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ON PUBLIC COMMUNICATION • OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE APCC®

June 2008
Volume 16
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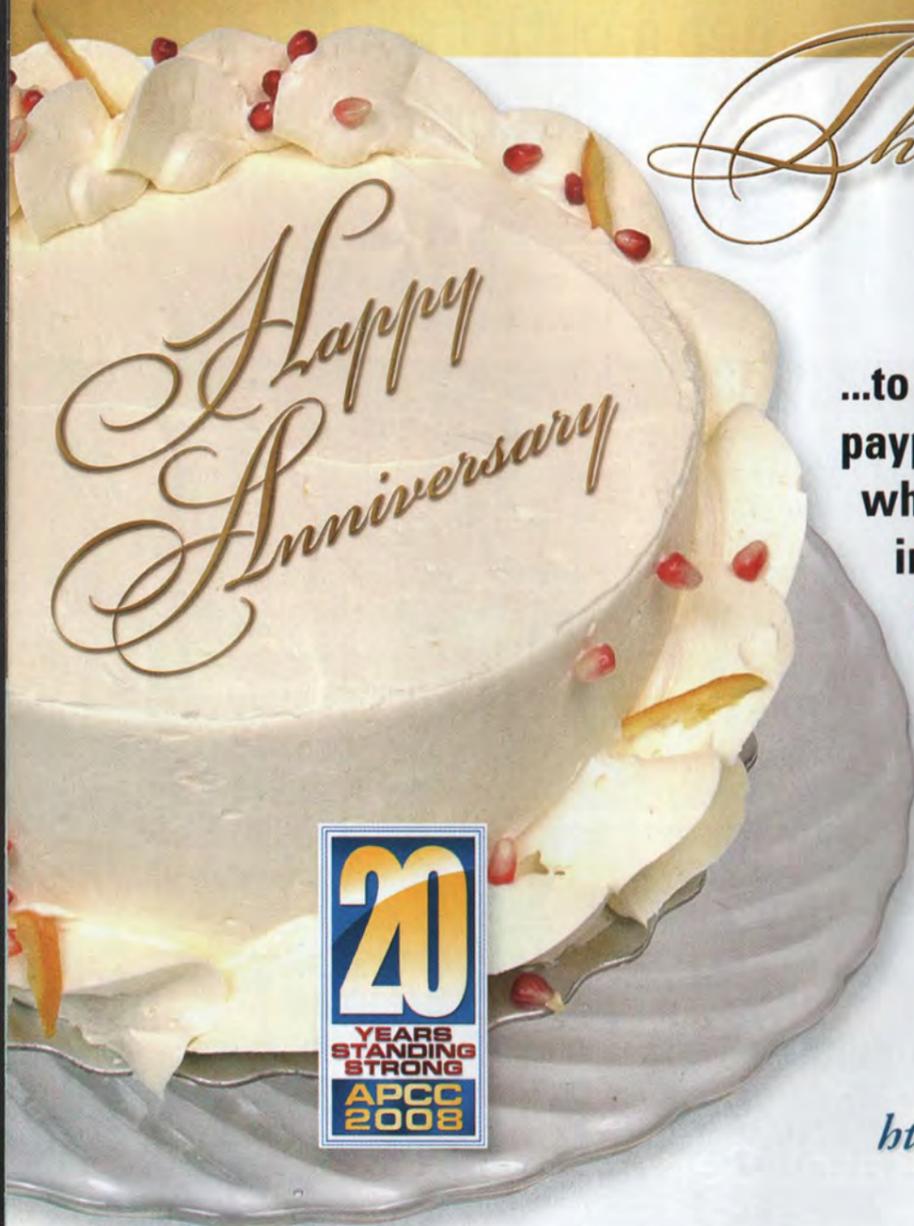
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The PAC: continuing to fight for justice

The APCC's political action committee was created to allow our customers and members an effective way to participate in the political process — to be heard by decision makers on issues important to the public communications industry. It is one of the best tools we have to help us make payphone providers' concerns a priority in Congress.

A primary goal for the PAC is to use our limited resources to educate legislators on the continuing need for payphones and on the challenges we face. As you all know, many of our challenges have been caused or worsened by policy changes that don't take into account their impact on the small businesses run by the men and women in the independent payphone industry.

Make no mistake — our opponents are spending tens of millions of dollars lobbying to impact the legislative process in their favor. The most recent PAC expenditures reports for AT&T, Sprint and Qwest together show over \$3.5 million in PAC contributions to legislators in just 2007 and the first quarter of 2008. The reports for Verizon and BellSouth show over \$1.5 million in contributions in the same period. Obviously, the few thousand dollars we have available in the APCC PAC can't begin to equal these carriers' efforts.



I know the carriers have lots of issues of concern. But don't doubt for a minute that a portion of their funds and activities are going to telling a story that congressional policymakers shouldn't really be worried about payphones anymore. The reason is simple. Even though most of these carriers no longer compete against us in the payphone arena, they hope a weakened independent payphone industry simply won't have the wherewithal to continue to fight for justice.

These carriers are showing time and again that they will stop at nothing in their efforts to continue to cover up their years of anticompetitive overcharging and their past failures to pay hundreds of millions of dollars in dial-around compensation that they owe to our members and customers.

Even with our limited resources, we are doing

editorial

better than just "holding our own" against these giants. The reason is simple: Each of you, and the independent payphone industry as a whole, provide a real and valuable service for the American public — no matter how often the large carriers might attempt to denigrate it. And fending off the carriers is just one of the topics we deal with legislatively.

This year, for example, we need to maintain our legislative focus on the important policy issues facing payphone providers, issues like making sure no DAC loopholes can be exploited by VoIP carriers and our continuing efforts to rationalize the Universal Service Fund system. The USF system today still requires payments from payphone providers but denies PSPs the ability to obtain payments from the fund to help them continue to provide truly universal services to all Americans.

The regulations applicable to PAC fund-raising are pretty complex. Certainly, for a small association, they impose some costly and difficult hurdles that must be overcome. On the other hand, the carriers' expenditure figures show they don't have much of a problem working with the system.

One of the more significant burdens on our ability to be effective in raising PAC funds is the requirement that everyone be asked first for permission to actually then solicit participation. As all of our members and customers know, we send out just such a pre-solicitation communication every year.

This year, I hope you will carefully consider a positive response when returning it to us.

This won't in any way commit you to making any contributions or in any amounts. But what it will do is allow you to receive from us more complete information about what the APCC PAC has been doing and what its plans are for the future. With this information, I am sure it would be a lot easier for each of you to see that the PAC is working for you to accomplish your goals.

Let me close by saying that I hope to see each and every one of you June 24-26 at this year's Conference & Expo at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. It's going to be an informative and exciting show that you won't want to miss.


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by Dan Collins

Q&A on the USF

APCC's corporate counsel answers the most commonly asked questions on the Universal Service Fund

Like all business owners, payphone service providers (PSPs) face a myriad of fees and taxes related to the operation of their businesses. One of the fees that raises the most questions for payphone providers is the Universal Service Fund (USF) fee. This fee typically appears as a "universal service charge" on monthly telephone bills.

Questions from PSPs have included: What exactly is the USF? How does it work? Who pays into it? Who gets money out of it? How does it affect PSPs? What changes are they making to it? What follows is intended to answer those questions and help payphone providers better understand this fee.

What exactly is the USF?

The USF is the funding mechanism that pays for the federal government's universal service program. With the Telecommunications Act of 1996, Congress expanded the scope of the federal universal service program to include schools, libraries and rural health care providers along with the program's traditional focus on low income telephone customers and telephone customers in rural and high cost areas. The federal universal service program currently consists of the following:

- Lifeline/Link-Up program, which provides discounts on monthly service and initial telephone installation or activation fees to income-eligible consumers;
- High Cost program, which supports companies

- that provide telecommunications services in areas where the cost of providing service is high;
- Schools and Libraries program, which helps support classrooms and libraries in using educational resources available through the telecommunications network, including the Internet; and
- Rural Health Care program, which helps link health care providers located in rural areas to urban medical centers in order to provide access to advanced diagnostic and other medical services.

How does the USF work?

The day to day operations of the USF are administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC). On a quarterly basis, USAC estimates the amount of support required to fund the USF programs as well as the amount of revenue to be generated by the telecommunications companies that contribute to the USF.

USAC then calculates a proposed contribution factor to be applied to those revenues in order to fund the USF programs. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) then reviews the data and proposed contribution factor and either accepts or modifies the proposed contribution factor. USAC then bills all USF contributors for the amounts due based on the approved contribution factor. Payments received from the contributing companies are then disbursed to program recipients.

Who pays into the USF?

Under the Telecom Act, every telecommunications carrier providing interstate telecommunications services, including PSPs, is required to contribute to the USF. In addition, the FCC is authorized to require any other providers of interstate telecommunications to

before the FCC and Congress for years about the unfairness of burdening payphone providers with payments into the USF and then not allowing them any benefit while providing USF subsidies to competitors like wireless providers.

How does the USF affect PSPs?

PSPs are required to contribute to the USF. Larger PSPs contribute directly to the USF by contributing a percentage of their interstate coin call revenues. Such direct payors receive invoices from USAC and pay their contribution on a monthly schedule.

To ensure correct billing for USF contributions, direct payors are required to file a Form 499-Q, Quarterly Filing for Universal Service Contributors, on a quarterly basis to report their revenues from the prior quarter. The filing deadlines are normally Feb. 1, May 1, Aug. 1 and Nov. 1 of each year. PSPs that qualify for the USF's de minimis exemption, which is discussed below, do not need to file Form 499-Q.

De minimis PSPs

Smaller payphone providers typically are exempt from paying fees directly to the USF through a "de minimis" exemption. The de minimis exemption applies if a PSP's contributions to the USF for the year would be less than \$10,000.

To assist PSPs with determining whether they qualify for the de minimis exemption, the FCC typically includes a de minimis financial table in its instructions for completing Form 499-A, the FCC's Annual Telecommunications Reporting Worksheet. APCC members can find a copy of Form 499-A and instructions on the association's Web site, www.apcc.net. Most PSPs qualify for the de minimis exemption. (Please note that all PSPs are required to file Form 499-A annually.)

PSPs that qualify for the de minimis exemption for direct payments still make indirect contributions to the USF, as telephone companies generally "pass through" the cost of their own direct USF contributions to their customers, such as PSPs. Telephone companies are prohibited from passing through the cost of their USF contributions to PSPs who directly contribute to the USF.

As the indirect payments can sometimes result in PSPs paying higher USF fees than if they were direct contributors to the USF, the APCC filed a request with

the FCC in 2006 asking the commission to allow PSPs who qualify for the de minimis exemption to make direct USF payments. In its request, the APCC noted that the average pass-through USF charges paid by de minimis payphone providers greatly exceed the average direct payments made by direct-paying PSPs. The FCC has not yet ruled on the request.

State USF programs

In addition to the federal universal service programs, many state governments have implemented their own programs. At the state level, public utility commissions generally implement the universal service programs. State universal service programs typically are funded through either a fee or tax levied directly on telephone customers or a fee or tax levied on telecommunications service companies. The companies are permitted to pass these charges on to their customers.

What is the future for USF?

With \$6 billion in support payouts in 2006, the USF is a very popular political issue in Washington, D.C. Both the FCC and Congress are looking to make changes to the USF in the near future.

In January of 2008, the FCC released a series of Notices of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRMs) seeking comments on ways to reform the USF's High Cost program. In one of the NPRMs, the FCC is seeking comments on whether to use reverse auctions to determine the amount of high cost universal service support provided to eligible telecommunications carriers serving rural, insular and high cost areas. In a reverse auction, companies would compete against each other to become the one company designated to receive USF payments in any given geographic area. The company requesting the lowest amount of USF assistance would be the successful designee.

The FCC also is seeking comments on whether it should employ a pilot program to disburse high cost support targeted to broadband Internet access services. As comments and reply comments on the NPRMs were due this spring, any action by the FCC is many months away.

As many rural telecommunications providers receive substantial support from the USF, members

of the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives representing rural areas of the country have made expanding the USF a legislative priority. The APCC was successful in getting legislative language included in both the Senate and House bills in the last Congress to allow the FCC to exempt some market segments, such as the payphone industry, from contributing to the USF. However, those bills did not make it to the floor for a vote.

While little action on telecommunications legislation is expected from the current Congress prior to the elections in November, the APCC is still engaged in laying the foundation for exempting payphones from contributing to the USF and has been successful in getting favorable language included in several legislative drafts.

Additional information

If you have any questions on the USF or need additional information, here are some additional resources.

- APCC's Legal & Regulatory Web page — www.apcc.net or APCC members may contact Dan Collins at dcollins@apcc.net or at (703) 739-1322, ext. 225.



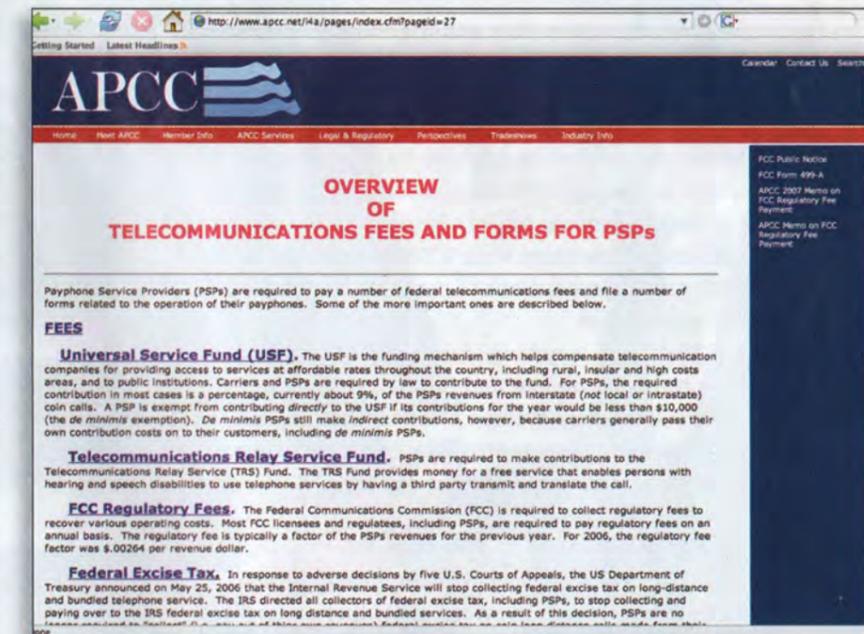
contribute to the USF if it is deemed to be in the public interest.

In June of 2006, the FCC extended USF contribution obligations to include providers of voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) services. Additional information on contributing to the USF can be found at www.usac.org/fund-administration/contributors/.

Who gets money from the USF?

Although consumers ultimately benefit from the USF, only companies that provide telecommunications and other services are eligible to receive support payments from the USF. The support payments help companies offset the cost of delivering the USF program services to consumers. For a telecommunications provider to receive USF support payments, it must provide a service covered by a USF program and must also be designated as an "eligible telecommunications carrier" (ETC) by either a state public utility commission or the FCC.

To date, PSPs have not been designated as ETCs and therefore are not eligible to receive USF support payments. As the American Public Communications Council Inc. (APCC) strongly believes PSPs provide universal service through affordable access to the nation's telephone network, it has been arguing



- FCC's Universal Service homepage — www.fcc.gov/wcb/tapd/universal_service or (888) CALL-FCC (888-225-5322).
- Universal Service Administrative Company — www.usac.org or (888) 641-8722. ■

Dan Collins is corporate counsel for the APCC.

A helping hand

Nonprofit organization offers free business advice to companies who ask for it

There are plenty of sources of advice available about running a business successfully, but few voices are as valuable as those who've already seen success.

That's the premise behind SCORE, which describes its members as "Counselors to America's Small Business." The nonprofit national organization puts the expertise of retired executives at the disposal of those trying to find their way in the business world today. Most of SCORE's clients are aspiring entrepreneurs, but SCORE's services are available to anyone who wants a hand in making a business thrive. And yes, the services are offered free of charge.

For those in the payphone industry, advice on keeping a business healthy can be especially worthwhile, says Andy Majernik, president of Innovative Business & Services Inc. of Glendale, Ill. His company held several meetings with SCORE volunteers in late 2007, and Majernik plans to continue working with the organization.

"We're in a very tough business," Majernik says. "The revenues are low, and they're getting lower. You have to figure out how to offset that. Here's an opportunity to potentially look at ways to grow or improve, and it doesn't cost anything."

Ready to help

SCORE, a 44-year-old organization headquartered in Washington, D.C., provides individual counseling and business workshops throughout the country. (The organization was formerly known as the Service Corps of Retired Executives.)

"The bottom line is to improve the lot of small business," says Rod Means, a San Diego-based district director for SCORE. Means, who is one of more than 10,000 SCORE volunteers, is an example of the type of expertise that's available to SCORE clients. He's been running companies since the early 1970s.

When he retired in 1998, he was the founder, president and CEO of TRICK Enterprises Inc., an affiliate of TRICK Racing Gasoline.

Those who choose to work with SCORE have a number of options for getting help, Means says. First, they can find a nearby office — SCORE has 389 chapters in the U.S. — and start meeting with a counselor. Most volunteers can cover the basics of business, from cash flow management to growing an operation. Chapters also can help clients locate volunteers with expertise in a specific area, such as marketing or human resources, or in specific industries, such as

communications or technology.

"When you call a chapter, you determine in your mind what skill you're looking for, what kind of expertise you need," Means says. "Maybe I want to expand my business, or maybe I want to be running my business more efficiently." Clients can get as detailed as they want with their questions, Means says.

Prospective clients also have the option of work-

ing with SCORE counselors online at www.score.org. The national site's Ask Score feature allows users to present the organization with a question and receive answers by e-mail. From there, they can maintain a running online dialogue with a counselor. Depending on the clients' questions, they could receive answers from throughout the country.

"It's an interactive thing," Means says. "No one else has anything like it, and it's free. You can ask a question and get 10 answers." No one knows if any of the other volunteers have answered, Means says, so everyone will try to make his response as informative as possible.

Means is one of the volunteers who tackles these questions. If he doesn't know the answer, he'll turn to other SCORE members for help. He remembers an e-mail from an online furniture retailer. "They had a complaint lodged against them through the Better Business Bureau, and they were devastated," Means says. "They came to me and asked how important the Better Business Bureau is. I went to three other colleagues for input." The answers varied, but the general

consensus was to address complaints as quickly as possible, and beyond that, not to worry.

The national site also has links to free how-to

articles, e-newsletters and other business resources.

It's worthwhile to visit chapter Web sites, too, Means says. The San Diego branch, for instance, has an online business library. Clients can click on About SCORE, and then select Find SCORE, to connect with the chapter offices.

In addition to accessing chapter resources, clients can investigate chapters and find out what kind of expertise their members offer. If they find a good fit for their company, they can conduct their counseling online or by phone.

Those who register with a branch can start getting notices about upcoming workshops and seminars. There usually is a fee for these events, which

SCORE



serve as fund-raising tools for the branches, but the organizers strive to address issues of interest to small businesses. "Internet marketing is one of our most popular topics," Means says.

Finding the time

For SCORE, meeting clients' needs is rarely a problem, Means says. The challenge is convincing entrepreneurs and business owners to carve out the time to work with the organization in the first place. "Small business is guilty of being too busy working to make money," he says. "It's hard for them to walk away and take vacation or go to a seminar. They don't join the chamber of commerce. They don't network. That's a constant problem."

But in his experience, most entrepreneurs and business owners can benefit from the time they spend working with SCORE. "It's like any other investment," he says.

Open to ideas

Majernik, who established his payphone company in 1991, operates primarily out of Illinois, but he has payphones in several Midwest states. "We're trying to maintain growth and profitability," he says. "We

see a lot of consolidation in the industry, but we're still a growing company."

Majernik has known about SCORE for about 10 years, but like the other business owners Means described, he didn't really make it a priority to reach out to the organization for help. "We've always been talking about it, especially during the slow times of the year."

Then, last year, a counseling service approached Innovative Business & Services. Like SCORE, this service offers the advice of seasoned business executives. But this organization charges for its services, it limits the number of times clients can interact with advisors, and it makes no guarantee that its advice will make a difference.

Majernik understands that no one can guarantee his advice, but this service represented a significant expense to his company. "With a payphone business, you can't afford to take those kinds of gambles," he says.

So late last year, Majernik decided to start meeting with SCORE. He and his company representatives met a counselor from their local chapter and later spoke with consultant and small business mentor Jack Hardy, a SCORE volunteer who spoke at APCC 2007 and has written for *Perspectives*.

Majernik learned that most of SCORE's clients are aspiring entrepreneurs, rather than established business owners. "We weren't their typical client, but that wasn't a bad thing; they were excited," Majernik says. "To actually have a company call them just to tweak themselves is rare."

Innovative Business & Services' leadership is open to new thoughts on payphone operations and business management, Majernik says. "We thought SCORE would be somebody to talk to for fresh ideas."

Promising future

The company's initial meetings with SCORE representatives gave Majernik an opportunity to learn more about the organization and what it does. Now, he says, he's looking forward to finding ways to utilize what it has to offer. "They can help you work on potential problems or come up with new ideas," he says. "We're so new to this I haven't decided what we're going to work on first, but this is a valuable resource."

For more information about SCORE, call (800) 634-0245, e-mail score@sba.gov or visit www.score.org. ■

Flori Meeks is a freelance writer who is based in Houston. She has 20 years of writing and editing experience, and has been writing for *Perspectives* for nine years.

by Flori Meeks

Making a difference

In addition to serving their communities with payphone service, industry members volunteer for a variety of causes

By the very nature of their business, payphone service providers (PSPs) serve their communities. Their presence provides a safety net for millions of people throughout the country, whether they're callers with no other means of outside communication or those in a crisis who need a reliable way to reach help and loved ones. But a number of PSPs take extra measures to make a positive difference. Some donate their time and money to causes they respect. Others contribute company resources.

Perspectives recently spoke with several industry representatives who've made it a priority to help others. Each found the decision to be of service an easy one.

Benefit behind bars

Kevin O'Neil remembers the day he went to jail fondly. O'Neil is the president of Pinnacle Public Communications. The Oregon-based company operates about 1,000 payphones in the West and provides air machine and inmate phone services.

O'Neil's home community, Fruitland, Idaho, has been raising money for an indoor, heated facility



Kevin O'Neil makes calls to get out of "jail."

for the high school baseball team. The facility is intended to provide school athletes and community members a place to sharpen their baseball skills during Fruitland's frigid winters.

Last November, community members called on O'Neil to join their fund-raiser for the base-



A local DJ interviews one of the baseball coaches.

ball center. Participants were locked in a mock jail, and the only way to earn bail was to raise money toward the project's \$100,000 goal.

Not only did O'Neil agree to the lockup, he recruited colleagues from the payphone industry to help with donations. And Pinnacle contributed \$500 toward the cause. "I loved helping our local school," said O'Neil, who has a son at the high school. "I think we need to support our kids' sports. Everyone will have access to this facility from little league to the high school. It will be a place to work on your swing and get ready for the next season."



Volunteers helped decorate the gym for the event.

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There for a friend

John Vranich isn't a PSP, but he works with them every day. His Sacramento-based company, America's Business Software, regularly sells Management Information Systems for Telephones (MIST) software to people in the payphone industry.



Austin Vranich shows off his medal from the JDRF walk.

Most clients who know Vranich know about his 12-year-old son, Austin, who has type 1 diabetes. Austin has to be injected with insulin before every meal, and before each shot he has to check his blood sugar level. If his blood sugar were to get out of

control, he could be at risk for a wide range of complications, from kidney disease to nerve damage.

Since Austin was diagnosed at age 9, Vranich has been organizing community walks to help the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF) raise money for research. "I get out each time and e-mail my clients and ask them if they want to help. And

they do. They find it in their heart to send donations."

Vranich has been touched by consistent generosity he's been observing among PSPs. "It means a lot," he said. "They have good hearts. They donate, and they're generally concerned about others."

For more information about the JDRF, visit www.jdrf.org.

For more information about Vranich's walk, which usually is held in the fall, e-mail john@abs-mist.com.

Sharing space

When a local arts group approached TCC Teleplex about posting displays on the company's payphone kiosks, it was a no-brainer, said director of projects Alan Rothenstreich. The company has provided the use of its kiosks for two years now. "We always try to help out the different sectors our customers are involved with," Rothenstreich says.

TCC Teleplex, a New York City-based company, offers payphone service, Web payphones and kiosk advertising, along with payphone installation and maintenance service.



The company hosted the art displays for the Jamaica Center for Arts & Learning (JCAL) during the nonprofit organization's "Jamaica Flux: Workspace & Windows" exhibition. The event, held September through November, 2007, called for the commission, creation and exhibition of 25 site-specific pieces of art.

The display sites along Jamaica Avenue included banks, stores, restaurants — and the payphone kiosks. Jamaica Flux is intended to challenge ideas about where art should be displayed and encourage viewers to consider the relationship between art, commerce, urban renewal and community.

Supporting the exhibition was a positive experience, Rothenstreich says. "It's just giving back to the people who use our phones," he says. "Not only do acts of service help the community, they put the payphone industry in a positive light. We have to show how much value we add to the community. We're not just taking up space."

Creating a safe haven

Jay Walters has a healthy respect for the work of missionaries. The vice president of NCIC Operator Services is the son of missionaries, Joe and Floye Walters, and he continues to find ways to support their efforts.

During the last year, he created a Web site for Oasis Christian Children's Home in Sorsogon, Philippines, and for his father's missionary organization, American Harvesters. NCIC continues to provide Web space for both organizations, and Walters has been contributing his own money to their efforts.

NCIC Operator Services provides operator service in the U.S., Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands and Canada. The Longview, Texas-based company also provides inmate phone services.

Walters learned about Oasis through his parents, who spoke to him after visiting tent cities in the Philippines. "Basically, the children there are living and eating in a dump," Walters says.

Oasis is striving to provide orphans and children in need with a safe haven, he says. "I just wanted to help them out because I thought it was a great cause."

Walters is enthusiastic about his father's work too. When Walters was a boy, the family lived in Honduras. Joe Walters supplied food for refugees and tried to provide a support system for the local church. Since then he has expanded his missionary efforts throughout Central America, along with Australia, New Zealand and Philippines.



Oasis is striving to create a better life for orphans.

Supporting Oasis and American Harvesters' efforts overseas means a lot, Walters says. "We can't always be there, but by giving my prayers and financial support to them I'm at least involved in more than the everyday hustle and bustle of life."

For more information about Oasis Christian Children's Home, visit www.oasisorphanage.com.

For more information about American Harvesters, visit www.americanharvesters.com. ■

Flori Meeks is a freelance writer who is based in Houston. She has 20 years of writing and editing experience, and has been writing for *Perspectives* for nine years.

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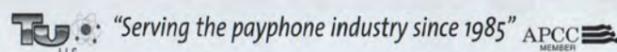
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Fighting the good fight



Throughout its 20 year history, the APCC has been a strong advocate for independent PSPs

The American Public Communications Council Inc. (APCC) has seen its share of David and Goliath sagas. And in most cases, the association was part of the story, standing by the little guy, evening the playing field. The association has been helping independent payphone service providers (PSPs) make their way for 20 years now, often in the face of tremendous obstacles.

The APCC got its start shortly after the payphone industry opened to independent providers, and it's been working on their behalf ever since. The association has been serving as a teacher, encourager, advocate and defender. It has helped payphone providers make sense of the industry, and often, it has helped shape it. "The trade association has been extremely active in the legislative and regulatory arenas," says communications attorney Al Kramer, who has been APCC's outside counsel since it was founded. "They are really the only voice for the industry."

A common cause

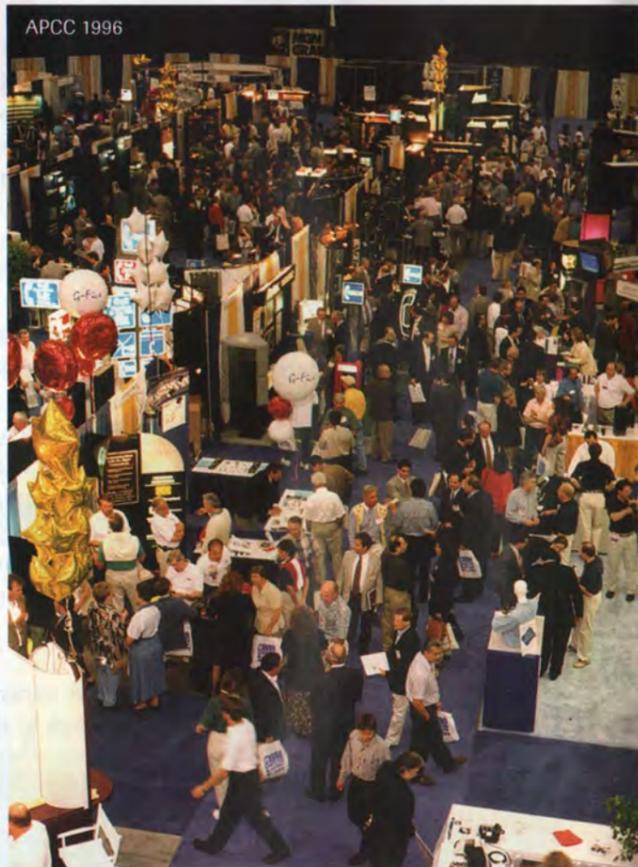
Former APCC Chairman Jeff Hanft, who served on the board for many years, still remembers the impetus behind the association. He was attending a trade show in Florida in 1988 when he learned about a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) ruling with potentially negative repercussions for the independent payphone industry. Hanft, who owned Miami-based Peoples Telephone Co. at the time, discussed this new development with fellow industry member Marty Segal. It only had been four years since an FCC ruling forced existing phone companies to open their networks to competitors' payphones.

Segal, who got in the business in 1984, knew he and other independent providers faced a rough road ahead. "What was evident was I couldn't fight the battles that needed to be fought," he says. "We needed to have a unified voice in Washington with the FCC and Congress."

The conversation between Hanft and Segal led to talks with more industry members, including Alan Lieberman (now deceased), Steve Edwards and Randy Bergmann. "We got together, and we decided to form an association," Hanft says.

Not only did the men want to see an organization presenting their needs to federal policymakers and legislators, they wanted an opportunity to host trade shows, as opposed to relying on outside private parties to organize these events. "We felt we should hold our own shows and keep the money in the industry," says Segal, who, short a brief absence, has served on the APCC's board since its inception. Segal also serves as executive director of the Illinois Public Telecommunications Association (IPTA).

The men approached Kramer, who was outside counsel for the North American Telecommunications Association (NATA), a Washington, D.C.-based national trade association that represented telecommunications



APCC 1996



APCC 1994 West

equipment manufacturers and vendors. "The PSPs didn't have resources to start their own association," says Kramer, who is now a partner with Dickstein Shapiro in Washington, D.C.

The payphone providers asked Kramer to approach NATA about forming a payphone section. He agreed to help them.

After receiving a positive response from NATA, Kramer wrote up the paperwork that made the payphone group official. It would share NATA's office space and have access to its phone lines. In addition to representing the payphone industry's needs before the FCC and Congress, the association kept its members current on relevant national issues. "It was really quite amazing, because we grew from basically nothing to having hundreds of members, a trade show and a magazine," Hanft says.

From the very beginning, the association began to make its mark in the legal and regulatory arenas. In fact, just a month or two after it was formed, the APCC faced a life or death challenge.

In the spring of 1988, in reaction to perceived operator service provider (OSP) overcharging, legislation was introduced in the House of Representatives that would have, in effect, eliminated independent PSPs and left the field to incumbent telephone companies. The APCC decided to take the threat and turn it into an opportunity.

By the time the legislation passed the Senate and was signed by the president, it contained a provision that required the FCC to consider whether to develop a system to compensate independent PSPs for dial-around calls.



APCC member Herman Malone, RMES Communications



Long-time board members Tom Keane, Bruce Renard and Dennis Novick



APCC '98 West keynote speaker FCC Commissioner Harold Furchtgott-Roth



Vic Brenner and Cheryl Barker at APCC 1996

Taking a stand

In the early 1990s, the association decided it was ready to separate itself from NATA, and it engaged a

APCC finished the job by participating in the FCC rule-making that mandated per-phone compensation beginning in June of 1992, and these proceedings eventually led to per-call dial-around compensation.

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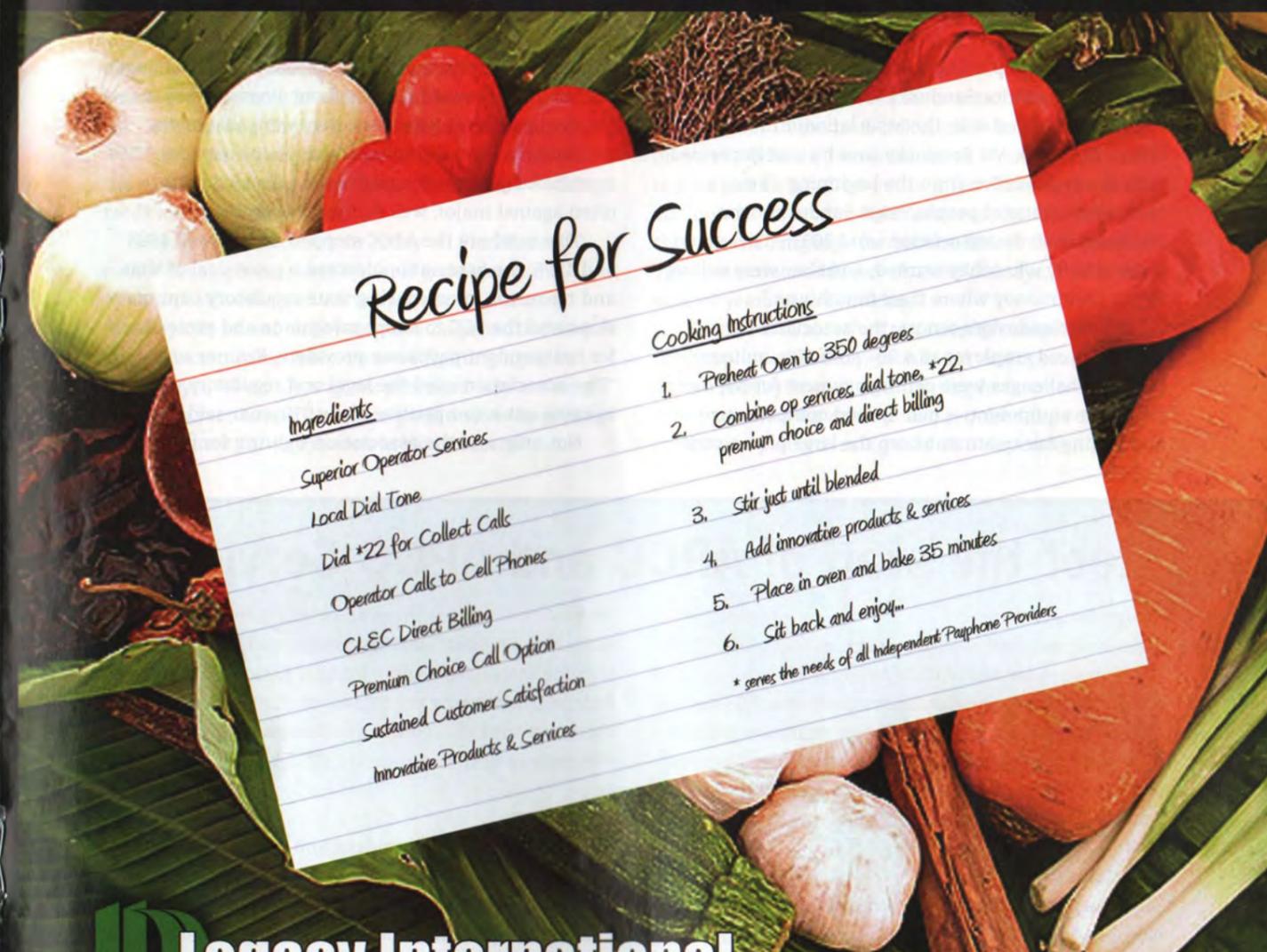
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search firm to help it find a strong leader to help with the transition. Vince Sandusky took that role in March of 1994 and settled with the association into new offices in Fairfax, Va. Sandusky says he was impressed with the organization from the beginning. "I saw a committed group of people," says Sandusky, who remained with the association until 2003. "These guys knew exactly what they wanted, and they were willing to put their money where their mouth was."

During Sandusky's tenure, the association grew from one paid employee to a 20+ staff. The industry's primary challenges were getting payment for the use of payphone equipment — dial-around compensation — and getting fair treatment from the large phone com-

panies PSPs rely on for service. Because local exchange carriers (LECs) owned the payphone lines used by independent payphone providers, they were able to discriminate in favor of their own payphone services. PSPs continuously found themselves at a disadvantage, often against major, well-funded corporations.

This is where the APCC stepped in. Between 1988 and 1995, the association devoted a great deal of time and resources to convincing state regulatory commissions and the FCC to adopt safeguards and protections for independent payphone providers, Kramer says. "The association used the legal and regulatory process to carve out a competitive niche," Kramer said.

Not only was the association fighting for indepen-

dent providers, it was winning its fights, says Sandusky, who now heads up the Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors' National Association.

"Public policy success was the jewel that drove the APCC," Sandusky says. "It fed upon itself, nothing feeds success like success."

Hanft, who concentrates today on Florida real estate development, says he feels good about the APCC's positive impact on the payphone industry. "I take pride in our ability to prevail against the very large telecom companies we were fighting against," Hanft says. "The only way we prevailed was we were fighting a just cause. We made great strides in getting fair treatment for payphones in this country."

A new playing field

One of the association's most dramatic victories would occur in the mid-1990s, said Gary Pace, who operates Midwest Communication Solutions Inc. and is a long-time APCC board member. "I think the association's No. 1 accomplishment was shepherding through the language for Section 276 of the federal Telecommunications Act of 1996," he says. "That was several years in the making."

Section 276, an effort to promote competition in the payphone industry, prohibited Bell operating companies (BOCs) from discriminating in favor of their own payphone services. It also required the FCC to establish a plan ensuring that all independent pay-

Meet the staff of APCC and APCC Services

Evelyn Bruggeman

Title: customer account manager

Number of years with APCC: 4

Responsibilities: dial-around compensation billing and collection, including duties such as customer service and support, interacting with payors and non-payors and involvement with the payment and submission process

Dan Collins

Title: corporate counsel and secretary

Number of years with APCC: 4

Responsibilities: advises APCC board of directors and senior management on corporate legal matters; advises APCC personnel on day-to-day legal matters; researches and advises association members on compliance issues; drafts and negotiates contracts; works with outside counsel on regulatory and litigation matters; writes about legal issues for *Perspectives*
Outside interests: hiking, biking, books, music, college football, soccer and auto racing

Jannette Corcher

Title: ad sales representative

Number of years with APCC: 4

Responsibilities: manages ad sales for *Perspectives* magazine and exhibit sales for the trade show
Outside interests: reading (mainly fiction novels), running, mentoring youth and working with local church groups to facilitate positive changes within the community

Ruth Jaeger

Title: APCC Services president and general manager

Number of years with APCC: 9

Responsibilities: dial-around compensation billing and collection, including duties such as customer service and support, interacting with payors and non-payors and involvement with the payment and submission process

Maria Kerr

Title: customer account manager

Number of years with APCC: 1

Responsibilities: dial-around compensation billing and collection, including duties such as customer service and support, interacting with payors and non-payors and involvement with the payment and submission process

Carol A. MacDougall

Title: director, conferences and education

Number of years with APCC: 9

Responsibilities: directs all aspects of APCC's annual conference and expo

Outside interests: family, running, reading, cooking, crossword puzzles

Willard R. Nichols

Title: APCC president and general counsel

Number of years with APCC: 6

Responsibilities: serves as the CEO of APCC and as its primary spokesman for regulatory and congressional activities

David Rossé

Title: customer account manager

Number of years with APCC: 11

Responsibilities: dial-around compensation billing and collection, including duties such as customer service and support, interacting with payors and non-payors and involvement with the payment and submission process

Helly Shareefy

Title: membership manager and database administrator

Number of years with APCC: 4

Responsibilities: communicates with members, including sending updates as needed, maintains APCC database, updates APCC Web site, processes annual conference and expo registrations

Outside interests: family and music

Deborah Sterman

Title: CFO and treasurer

Number of years with APCC: 4

Responsibilities: handles financial planning, management and reporting for APCC and APCC Services

Outside interests: family, reading, crocheting, animals, NASCAR

Tracey Timpanaro

Title: publisher

Number of years with APCC: 14

Responsibilities: publishes *Perspectives* on Public Communication magazine six times per year

Outside interests: family, music, yoga, reading, tennis, soccer, exercise



Evelyn Bruggeman



Dan Collins



Jannette Corcher



Ruth Jaeger



Maria Kerr



Carol A. MacDougall



Willard R. Nichols



David Rossé



Helly Shareefy



Deborah Sterman



Tracey Timpanaro

phone providers were compensated fairly for the use of their payphones. The new law would become critical to independent PSPs' survival, says Pace, who previously served as APCC chairman and now is the executive director of the Kentucky Payphone Association and the Michigan Pay Telephone Association.

"Without dial-around compensation there would be no payphone industry today, period," Pace says.

Section 276 also required the FCC to take steps to eliminate the discrimination by incumbent telephone companies and to promote payphone competition. The FCC responded to the law with a series of Orders. All incumbent LECs were required to stop subsidizing their payphone operations. The BOCs in particular were now required to charge PSPs cost-based rates for the use of their lines, rates that satisfied the FCC's new services test (NST).

The law and the FCC Orders were major milestones, Pace says, but the APCC's work was far from over. "We've had a very difficult time getting the carriers to abide by the NST and getting all carriers to comply with dial-around requirements," he says. "It's still a work in progress."

The APCC faced some of its most difficult battles after the passage of the Telecommunications Act, agrees long-time board member Vincent Townsend, who joined the association in the late 1980s. "It was hard work," he says. "I think I made 72 trips to Washington to meet with representatives of the FCC and Congress to try to get them to do the right thing with the Telecommunications Act and the new services test. Of course, that fight is still going."

Package deal

In the midst of ongoing battles, the APCC has strived to inform PSPs and give them tools they need to succeed. The association magazine, *Perspectives*, has been a valuable resource since its inception in 1993. Its primary focus has been helping payphone providers maximize the profitability of their businesses, and its coverage has included everything from route management and technical issues to state and national regulatory news. The association provides additional information on its Web site, www.apcc.net.

APCC Services, a subsidiary of the APCC, provides billing and collection services for dial-around compensation. And the association's annual trade shows bring industry members from throughout the country together for educational seminars, networking and a look at the products and services available to them.

"The association has been there to assist us as providers," Townsend says. "Those shows it hosts have allowed us to have face to face contact with vendors. We've also had valuable educational forums. So the APCC was providing a very important resource to us."

Townsend, who also serves as president of the North Carolina Payphone Association, says the APCC and its

shows benefit state associations as well. "It provides a vehicle for the sharing of information from a regulatory standpoint," he says. "We ended up coming together and sharing information that was critical."

Still on the job

Today, the APCC is in the midst of cases against Qwest, Sprint, AT&T and others, says Randy Nichols, who has been serving as APCC's president since May of 2004.

"We're holding carriers' feet to the fire for meeting their responsibilities," says Nichols, who joined the association in 2003 as executive vice president and general counsel.

The association remains active at the regulatory level, too. "We work on a robust regulatory plan every year," Nichols says. "We're making sure there are no loopholes as far as carriers charging competitive rates."

Current areas of interest for the association include the emergence of voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) providers and the proper use of coding to identify payphone calls to ensure dial-around payment regardless of the technologies that may be used to complete a call. In addition, the APCC is closely monitoring and participating in proceedings involved with meeting new Americans with Disabilities Act standards.

Another major area of concern is the Universal Service Fund (USF), both the costs to payphone providers for maintaining the fund and the inherent unfairness of requiring PSPs to pay into the fund while at the same time being ineligible to receive payments from the fund. "Payphones are 'universal service,'" Nichols says. "We've been arguing for years that it isn't right to burden payphone providers with payments into the fund and then not allowing them to benefit while providing subsidies to competitors like wireless providers."

The APCC's services are more important than ever, Nichols says. "There may be fewer payphones today, but they are still critical to the American public, especially in light of the large number of American households still with no phone at all."

Indeed, statistics from the FCC show that about 7 million households have no phone service of any kind. Meanwhile, approximately 1.5 billion payphone calls were made in the United States last year. "Clearly, this is still a vital service, and for many Americans, their very lifeline to the communications network," Nichols says.

The APCC has spent the last 20 years working to protect and advance this industry, and it will continue its mission for years to come. "We're ensuring our people don't get overcharged and ensuring they get paid what they're entitled to," Nichols says. "That's what we've been doing all along." ■

Flori Meeks is a freelance writer who is based in Houston. She has 20 years of writing and editing experience, and has been writing for *Perspectives* for nine years.

tech talk

by Dennis Williams

Don't try this at home

A query about batteries leads to an experiment with explosive results

About a year ago I wrote a Tech Talk column about the ever frustrating payphone battery (see the April 2007 issue), but it appears more questions and comments have arisen regarding this small but seemingly complicated device.

For example, we received the following question from a PSP who asked to remain nameless and said he probably had a delusion about an article he thought he'd read: Can you charge your payphone's NiCad battery from your vehicle's battery?

Well, sir, the payphone NiCad battery, when fully charged, is around 4 volts and the car battery is typically 12 volts. Therefore my suggestion would be, "No, do not attempt it." But if you knew me, you would know that the possibility of blowing something up definitely had me intrigued.

Once I received your question from *Perspectives*,

I ran a few tests of my own. I set up several NiCad batteries of various voltages (1.5v, 2.5v, 4v) on the bench, testing one at a time. (I did not want to test a battery higher than 4v, because there is no point, as these batteries are fully charged and work perfectly in the field). The car battery I used was 12.96v, a typical voltage for a fully charged car battery.

As you know, when connecting the batteries together, it is very important to connect positive with positive and negative with negative. If the batteries are not marked clearly, the easy way to determine polarity is to use a volt meter.

Place the positive probe from the volt meter on one terminal of the battery and the negative probe on the other. If the voltage reading on the meter is positive, you have found the positive and negative terminals.

However, if the voltage reading is a minus number (below zero), then the positive and negative probes are reversed and should be switched to be correct. You should complete this test for both batteries before connecting them. Remember, safety first! (See photo.)

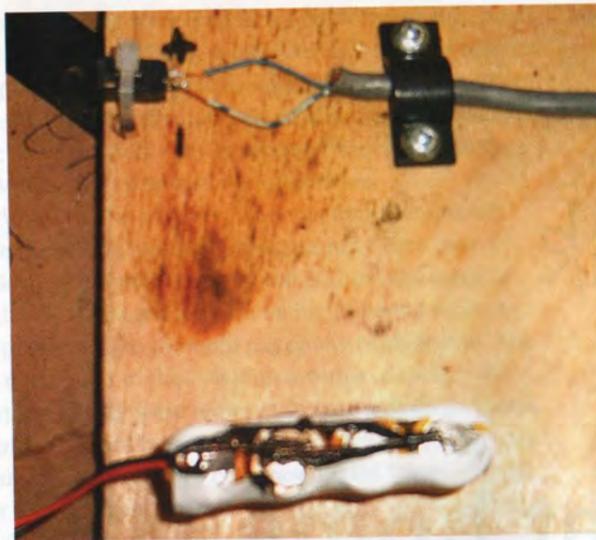
I completed the following test on all payphone batteries and the findings were very explosive!

After 30 minutes I tested the voltage on the payphone batteries, and they were all higher than the initial voltage. The 1.5v and 2.5v batteries were close to 6 volts, and the 4v battery was closer to the 12v of the car battery. It is important to note that all batteries were extremely hot to the touch.

After 45 minutes, all payphone batteries were carrying the 12v of the car battery, and I noticed that the 4v battery was getting quite hot, in fact it



Here we go - you can see that the payphone battery is connected to the car battery.



DENNIS WILLIAMS

◀ Although it's a little out of focus, you can see that the poor battery didn't make it.

2.) Replace the car battery with the transformer, connecting the positive to positive and negative to negative correctly as stated above (see photo below). The batteries will only charge to the maximum of 6 volts.

I performed this test and left the battery connected overnight. The battery charged to 6v and, most importantly, held the charge but did not explode. I would not leave the batteries connected for an extended period of time, but if you monitor this setup and remove the battery when fully charged, this method will pass the safety test.

Another device, probably the device that was suggested to you in the past, is a car battery charger. Many of these chargers have various voltage settings. Place the charger on the correct setting for the battery being charged and the charger will shut off once the battery is charged. This is the safest, but yes, most expensive, method of the ones we've discussed in this column.

was untouchable. Then I started to smell a strange odor. A few seconds later I saw smoke rising from the payphone battery.

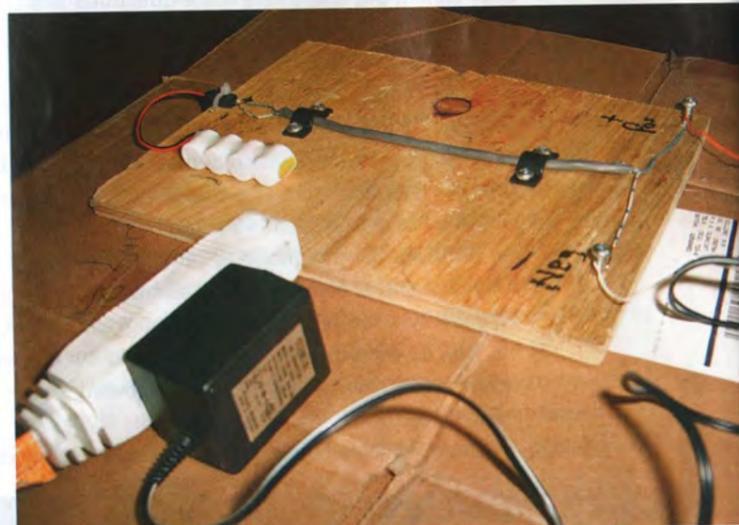
Unfortunately, before I could get the camera ready, the battery made a hissing sound and then burst open. It actually sounded like a frying egg (see photo above). I then continued testing the remaining batteries. The complete test was 2 hours.

The voltages were holding at 12v, but all the batteries were getting hot, too hot to touch. Because of my electrical engineering and safety background, I could not continue the test, as I felt the remaining payphone batteries would soon become unstable and I did not want a Chernobyl disaster. The neighbors would be talking about it for weeks.

To conclude my findings: Yes, the car battery did charge the payphone batteries. In fact, it was an explosive charge for one of the batteries. The remaining batteries are still holding the charge a week later. But to prevent any lawsuits against *Perspectives* or yours truly, I go on the record as stating that this is not a safe or reliable method, even in a pinch.

Neither the payphone batteries nor the car batteries have a regulator or safety switch to control the voltage. That is the reason it is not a safe method. If you leave the batteries connected together for a long period of time, they will explode and unfortunately, it will not create the kind of fireworks we see on the Fourth of July.

Alternatively, why not use a 6v transformer? These transformers are inexpensive and can be purchased from most of the payphone suppliers. (Those of you who use Intellicall will be familiar with these, as Intellicall uses a 6v transformer to power the Astratel



▲ This is probably your best bet – recharging payphone batteries on a transformer.

To conclude, it is very important to continuously test and recharge your batteries to give your payphones the best chance of survival. Other than dial tone, the battery is the heart of your payphone. Therefore consider it the heart of your business. Whatever method or device you use to maintain your batteries, make sure it works for you, because without it, you are not operating your business to the maximum of its potential. ■

Dennis Williams has been involved in the payphone industry for 10 years and is currently operations manager for FCT Communications Inc., which is based in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. If you have Tech Talk ideas, please send an e-mail to dennis@3dm.ca.

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Whether you own a payphone business in Massachusetts, Texas, California or elsewhere, we are all facing similar challenges. APCC 2008 proves that even in tough times, resilient people and companies still find ways to compete and expand into new areas. We've gathered PSPs from across the country to lead an important series of GENERAL EDUCATION CLASSES. Their industry knowledge, entrepreneurial spirit, and willingness to share their success is so inspiring, you won't want to miss a single session.

What's working - from coast to coast.

The National Perspective: Payphones, Public Perception, and the Power of Grassroots Initiatives

We all know the headlines – "Payphones disappearing from the national landscape;" "AT&T pulling out of declining payphone marketplace." What is real, what's not? How do decisions and actions on NST, USF, and dial around compensation impact our industry's profitability? How can we influence these decisions and whose support can we enlist to help us make our case? This APCC 2008 education session is a start. Panelists will speak to the tough issues facing the payphone industry, outline APCC's objectives, and detail what you can do at the local, state, and national levels to raise public awareness and take action in support of payphones.

East Coast Keeping You in the Game: Small Change Adds Up

Semi-public phones. 1-800 numbers. Understanding your customers and your route. The future of your payphone business may lie in your ability to identify who your customers are and to think creatively about what you can bring to them. Learn what products and services this established east coast PSP is using to meet the needs of his customers while adding incremental value to his company's bottom line – without large capital expenditures.

West Coast Town Hall: Innovative Products, Services, and Marketing for Today's Independents

Get involved to get ahead. Be proactive in defining your company's future. While other payphone providers are looking to sell, this west coast PSP is growing. Come find out how he's doing it in this dynamic idea exchange. We promise you this - his excitement for our industry's potential is contagious.

Southern Hospitality: Business Opportunities and Regulatory Issues - Inmate Phones

It's rare to hear about growth potential in the payphone industry, but that is just what this session is all about. The number of independent public payphone providers moving into the inmate phone service marketplace has grown substantially over the last few years. Learn what's happening today to make this a viable opportunity for independents, the strategies and precautions required for success, and products available from some of the top vendors and manufacturers currently serving the prison marketplace.

Central Time on Business Strategies: Leave No Rock Unturned

Route consolidation. Expense sharing. Local advertising. AT&T's exit from the public payphone business. Networking. Networking. Networking. This session will be presented by PSPs who are intent on finding new revenue sources and are willing to share what they've found. Where can you find new business opportunities? How do you analyze your strengths and weaknesses? Why do some succeed and others fail? An unvarnished presentation that will address how to cut costs, where to look for additional capital, and how to protect your assets.



PLUS - Welcome Breakfast Special Guest Speaker Larry Winget
Host of A & E's hit reality series "Big Spender"
It's Called Work for a Reason!

Based on the speaker's new book by the same title, Larry Winget takes on every aspect of business. From sales to customer service, to teamwork and leadership, Winget attacks traditional business wisdom and offers simple truths in his direct, thought-provoking, and hilarious style. Now the host of A & E's hit reality series, "Big Spender," Larry Winget was the highly rated guest speaker at APCC 2003. On the occasion of APCC's 20th anniversary, he's back – and better than ever.

APCC 2008 COMPUTER LAB and PROGRAMMING CLINIC

Work smarter. Not harder.

Introduced at the 2007 conference & expo, APCC's Computer Lab received enthusiastic reviews and standing room only crowds. We've expanded upon that success in 2008.

The APCC/Micropact 2008 Computer Lab and Programming Clinic will offer hands-on instruction on how to make computers work for you. Plus – we've added some key classes on programming your pay phones and how to use APCC's exclusive web site tools to better manage your dial around.

Computer Lab and Programming Clinic classes are open to all registered APCC 2008 attendees. Detailed descriptions of the classes can be found on APCC's web site, www.apcc.net. Just click on the APCC 2008 "Computer Lab and Programming Clinic" link.

- **Mastering Basic Word Documents**
- **The Basics of Managing Excel Spreadsheets**
- **Using APCC Services' Exclusive Web Site Tools to Better Manage Your Dial Around**
- **Using Excel Spreadsheets to Analyze Data Files**
- **Payphone Programming Clinic**

EXHIBITOR BONUS MINI SESSIONS

APCC's 2008 conference program will include a continuation of the popular Bonus Mini Sessions – the powerful information-packed series run exclusively by APCC exhibitors and highlighting some of the products, services, and resources available on the Expo Hall floor.

Bonus Mini Sessions are open to all registered 2008 attendees.

A CURRENT LIST of APCC 2008 BONUS MINI SESSIONS is posted on APCC's website, www.apcc.net. Just click on the APCC 2008 "Bonus Mini Sessions" link.

20th ANNIVERSARY INDUSTRY CELEBRATION

We're going to party like it's... 1988!

Thursday, June 26, 2008

7:00 pm – 10:00 pm

No APCC tradeshow is complete without a little let your hair down, blow off some stress fun. This year, we're partying 1980's style.

Not sure what to wear to APCC's 20th Anniversary Industry Celebration? The look for this party is all about color, volume, and hair. So pull out the acid-washed jeans, tease up the hair, throw on some sunglasses, and get ready to have some fun.

Visit www.apcc.net for complete APCC 2008 details and updates.

Registration and Hotel Information

3 Easy Steps to Register for APCC 2008

1. Complete the APCC 2008 Pre-Registration form.

You'll need to choose between the All Inclusive Package or the Expo Hall Package. Details about what each package includes can be found on the pre-registration form.

2. Mail or fax completed form to:

Fax: 703-739-1041
 Mail: APCC, Inc.
 ATTN: APCC 2008
 625 Slaters Lane, Suite 104
 Alexandria, VA 22314

3. Contact Caesars Palace Hotel to make your room reservation.

Call Caesars Palace directly at 1.800.634.6661 or register online at www.apcc.net. Simply click on the **APCC 2008 Hotel and Attendee Registration Information** link and follow the directions for online registrations. APCC's contracted room rate with Caesars Palace is just \$169.00 a night. Be sure and reference **APCC Group Code SCAPC8** to access this special rate. Important note: you cannot go to the Caesars Palace web site and input APCC's group code. When registering online, you must use the special link provided on APCC's web site only. Pending availability, the **cut-off date for all registrations using the APCC Group Code is May 30, 2008.**



APCC 2008
 June 24-26, 2008
 Caesars Palace
 Las Vegas, NV

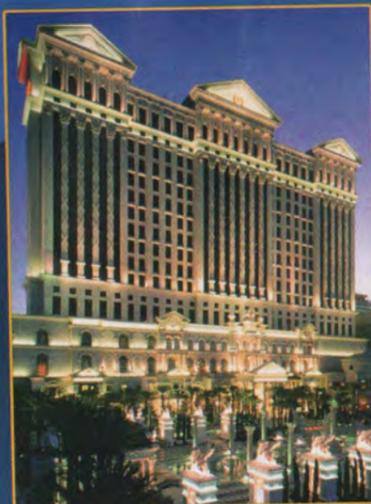
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REGISTRATION OPTIONS

		EARLY BIRD Prior to May 30	After May 30	Amount Due
ALL INCLUSIVE PACKAGE Entrance to all APCC 2008 events including Welcome Breakfast, all education sessions, all Expo Hall events, the computer lab and the 20th Anniversary Industry Party.	APCC/APCCS Rate*	\$245	\$295	\$
	Additional Member Rate (if you are registering multiple attendees from the same member company)	\$195	n/a	
	Non-member Rate	\$495	\$595	
EXPO PACKAGE Entrance to all Expo Hall events and the computer lab. Tickets to other APCC 2008 events may be purchased separately.	APCC/APCCS Rate*	\$95	\$125	\$
	Non-member Rate	\$145	\$195	
INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCE SESSION TICKETS (pricing is per session)	All Attendees	\$50 (times the number of sessions purchased)		\$
WELCOME BREAKFAST TICKET	All Attendees	\$35		\$
APCC 20th ANNIVERSARY INDUSTRY PARTY TICKET	All Attendees	\$50		\$
*APCC/APCCS rate is available to APCC members and APCC Services customers only.		TOTAL DUE		\$

PAYMENT INFORMATION

(Payment must accompany registration form)

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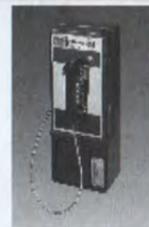
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industry briefs

product news



WRG Services Inc.

WRG Services Inc., based in Willoughby, Ohio, is now offering a full spectrum of ATM products and services to the payphone industry.

"Basically, we're a one-stop shop," said Angela Duplago, marketing manager. WRG provides ATM equipment, repair, processing and finance services. The company designs and writes its own software.

WRG strives to make ATM service as easy as possible for its clients, Duplago said. All of the company's products and services can be managed online and WRG offers training in all aspects of ATM deployment. "From sales to operations, WRG can make it simple for you," Duplago said.

The company's services are ideal for payphone service providers (PSPs), Duplago said. "They already have the real estate, which is the hardest part. They can simply place ATMs at existing locations and capitalize on the relationships they've already established."

WRG Services was established in 1989 as a vending company. Today, Duplago says, it is one of the largest independent ATM companies in the United States. For more information, call (800) 531-1230, ext. 501, or visit www.wrgservices.com.

InComm, DataWave

InComm's DataWave subsidiary now manufactures, owns and operates vending machines that dispense prepaid phone cards.

All DataWave machines are connected to a wireless network that allows the company to perform remote checks and maintenance tasks, to track sales and to access a variety of reporting menus.

The vending machines accept cash and credit cards for payment.

DataWave is a subsidiary of InComm, a marketer and technology innovator of stored value gift and prepaid products at more than 145,000 retail locations. InComm provides retail and network branded gift cards, prepaid wireless, long distance, digital music, gaming, mobile content and more at grocery, chain drug and convenience stores, among other retailers.

For more information, call (888) 328-2928, ext. 5045, or visit www.datawave.com.



people & places

Navigator Telecommunications

Navigator Telecommunications has extended its voice and data service area to Washington state.

Customers with locations across state lines or incumbent local exchange carrier (ILEC) boundaries often work with more than one telecommunications company, which can make it challenging to manage their bills and services, Navigator representatives say.

Navigator's expansion is intended to help clients avoid this situation.

"We bring it all together under one roof by combining the ability of the 'big guys' with the new technology of alternative providers," said Navigator President Lou McAlister. "Washington is where it made the most sense for us to expand to meet the needs of some of our existing customers."

Navigator Telecommunications offers dial tone to offices, hotels, restaurants, manufacturing operations, inmate and health care facilities, along with ATMs. The company is certified in 37 states.

For more information, visit www.Navtel.com.

Prime Point Media

Prime Point Media has been expanding inventory and adding staff in key markets to increase client outreach and service locally, said President Karen Robinson.

Fred DiMesa, the newly appointed vice president and general manager of local and regional markets, has added local account executives in three strategic markets: Shane Call in Los Angeles; Brandon Nachbar in Kansas City; and in New York City, Joshua De La Mata, Kevin Archer and Steve Cole, who relocated from the company's Atlanta headquarters. Outdoor advertising industry veteran Cynthia Culver has joined the team as the sales support specialist.

"This new team is entirely focused on bringing the Prime Point Media expertise and client service to local businesses and organizations," DiMesa said. "With our growing inventory of large format phone kiosks, PartnerBins and Lifeguard towers, and our proprietary demographic mapping database, our local account executives can help any size business develop an effective ad campaign that fits their budget."

Several more staff announcements have been made as well.

Company veteran Dana Michaelis, senior vice president of sales, has assumed full responsibility for all staff, operations and activities of the company's national sales organization.

Jake Kovalcik has been promoted to director of national sales, and Kerry Andrews has joined the company as director of sales, western region.

Prime Point Media, a division of Outdoor-Partner Media, provides street level outdoor advertising nationwide. The company has a proprietary database of more than 700,000 locations identified by demographics, income, ethnicity, event venues and other specific characteristics. Prime Point Media's displays include payphones; PartnerBins, which collect recycling in high traffic urban areas; beach lifeguard towers; and PrimeCasting, which uses Bluetooth technology to transmit text and video messages to mobile devices.

For more information, visit www.primepointmedia.com.

StarMetro, Parvus Corp.

StarMetro, a Tallahassee-based transit service, has added Wi-Fi service to 10 of its buses.

The Wi-Fi technology, which is provided by Parvus Corp., will allow StarMetro riders to access the Internet via wireless-enabled devices, including laptops and personal digital assistants.

"From local listening sessions, we discovered that riders really wanted and valued Wi-Fi access on tran-



sit," said Samuel Scheib, a StarMetro planner. StarMetro began the process of acquiring Wi-Fi technology for its coaches in spring 2007. Installation started in early February 2008.

"We are very pleased to offer this new service to our riders," said Ron Garrison, StarMetro's director. "If our riders enjoy the service, we hope to continue adding Wi-Fi capabilities to the rest of our fleet."

The buses participating in this pilot program display a Wi-Fi logo near their double doors.

Parvus is part of the Eurotech Group, which has a long history in the traffic and public transportation field. The group provides vehicle communication, location tracking and video surveillance systems, as well as mobile Internet access points and passenger counting devices. Parvus products can be found at a variety of public transit authorities nationwide, including the Foothill Transit, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, Monterey-Salinas Transit, New Jersey Transit Authority, New York Metropolitan Transportation Agency, Santa Cruz Metro, Utah Transit Authority, among others. For more information, visit www.parvus.com. ■

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Oops...

In a moment that caused our editor to die a thousand deaths, we misidentified a photo we ran in the State Briefs column in our April issue. The photo caption identified "Sher Wagner, Barry Selvidge, Linda Selvidge," but in fact the woman on the left is Sheila Izzo, wife of Peter Izzo of Telebeam Communications. A million apologies to all concerned.



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June 24-26, 2008

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last word

by David Rossé

Payphones on the silver screen

Payphones have played many starring roles, from film noir movies to present day flicks

In the recent independent film "Brick," a high school student receives a phone call from his estranged girlfriend, who has gotten herself entangled with suburban Los Angeles drug pushers. The film is set in 2005, yet the student receives a phone call from a payphone. It struck me as strange that a high school student in 2005 would be talking on a payphone, not a cellular phone.



A scene from the movie "Brick"

COURTESY OF FOCUS FEATURES

I did some research on the film, and discovered that the filmmakers were interested in making a film noir, set in a modern day high school with just teenage characters (their parents and teachers are rarely to be seen in the film).

In its February 2006 issue, *Perspectives* ran a short piece that featured examples of payphones as used by Hollywood. Payphones were also a staple of film noir, as well as "modern noir," or "neo noir," movies like "Brick." Cellular phones have yet to enter the mythical landscape of Hollywood, unless you count the Kim Basinger flop from a few years ago simply called "Cellular."

There is something mystical, even romantic, about the use of payphones in film. Can you imagine the plot of "The Matrix" if Keanu Reeves just had to dial a cell phone, instead of a payphone, to cross into another dimension? Or Miles, using his mobile phone to call his ex in his drunken state ("drinking and dialing") instead of a restaurant payphone, in "Sideways?" (On the DVD commentary for "Sideways,"

actors Paul Giamatti and Thomas Haden Church even comment on how the payphone is filmed like a human character in that scene). Payphones retain a certain allure, as the makers of "Brick" must have realized. And they were a staple of film noirs from the '40s and '50s.

Film noir is French for "black film," and was a style of filmmaking that has influenced scores of modern filmmakers, including Martin Scorsese, the Coen Brothers, Ridley Scott and Brian De Palma. Film noir used black and white cinematography to enhance shadows, and most of the action took place at night. And in these films, the hero communicates to other characters via a payphone: "Double Indemnity," "The Big Sleep," "Gilda," "Laura," "Sorry, Wrong Number."

When film noir became popular again in the late '60s, the term "neo noir" was invented, and payphones were just as critical as props to these characters. Some popular neo noir films are "Blade Runner," "Mulholland Drive" and "L.A. Confidential," and these films helped introduce the film noir to a new generation.

Payphones in film are not restricted to film noir or neo noir: Science fiction classics such as "2001: A Space Odyssey" and "Brazil" featured characters talking to one another on futuristic payphones, not "wireless" devices (and surely someone would have thought of wireless phones in 1968 or 1985, the years "2001" and "Brazil" were made).

On the Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com), there are some comments posted by Generation Y viewers (who were intrigued by the high school setting of "Brick"), many of whom could not understand why the characters used payphones. Some of these viewers researched the history of payphones in movies, and film noir in particular.

If payphones, and film noir, are once-foreign, now-familiar, concepts to Generation Y viewers, that can only be good for our industry. It should be interesting to see how they handle Maxwell Smart's entrance into CONTROL's headquarters in the Steve Carell remake of "Get Smart" to be released this summer... ■

David Rossé is a customer account manager for APCC Services. He has been with the APCC for 11 years. He is quite the film buff, but for the most part he eschews Hollywood films for the indies.

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