

Multimedia Automated Attendant Overview

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What is a Multimedia Automated Attendant?

A multimedia automated attendant (auto-attendant) is an interactive telephone answering system. It answers incoming calls with a pre-recorded announcement and routes them based on the caller's response to menus and prompts. It also allows the caller to receive faxes.

You set up a multimedia auto-attendant so that callers hear a menu of options. Callers then press the button on their telephone keypad that corresponds to the menu option they would like and the multimedia auto-attendant executes the selected option. Callers who do not have touch tone telephones are typically told that they can hold or call another number to speak with a live attendant.


You can design a multimedia auto-attendant menu system to contain subordinate layers of menus. These sub-menus, or *nested auto-attendants*, play additional options that can include a choice leading to another nested menu.

The voiced menu options that callers hear are greetings that you record for the multimedia auto-attendant's extension. You can record the greeting like a message and can change the text of the message at any time.

Multimedia Auto-Attendant Features

[Table 1-1](#) illustrates the features available through the multimedia auto-attendant.

Table 1-1. Auto-Attendant Features

Feature	Description
Fax-on-Demand	<p>Allows you to provision any number of faxes into your custom created menu. Callers can select a fax-back option on the same call.</p> <p> NOTE: Callers must have access to a fax phone to use the Fax-on-Demand feature.</p>
Mailbox integration	Callers can use other mailbox messaging features, such as directory access or dial-by-name, to transfer.
Multi-level user interface	Easy-to-use administration allows you to create any number of menu trees, each with multiple levels. Transitions between the levels are seamless and global navigational controls let callers easily transverse the menu tree.
Routing	Menu trees can be set up based on your environment; different user interfaces can be presented to the caller based on business hours, day/night schedules and holidays.
Shared ports	For more efficient utilization of ports, the multimedia auto-attendant shares ports with messaging on the INTUITY system server.

Design Considerations

To make effective use of the multimedia auto-attendant features, you must first determine the needs of your business. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Will all callers route directly to the multimedia auto-attendant?
- Will certain options of a multimedia auto-attendant route callers to other auto-attendants?
- Will the multimedia auto-attendants have a main greeting?
- Will the nested auto-attendants have their own greetings?
- Will callers need fax capabilities?

[Table 1-2](#) shows various multimedia auto-attendant applications and their descriptions for your design considerations.

Table 1-2. Automated Attendant Applications Descriptions

Application	Description
Main multimedia auto-attendant	The mailbox to which the multimedia auto-attendant telephone extension connects. The main multimedia auto-attendant plays a single menu of options for selecting a final destination or presents menu options that differ depending on call types defined with multiple personal greetings (out-of-hours, holiday, etc).
Nested multimedia auto-attendant	Two or more layers of multimedia auto-attendants — a main multimedia auto-attendant that contains options leading to one or more secondary (nested) multimedia auto-attendants that play additional submenus of options.
Non-resident user extensions	A main or nested multimedia auto-attendant that contains options leading to users who have voice mailboxes and call in for messages, but do not have actual telephone extensions on the switch.
Shared extensions	A main multimedia auto-attendant that contains options leading to the mailboxes of two or more people sharing the same telephone.
10 options per auto-attendant	The multimedia auto-attendant can have as many as 10 menu options, corresponding to the buttons 0 through 9 on a touch-tone telephone.
Multimedia auto-attendant extension on the switch	If the multimedia auto-attendant extension is to be called directly, administer the switch to route all incoming calls to a multimedia auto-attendant instead of to a receptionist, or perhaps to route calls to this extension only after normal business hours.

Table 1-2. Automated Attendant Applications Descriptions




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Class of service for multimedia auto-attendants	<p>If you plan to use a number of multimedia auto-attendants, you might wish to set up a specific Class of Service (COS) for the multimedia auto-attendant.</p> <p> NOTE:</p> <p>If you set up a specific COS for the multimedia auto-attendant, be sure that existing users are not already assigned to that COS.</p> <p>This COS must be set up before setting up the multimedia auto-attendant. For more information see “Setting Up a Multimedia Auto-Attendant Class of Service” in Chapter 2, “Multimedia Automated Attendant Administration”.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> 8 transfers	<p>You can administer your system to allow callers to transfer from the multimedia auto-attendant to a specific extension by entering <input type="checkbox"/> 8, the extension number, and pound sign <input type="checkbox"/> #. Generally, it is more efficient to have callers enter extension numbers directly. <input type="checkbox"/> 8 is typically used when the attendant’s options require use of all the buttons or when the switch dial plan precludes use of the button that corresponds to the first digit of internal extension numbers that could be called directly. The Call Transfer Out of AUDIX feature must be turned on before callers can use <input type="checkbox"/> 8.</p> <p> NOTE:</p> <p>Make sure to enter y (yes) in the Allow Call Transfer field on the Auto-Attendant Administration screen.</p> <p> WARNING:</p> <p><i>Allowing transfers out of AUDIX increases the risk of toll fraud. If you set up your multimedia auto-attendant to use this feature, be sure your restrict the allowable destination numbers.</i></p>

Table 1-2. Automated Attendant Applications Descriptions

Application	Description
Direct transfers without <input type="checkbox"/> 8	<p>Callers can dial an extension directly from the multimedia auto-attendant without using <input type="checkbox"/> 8. To administer such direct dialing, type an e in the <code>Extension</code> field for the button whose number corresponds to the first digit of real switch extensions (on page 1 of the Subscriber screen). For example, if internal extensions begin with 5, assign button 5 as extension e. This allows the caller to dial any extension that starts with 5.</p> <p>For this feature to work properly, the <code>Addressing Format</code> field must contain <code>extension</code> (on Page 2 of the AUDIX Subscriber screen).</p> <p>Pay particular attention to the switch dial plan when assigning the e option. Some extensions within the group may not exist, may not be assigned, or may be assigned to special features. Any of these situations may cause problems if a caller attempts to dial anything but a voice extension.</p>
Coverage to AUDIX	<p>The multimedia auto-attendant extension must be administered to cover the Intuity system extension with Call Coverage (Call Forwarding, if your switch is a DEFINITY® switch). Calls are then sent to the multimedia auto-attendant mailbox where the menu of options is heard.</p>
Call routing	<p>The INTUITY system provides a conditional routing capability. You can use a routing table to vary multimedia auto-attendant operation based on as many as four separate business schedules and holiday schedules.</p> <p>Additionally, a call can be routed to a multimedia auto-attendant during an alternate time not associated with a business or holiday schedule, such as lunch time, or to handle calls from different time zones.</p>
Addressing messages	<p>If you design a multimedia auto-attendant so callers have the option of leaving messages for multiple Intuity system users, the Intuity system feature of addressing messages by name or extension applies. It is a good idea to include this information in the recorded greetings and prompts callers hear.</p>

Modes of Operation

A business can deploy multimedia auto-attendant service in either a primary or secondary operational mode.

Primary Mode Operation

A multimedia auto-attendant service deployed in primary mode is expected to answer all incoming calls as soon as they come in. The company receptionist backs up the multimedia auto-attendant by handling overflow calls and calls from people needing assistance, for example, dial 0, time-outs, etc.

Secondary (Back-Up) Mode Operation

A multimedia auto-attendant service deployed in backup mode defers as many calls as possible to the company receptionist. The multimedia auto-attendant service is configured to back up the company receptionist by handling calls the receptionist is unable to answer.

Operational Schedules

A business can establish several types of multimedia auto-attendant schedules. The multimedia auto-attendant service can be designed to answer incoming calls on a 24-hour/day basis or only at night, depending on your business needs.

Business Schedule

The multimedia auto-attendant can use the INTUITY system weekly business schedule for time-of-day operation or it can rely on the telephone system to indicate when it should operate in a day schedule and night schedule. Note that some telephone systems (for example, MERLIN LEGEND®) can provide day/night status to INTUITY system, while other telephone systems (for example, DEFINITY) cannot. It makes no difference to the multimedia auto-attendant service whether day/night operation is controlled by the associated telephone system status or by Lucent INTUITY's own weekly business schedule.

See [“Business Schedules”](#) for more information on setting up business operational schedules.

Holiday Schedule

The multimedia auto-attendant can be administered to deviate from the normal business schedule for a day at a time. You might use these schedules to play different greetings and to handle calls differently on holidays. There are four holiday schedules.

See [“Holiday Schedules”](#) for more information on setting up holiday operational schedules.

Routing Table

The business and holiday operational schedules are linked within a routing table. A routing table applies the business schedule and a holiday schedule to an incoming called number such as an incoming trunk or covered extension. You then assign a schedule to the multimedia auto-attendant mailboxes you want to handle the calls at the various times.

See [“Setting Up a Routing Table”](#) for more information on setting up routing tables.

Auto-Attendant Examples

The following examples describe some applications for the auto-attendant feature. Use these examples as models when defining your own multimedia auto-attendants.

Main Multimedia Auto-Attendant

A main attendant is an attendant that can be reached directly by callers who dial through your switch. This attendant can answer your company's main telephone, or an individual department's main telephone. It must be associated with an extension that is administered on the switch.

For example, the multimedia auto-attendant is set up to answer the company's main telephone. It offers callers the option of transferring to the sales, accounting, or personnel departments by pressing a number or dialing any internal extension that begins with 5, or transferring to a receptionist. If the caller does not respond within 5 seconds (perhaps because the caller has a rotary telephone), the call is transferred automatically to the receptionist.

If the caller chooses to transfer to accounting or personnel, the caller will immediately hear the call answer greeting active for the mailbox associated with extension 52200 or 52205 rather than being transferred through the switch. Finally, (in this example), to repeat this menu, callers can press [9](#) . For more information, see example under [“Nested Attendants”](#).

Nested Attendants

A nested attendant is an attendant that is invoked by another attendant. The nested attendant can also be a main attendant; that is, the extension can be reached directly by internal and external callers who dial the extension number directly.

For example, callers who dial the accounting department's extension directly could hear voice options from a main attendant for that department, as could callers who transferred to the accounting department by pressing [2](#) at the main

menu in the previous example. The accounting department's attendant is said to be nested beneath the company's main menu.

Additional menus can be nested beneath the accounting department's attendant, such as for transferring to the payroll or accounts receivable desk.

A good way to approach setting up nested multimedia auto-attendants is to diagram the complete system on paper, including telephone keypad options and their corresponding menu or call treatment. You might want to write the scripts for the menu greetings at this time, as well.

A simple example of this nested attendant is shown on the next page. In this example, pressing **2** at the main menu transfers the caller to the accounting department's attendant, and pressing **3** at that attendant transfers the call to the payroll department's extension.

Attendant	Telephone Button	Extension	Treatment	Result
Main	2	52200	sub-menu	call goes to accounting attendant
Accounting	3	52205	transfer	transfer to payroll extension

To the caller, this nesting is transparent because the nested attendant is invoked immediately by the system without transferring the caller through the switch. The caller in this example would hear the main attendant options, press **2** to transfer to accounting, hear the accounting department attendant options, and press **3** to transfer to the payroll extension without the delay that is associated with transferring back through the switch.

Shared Extensions

Several users sharing a single telephone (shared extensions) require a simple method for a caller to leave a message for the called extension (any of the users) or for a specific individual. A multimedia auto-attendant can handle this task by providing callers with options to leave a message for the extension or any of the individuals who share it. The attendant extension is administered at the switch. Non-resident user extensions in the INTUITY system (not administered at the switch) are used for each of the sharing users. The multimedia auto-attendant can transfer callers directly to these mailboxes to leave messages.



NOTE:

Because the Message Waiting Indicators (MWI) are associated with the individual telephone sets and not with INTUITY system mailboxes, the MWI for a shared extension will be activated when a new message is in the mailbox for the extension number that is shared, but not when new messages are in the mailboxes of the individual users only. If you administer your system to use this shared extension scenario, inform your users that they should check their mailboxes periodically, whether or not the MWI is active.

For example, a company sets up an information desk with a single telephone to provide callers with any necessary information or assistance. Two people answer the telephone during the day. They do not have individual telephones and can be reached only through the information desk. They are administered as INTUITY system users and are associated with extensions in the INTUITY system that are not administered on the switch.

If someone calls the information desk and the telephone is not answered or is busy, the call is routed to the multimedia auto-attendant. The multimedia auto-attendant in this example prompts callers to leave a message for the information desk or for one of the individuals who staff the desk.

If the caller selects an individual (button **2** or **3** in this example), the caller goes directly to the user's INTUITY system mailbox to hear the individual's call answer greeting and then leaves a message.

A message left in the mailbox of the information desk extension activates the extension's MWI in this example; a message left in the mailbox of one of the sharing individuals does not. These individuals must call into the INTUITY system to check for messages or use outcalling.

Nonresident User Extensions

Nonresident users are INTUITY system users who do not have an extension on a switch that is served by the INTUITY system. Mailbox numbers in the system for these users correspond to INTUITY system extensions that are not administered on the switch.



WARNING:

Setting up nonresident users with numbers that begin with trunk dial access codes could contribute to toll fraud. Always give nonresident users extensions that will not allow access to any outside lines.

An example of a nonresident user is an outside sales representative who needs to receive messages from clients. To accommodate this type of user, a multimedia auto-attendant can be set up to move callers directly to non-resident user mailboxes. The caller needs to know only the number of the multimedia auto-attendant and the nonresident user's mailbox number to leave a message.

Once in the non-resident user's mailbox, the caller hears either the system guest greeting or the non-resident user's call answer greeting, depending on the transfer treatment that is specified on the Subscriber screen.

For this example, the extension number for each nonresident user is a five-digit number beginning with 3, and the extension number for the multimedia auto-attendant is 30000. The nonresident user gives clients the telephone number of the multimedia auto-attendant and their own mailbox number.

With the system administered in this way, clients dial 30000, listen to the multimedia auto-attendant menu, enter the nonresident user's mailbox number, listen to the user's personal greeting, and leave a message.