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TAPI: Redefining Your Day

When a customer rings your extension, how would you like to have access to their entire profile before you even pick up the phone? Immediate access to information like their account status, billing information and any notes from previous calls? And what if this happened automatically, without you lifting a finger? That's the power of TAPI.

TAPI stands for Telephony Application Programming Interface and it's not a new concept. The technology has been around since the mid 1990s. What's new is the technology has been refined and can offer businesses an unprecedented level of productivity in the way employees use their phones.

What TAPI does is take common applications such as your CRM system, Microsoft Outlook®, and ACT!® and integrates them directly with your phone platform. What is the advantage of this? Think about the example above. Normally a phone platform and CRM system are two distinct units. When a call comes in, the traditional approach is to take the customer's name and account number, and then pull up the customer's record on a separate system. This may take anywhere from 15-30 seconds per call. Multiply that by calls per day, per week and per year, and you will begin to see how much time TAPI can save you and your company.

And this is just one small example. Developed by Microsoft® and Intel®, TAPI is a well-established protocol with many TAPI-compliant applications in existence today. With TAPI products available from ADP®, Sage Software® and Microsoft®, it's quite probable you already have a TAPI-compliant application residing within your organization and don't even know it.

Imagine how TAPI can be used with your project management or billing system. You can pull up a customer record for review, click a button on screen, and your computer will automatically dial the customer without you even reaching for the handset. The productivity possibilities of such a technology are exponential.

How to Deploy TAPI

TAPI is a low cost, easy to deploy application. But that does not mean there are not potential pitfalls to be avoided. Always beware of a telephony vendor who claims their platform is "plug and play" with all TAPI products. TAPI is sophisticated technology with many nuances. There needs to be a validation process to ensure that every TAPI



application you wish to use will work seamlessly with your phone system. Any TAPI-compliant phone network vendor should be willing to validate and test your TAPI applications in a lab environment to make sure everything works smoothly. And they should be willing to make adjustments to their system if needed (you may also need to go back to the application vendor in certain cases).

What Else can TAPI do?

TAPI already works within common products you use every day, such as ACT!® and Maximizer® . Future development should see TAPI integrating Unified Messaging and Presence Management technologies (such as Find Me/Follow Me) with the common customer/vendor/partner information systems you already use. This means that someday soon an important customer might be able to reach you on the road, and your system will send the customer's file to your PDA before you even say hello.

As TAPI grows in adoption and acceptance, you will see the line between phone and computer blurring. What will emerge will be a single unit of information and communication that is much more refined and productive than either component could ever be on its own. That's the power of TAPI.