanda Portal can act as a complete telephone switch, in particular for use in a call center environment. The number of telephone ports, mailboxes, messages, and so forth are limited only by the available hardware resources.

AmandaPortal is a convergence product, capable of integrating messages from five prevalent systems using standard internet protocols including the traditional public switching telephone network (PSTN), PBX, WAN, MAN, and LAN. It provides Internet, PSTN, and integrated messaging solutions with web access from any web browser.

The system's capabilities include, Internet email integration, text-to-speech, Internet email reading, speech recognition, outbound call job management system, decentralized call queues, real time statistics, 'dashboard' queue status, call switching, find me/follow me, web browser-based access, multilingual greetings, mailing lists, message notification records, Database and Open Database Connectivity (ODBC), Tcl (Tool Command Language) scripting with interactive debugger, single-line phone emulator for ease of application development, and usage as a web server with Tcl based dynamic web pages.