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(54) **METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR  
SCREENING CALLS FROM A TELEPHONY  
DEVICE**

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**H04M 3/42** (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** ..... **379/211.01**; 379/70; 379/87;  
379/88.12; 379/88.22; 455/417

(58) **Field of Classification Search** ..... 379/87,  
379/70, 88.12, 88.22, 211.01; 455/417  
See application file for complete search history.

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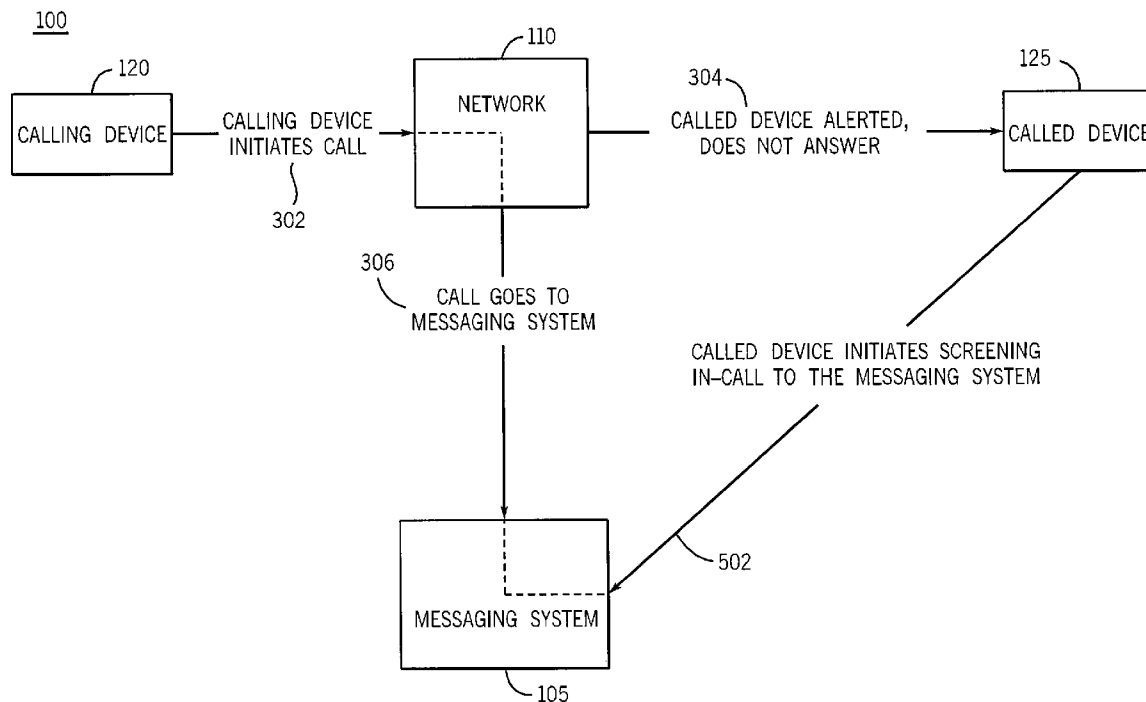
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A messaging system component provides for a screening of an incoming call from a telephony device of a plurality of telephony devices. The messaging system component is associated with a network and conforms to a signaling protocol of the network to communicate with the network. The messaging system component is located in a peripheral relationship to the network which allows for the addition of providing for the screening of the incoming call from the telephony device without modification to an architecture associated with the network.

**25 Claims, 6 Drawing Sheets**



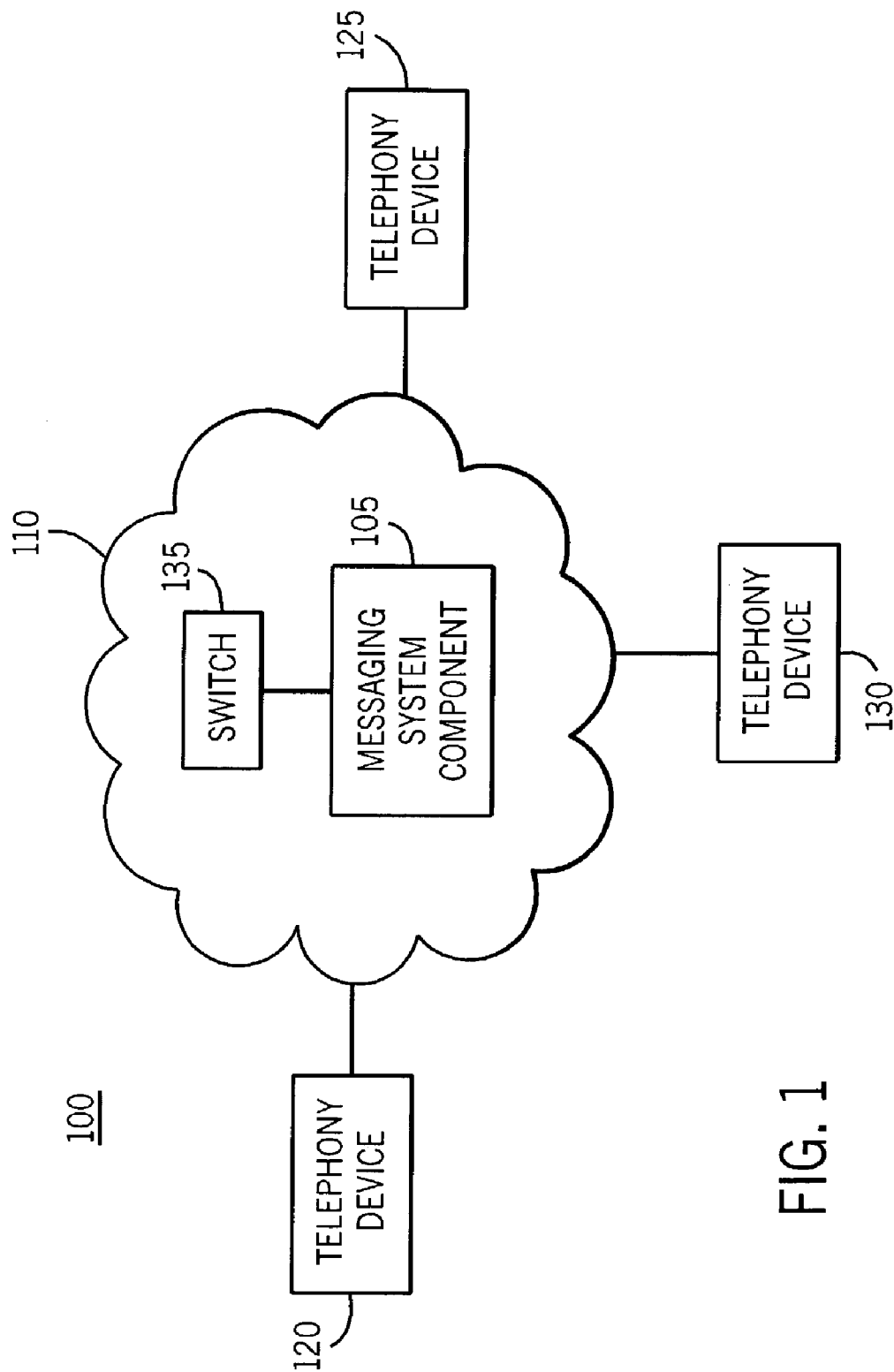


FIG. 1

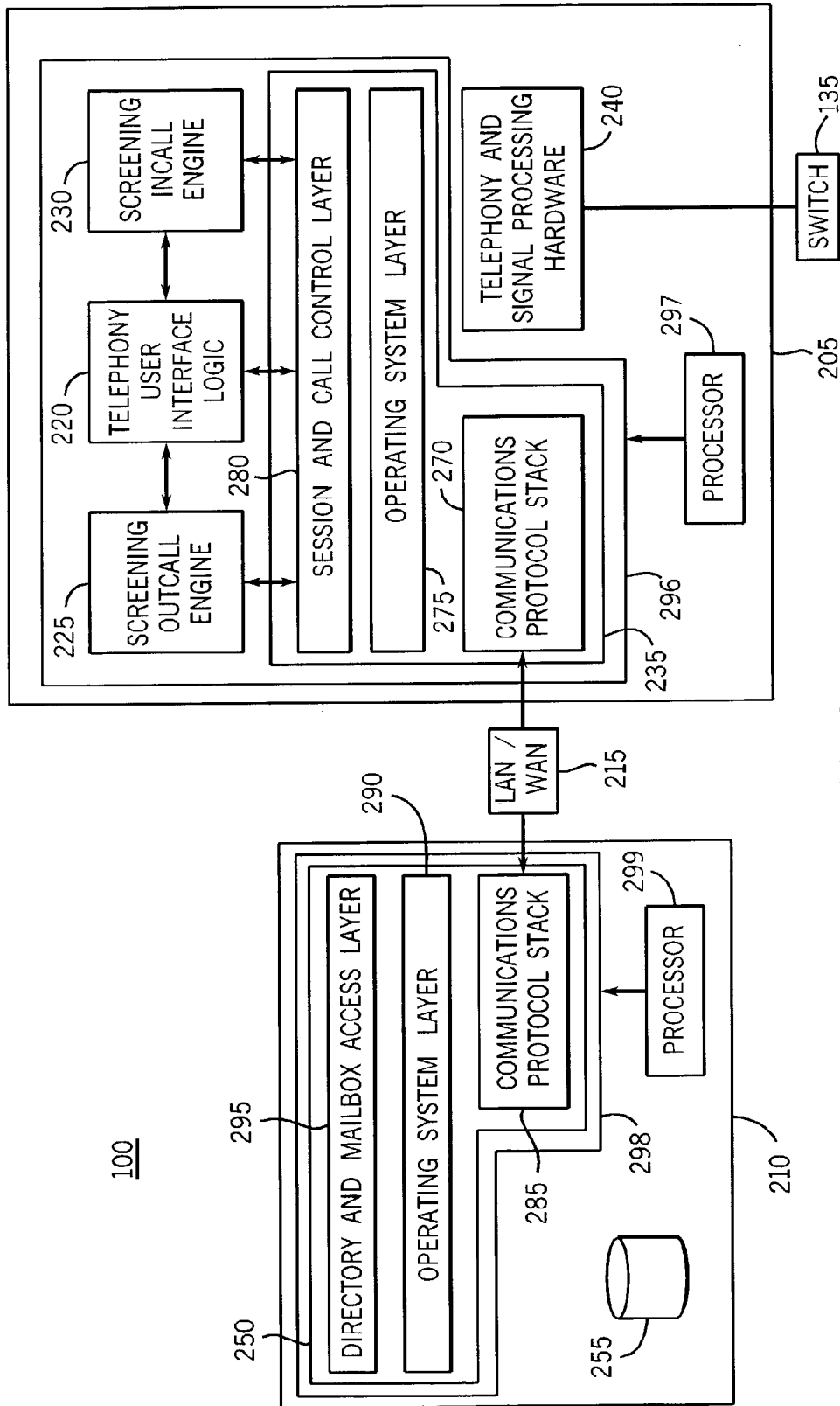
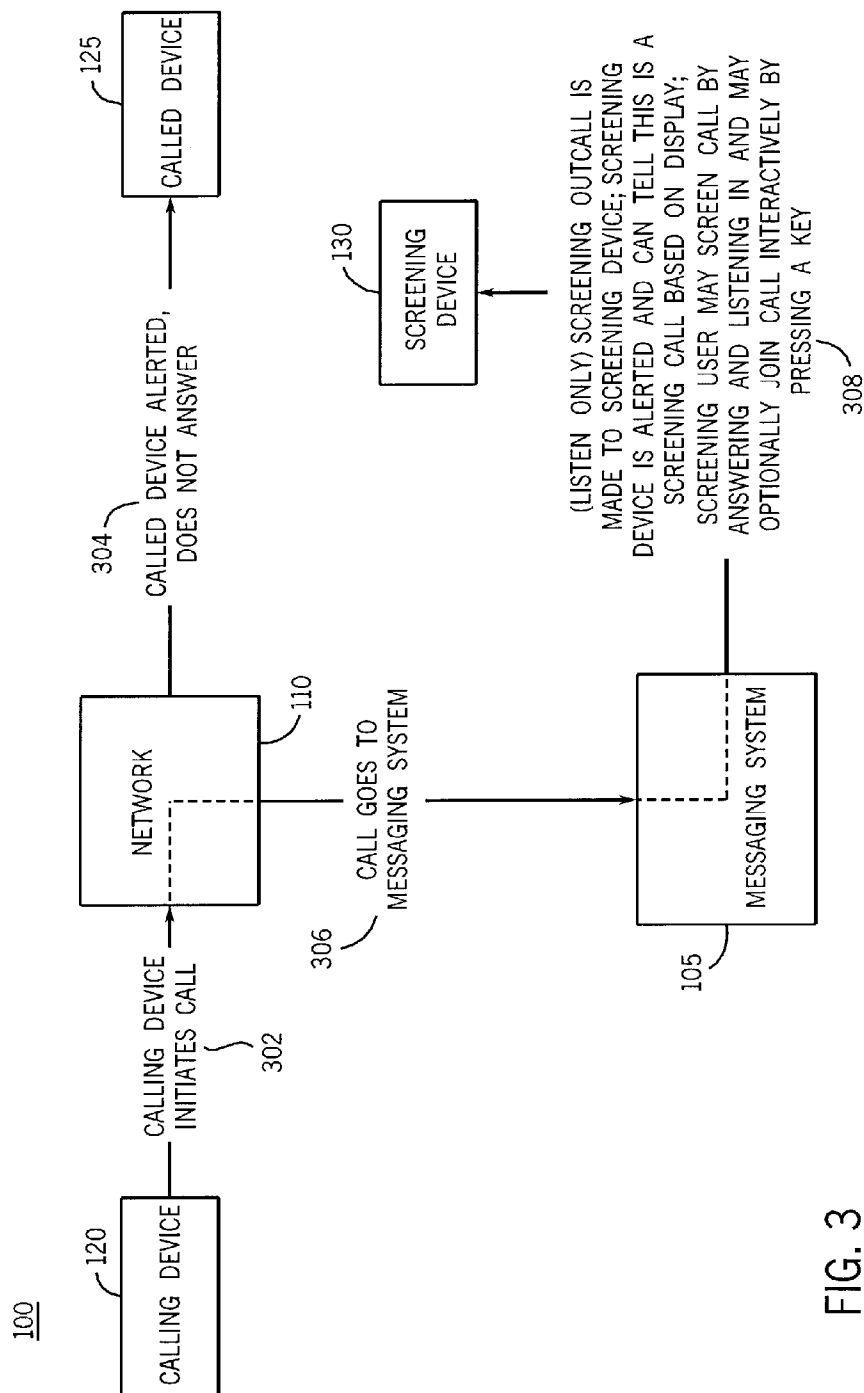


FIG. 2



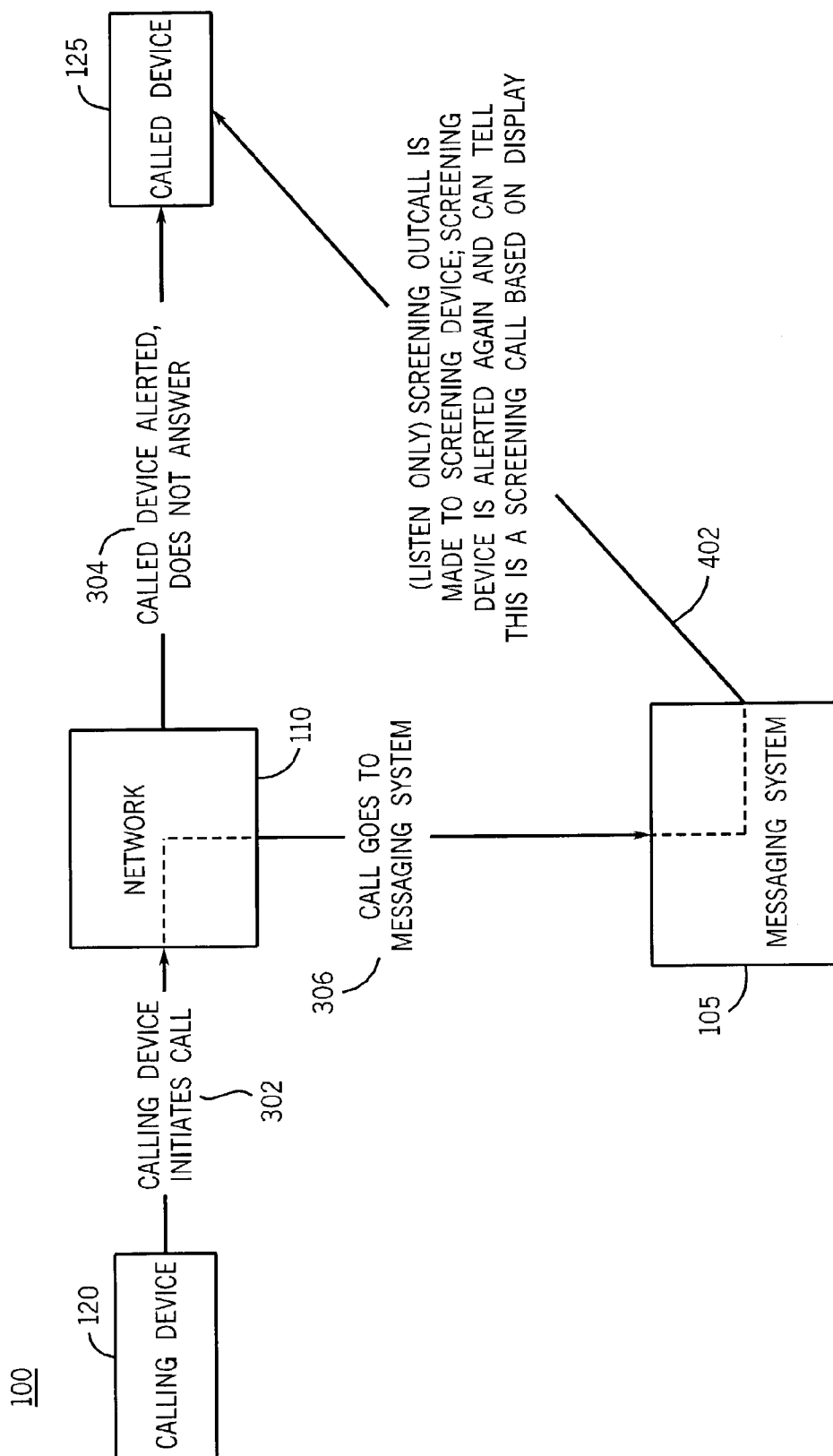


FIG. 4

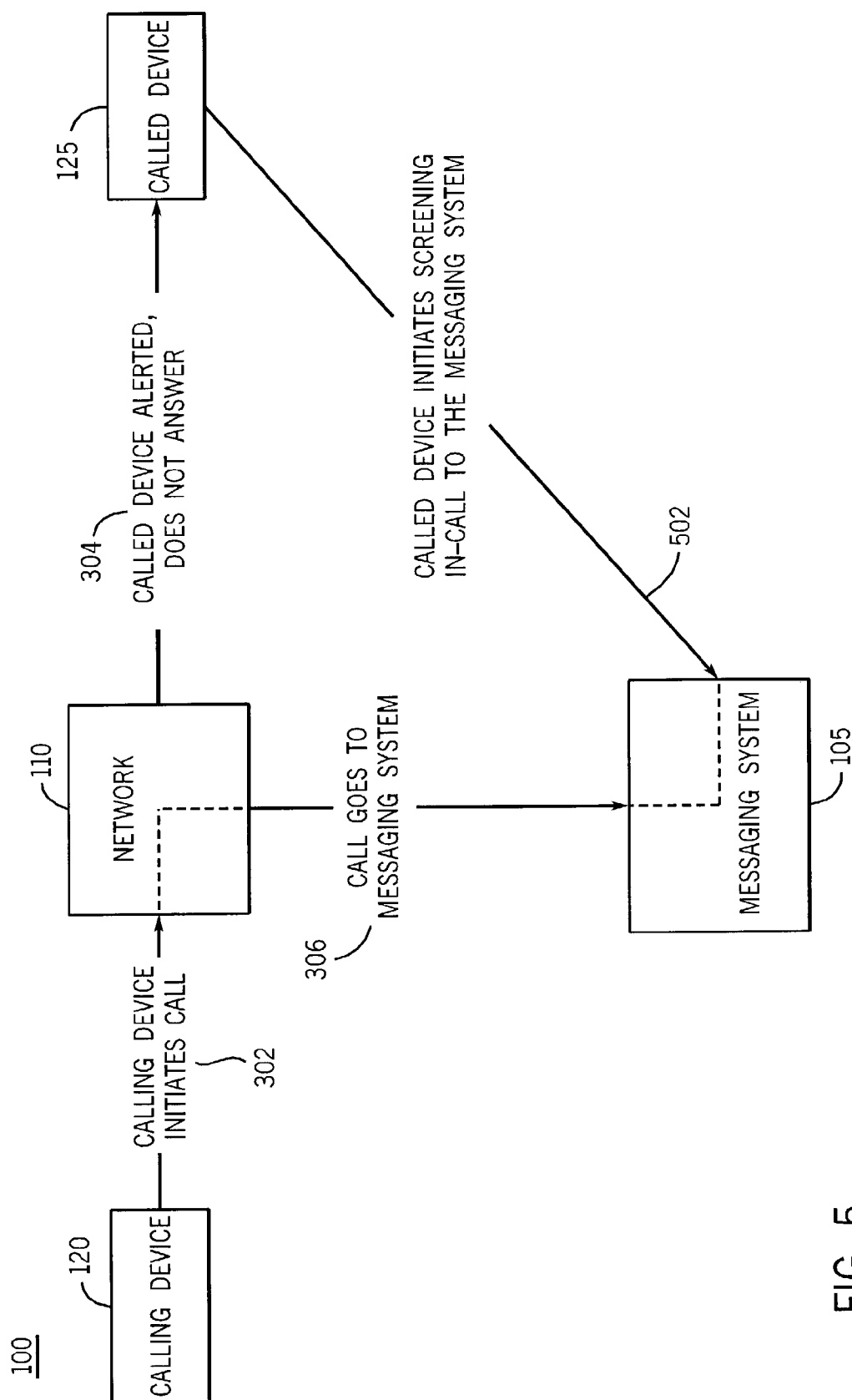


FIG. 5

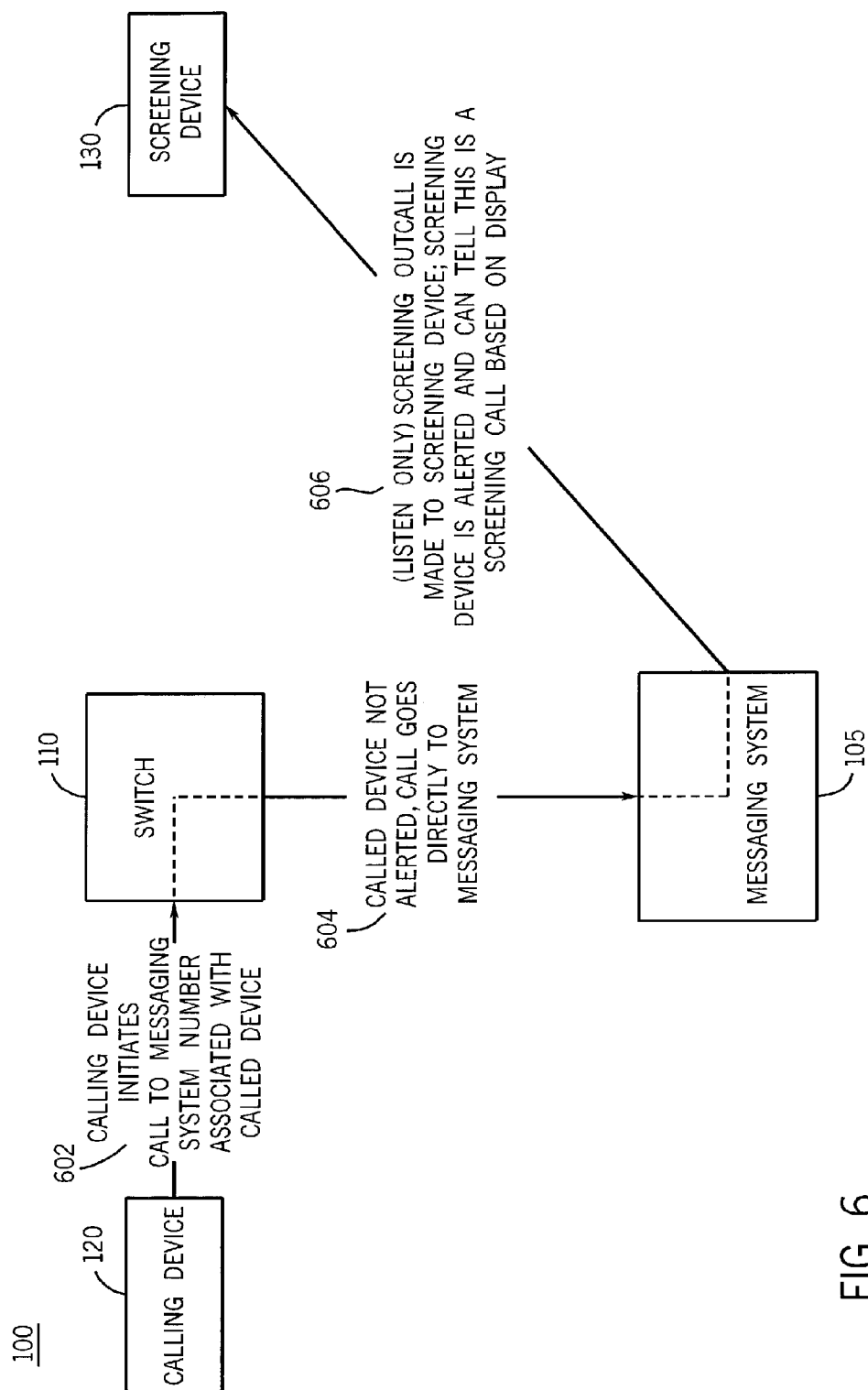


FIG. 6

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# METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR SCREENING CALLS FROM A TELEPHONY DEVICE

## TECHNICAL FIELD

The invention relates generally to telephony devices associated with a network and more particularly to employing the telephony devices for screening a call on the network.

## BACKGROUND

A user of a called telephony device receives a call from a network. The user of the called telephony device desires to screen the call before deciding to respond to the call. In one example, an answering machine is used as a screening device. The user of the called telephony device listens to a message being recorded by a user of the calling telephony device from a speaker of the answering machine. Where the user of the called telephony device is not located close to the speaker of the answering machine, the user is unable to screen the call as the user is unable to hear the message being recorded.

In another example, a voice mail system associated with a telephone network is used as the screening device. The user of the called telephony device receives the call and fails to respond to the call. The call is redirected to the voice mail system associated with the called telephony device where the user of the calling telephony device records the message. Unfortunately, with the network-based voice mail system the user of the called telephony device is unable to screen the call in real-time as the user of the called telephony device must wait for the user of the calling telephony device to finish recording the message before screening the call.

An Advanced Intelligence Network ("AIN") provides for the screening of the call in real-time from the network-based voice mail system but requires altering an architecture (e.g. altering and/or replacing one or more switches) of the telephone network. Unfortunately, service providers associated with the telephone network incur significant expense for altering the architecture of the telephone network to provide for the screening of the calls.

Therefore, a need exists to provide for the screening of the call associated with a network-based voice mail system from a telephony device without material alteration to the telephone network.

## SUMMARY

The invention in one embodiment encompasses an apparatus. The apparatus comprises a messaging system component that provides for a screening of an incoming call from a telephony device of a plurality of telephony devices. The messaging system component is associated with a network and conforms to a signaling protocol of the network to communicate with the network.

Another embodiment of the invention encompasses a method. A messaging system component associated with a network provides for a screening of an incoming call from a telephony device. The messaging system component conforms to a signaling protocol of the network to communicate with the network.

Yet another embodiment of the invention encompasses an article. The article comprises one or more computer-readable media. The article comprises means in the computer-readable medium for screening of an incoming call from a telephony device by a messaging system component associated with customer premises equipment at a periphery of a network.

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The article comprises means in the computer-readable medium for conforming to a signaling protocol of a network by the messaging system component to communicate with the network. The article comprises means in the computer-readable medium for retrieving a profile associated with a called telephony device of the incoming call from a database. The article comprises means in the computer-readable medium for employing the profile associated with the called telephony device, wherein the messaging system component provides for the screening of the incoming call by one of initiating a screening outcall and responding to a screening in-call.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Features of exemplary implementations of the invention will become apparent from the description, the claims, and the accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is a representation of one exemplary implementation of an apparatus that comprises a messaging system component, a network, a plurality of telephony devices and a switch.

FIG. 2 is a representation of the messaging system component of the apparatus of FIG. 1 that comprises a telephony component and a storage component.

FIG. 3 is an exemplary diagram of a first flow of an incoming call from a calling telephony device to a called telephony device and a redirection of the incoming call to the messaging system component. The messaging system component initiates a screening outcall to one of the plurality of telephony devices of the apparatus of FIG. 1.

FIG. 4 is an exemplary diagram of a second flow of an incoming call from the calling telephony device to the called telephony device and the redirection of the incoming call to the messaging system component. The messaging system component initiates the screening outcall to the called telephony device of the apparatus of FIG. 1.

FIG. 5 is an exemplary diagram of a third flow of an incoming call from the calling telephony device to the called telephony device and the redirection of the incoming call to the messaging system component. The called telephony device initiates a screening in-call to the messaging system component of the FIG. 2.

FIG. 6 is an exemplary diagram of a fourth flow of an incoming call from the calling telephony device to the messaging system component. The messaging system component initiates a screening outcall to the called telephony device of the apparatus of FIG. 1.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The particular values and configurations discussed in these non-limiting examples can be varied and are cited merely to illustrate an embodiment of the present invention and are not intended to limit the scope of the invention.

Turning to FIG. 1, an apparatus 100 in one embodiment comprises a plurality of components such as computer software and/or hardware components. A number of such components can be combined or divided in the apparatus 100. An exemplary component of the apparatus 100 employs and/or comprises a set and/or series of computer instructions written in or implemented with any of a number of programming languages, as will be appreciated by those skilled in the art.

The apparatus 100 comprises a messaging system components 105, a network 110, one or more telephony devices 120, 125, and/or 130, and a switch 135. The messaging system component 105 comprises a voice mail system. The network



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**110** comprises a collection of networks, switches, trunks, and signaling points, as will be understood by those skilled in the art. The telephony device **120**, **125**, and/or **130** comprise one or more of a telephone, a cellular phone, and/or a personal computer.

The messaging system component **105** is associated with customer premises equipment at a periphery of a network, as is appreciated by one skilled in the art. The messaging system component **105** communicates with the switch **135**. The switch **135** routes the one or more calls to the messaging system component **105**. The messaging system component **105** receives the one or more calls from the switch **135** and initiates the one or more calls to the switch **135**. The network **110** communicates with the switch **135** and the telephony devices **120**, **125**, and **130** to route the one or more calls. The telephony devices **120**, **125**, and **130** communicate with the network **110** to initiate and/or receive the one or more calls.

The messaging system component **105** provides for: a termination of the incoming call associated with a called telephony device, for example, the telephony device **125**; and a screening of the incoming call from a telephony device, for example, the telephony device **130**, of a plurality of telephony devices, for example, the telephony devices **120**, **125**, and **130**, associated with the called telephony device. The messaging system component **105** conforms to a signaling protocol, for example, the Signal System 7 ("SS7") protocol to communicate with the network **110**.

The network **110** routes one or more calls, for example, one or more voice calls or one or more Voice Over Internet Protocol ("VoIP") calls. The network **110** receives the one or more calls from one or more of the messaging system component **105**, and the telephony devices **120**, **125**, and **130**. The network **110** routes the one or more calls to either one or more of the messaging system component **105**, and the telephony devices **120**, **125**, and **130**. The network **110** comprises the switch **135**. The network **110** comprises multiple network components that are owned by one or more of: long distance carriers, local exchange carriers, and local telephone companies. The network **110** routes the one or more calls based upon a calling party number and/or a called party number, for example, an E.164 number (e.g. 888-555-1000) or a Universal Resource Identifier ("URI") (e.g. www.myhome.com or myemail@yahoo.com), of the one or more calls, as is understood by those skilled in the art. The network **110** communicates by adhering to the signaling protocol.

In one example, the telephony device **120** initiates the incoming call to the telephony device **125**. The telephony device **125** receives the incoming call from the calling telephony device. The telephony device **130** screens the incoming call associated with the called telephony device. The telephony devices **120**, **125**, and **130** communicate by conforming to the signaling protocol.

The messaging system component **105** provides for the termination of the incoming call of the one or more calls initiated by the calling telephony device by playing one pre-recorded greeting of one or more pre-recorded greetings to the telephony device **120** and providing the telephony device **120** with an opportunity to record a message for the telephony device **125**, as will be appreciated by those skilled in the art. The messaging system component **105** stores the message in the mailbox associated with the telephony device **125**.

The messaging system component **105** provides for the screening of the incoming call from the telephony device, for example, the telephony device **130**, by bridging the incoming call to a screening call associated with the telephony device in a listen-only mode. The telephony device **130** listens in real-time to the message being recorded by the telephony device

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**120** for the telephony device **125**. Upon receipt of a trigger from the telephony device **130** the messaging system component **105** bridges the incoming call to the screening call in a two-way mode. The telephony device **130** engages in an interactive session with the calling telephony device.

In one example, the screening call comprises a screening outcall. The messaging system component **105** initiates one or more screening outcalls to one or more telephony devices of the plurality of telephony devices associated with the called telephony device, for example, the telephony device **125**. The screening outcall comprises the calling party number of a messaging system number that identifies the screening outcall. For example, the telephony device of the one or more screening devices associated with the called telephony device employs the calling party number of the messaging system number displayed on a caller identification functionality to determine whether to respond to the screening outcall, where the telephony device comprises the caller identification functionality. Those skilled in the art will be familiar with other devices that may be employed as indicators to determine whether to respond to the screening outcall.

In another example, the screening call comprises a screening in-call. The messaging system component **105** responds to the screening in-call initiated by the telephony device of the plurality of telephony devices associated with the called telephony device, for example, the telephony device **125**. The screening in-call comprises the called party number of a screening number and the calling party number. The calling party number and the called party number comprise one or more of either: a E.164 number (e.g. 888-555-1000) and a URI (e.g. www.myemail.com) associated with the telephony device, for example, the telephony device **130**.

The messaging system component **105** employs the screening number to associate the screening in-call with the mailbox associated with the called telephony device, for example, the telephony device **125** in which the message is being recorded. The messaging system component **105** employs the screening number of the screening in-call to omit providing for the termination service associated with the telephony device **125** for the screening in-call. The network **110** routes the screening in-call to the messaging system component **105** based on the called party number, for example, the screening number.

Turning to FIG. 2, the messaging system component **105** comprises a telephony component **205**, a storage component **210**, and a connecting network **215**. The telephony component **205** and the storage component **210** provide for the termination of the incoming call. The telephony component **205** plays one pre-recorded greeting and provides the opportunity to record the message based on one profile associated with the called telephony device, for example, the telephony device **125**, of a plurality of profiles associated with the telephony devices **120**, **125**, and **130**. The storage component **210** stores the message in the mailbox associated with the telephony component **125**.

The telephony component **205** provides for the screening of the incoming call by the telephony device based upon the one profile associated with the telephony device **125** of the plurality of profiles. The storage component **210** stores the plurality of profiles. The plurality of profiles comprise a respective plurality of numbers. The respective plurality of numbers are associated with a plurality of screening devices associated with the telephony devices **120**, **125**, and **130**, respectively.

In one example, the telephony component **205** serves to communicate with the storage component **210** over the connecting network **215**. In one example, the connecting network

**215** comprises a local area network (“LAN”). In another example, the connecting network **215** comprises a wide area network (“WAN”).

The telephony component **205** comprises a user interface logic component **220**, a screening outcall engine **225**, a screening in-call engine **230**, a protocol stack **235**, and telephony and signal processing hardware **240**. The user interface logic component **220** communicates with the screening outcall engine **225**, the screening in-call engine **230**, and the protocol stack **235**. The protocol stack **235** communicates with the user interface logic component **220**, the screening outcall engine **225**, the screening in-call engine **230**, the connecting network **215**, and the telephony and signal processing hardware **240**.

The user interface logic component **220** provides for the termination of the call by playing the one pre-recorded greeting to the telephony device **120** and provides the telephony device **120** with the opportunity to record the message for the telephony device **125**, as is understood by those skilled in the art. The screening outcall engine **225** in combination with the protocol stack **235** bridges the call with the screening outcall associated with the telephony device **130**. The screening outcall engine **225** monitors the screening outcall. The screening in-call engine **230** in combination with the protocol stack **235** bridges the call to the screening in-call associated with the telephony device **130**. The screening in-call engine **230** monitors the screening in-call. The telephony and signal processing hardware **240** conforms to the signaling protocol of the network **110** to process the one or more calls received from or initiated to the network **110**. The protocol stack **235** bridges the incoming call to the screening call.

The user interface logic component **220** provides for the screening of the incoming call from the telephony device based on the one profile associated with the telephony device **125**. The user interface logic component **220** obtains the one profile associated with the telephony device **125**. In one example, the user interface logic component **220** communicates with the screening outcall engine **225** to initiate the plurality of screening outcalls to the plurality of screening devices associated with the telephony device **125**. In another example, the user interface logic component **220** communicates with the screening in-call engine **230** to respond to the one screening in-call from the telephony device **130**.

For example, the messaging system component **105** employs one or more filter rules of the one profile to evaluate the call, as is understood by those skilled in the art. The messaging system component **105** initiates one screening outcall of the plurality of screening outcalls to the telephony device **130**, and a second screening outcall to a work email address, based on the one or more filter rules for the call comprising the calling party number of a family member’s cellular phone, as is understood by those skilled in the art. The one profile associated with the telephony device **125** comprises the number associated with the telephony device, the work email address, and the one or more filter rules.

The screening outcall engine **225** in combination with the protocol stack **235** bridges the incoming call to the screening outcall in the listen-only mode. The screening outcall engine **225** monitors the screening outcall to the telephony device **130**. Upon receipt of the trigger, the screening outcall engine **225** in combination with the protocol stack **235** bridges the incoming call to the screening outcall in the two-way mode providing for the interactive session between the telephony device **130** and the calling telephony device, for example, the telephony device **120**. The screening in-call engine **230** monitors the screening in-call from the telephony device **130** in an analogous fashion as the screening outcall engine **225**.

The screening in-call engine **230** employs the calling party number of the screening in-call to associate the screening in-call with the mailbox of the telephony device **125**. The screening in-call engine **230** performs a validation on the calling party number of the screening in-call to ensure that the message is being recorded for the telephony device **125**. In one example, if the message is not being recorded when the telephony device **130** initiates the screening in-call the screening in-call engine **230** withholds bridging the screening call. The user interface logic component **220** plays an information message to the telephony device **130** indicating that the message is not available to be screened.

The screening outcall engine **225** and the screening in-call engine **230** respond to the trigger, for example, a touch-tone, initiated by the telephony device **130** while screening the incoming call. The screening outcall engine **225** employs the trigger to bridge the incoming call to the screening outcall in the two-way mode and to halt the recording of the message by the messaging system component **105**. In another example, the screening in-call engine **230** employs the trigger to: bridge the incoming call to the screening in-call in the two-way mode; halt the recording of the message by the messaging system component **105**; and store the message in the mailbox (e.g. a voice mailbox) associated with the telephony device **125**. In a further example, the screening outcall engine **225** employs the trigger to: bridge the incoming call to the screening outcall in the two-way mode; record the interactive session between the calling telephony device and the screening device; and deposit the recording of the interactive session into the mailbox associated with the telephony device **125**.

The protocol stack **235** comprises a communications protocol stack **270**, an operating system layer **275**, and a session and call control layer **280**, as will be appreciated by those skilled in the art. The communications protocol stack **270** processes the one or more calls received from or initiated to the network **215**. The operating system layer **275** provides one or more instructions for the protocol stack **235**. The session and call control layer **280** manages the one or more calls and bridges the incoming call to the screening call. The telephony and signal processing hardware **240** serves to send and receive the one or more calls from the network **110**. The telephony and signal processing hardware **240** conforms to the signaling protocol of the network allowing the messaging system component **105** to comprise a peripheral relationship to the network.

The storage component **210** comprises a protocol stack **298** and a database **255**. The protocol stack **298** communicates with the connecting network **215** and accesses the database **255**, as is understood by those skilled in the art. The database **255** comprises one or more mailboxes for the respective telephony devices **120**, **125**, and **130**. The database **255** stores the one or more messages recorded for the telephony devices **120**, **125**, and **130** in the respective one or more mailboxes. The database **255** comprises the plurality of profiles associated with the respective telephony devices **120**, **125**, and **130**.

The protocol stack **250** comprises a communications protocol stack **285**, an operating system layer **290**, and a directory and mailbox access layer **295**. The communications protocol stack **285** processes the one or more calls received from and initiated to the connecting network **215**. The operating system layer **290** in one example provides one or more instructions for the protocol stack **250**. The directory and mailbox access layer **295** manages one or more accesses to the database **255** by the telephony component **205**, as will be appreciated by those skilled in the art.

Referring to FIG. 2, the telephony component **205** and the storage component **210** comprises one or more of random

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access memory ("RAM"), read only memory ("ROM"), one or more hard disks, and one or more floppy disks. The storage devices **296** and **298** serve to store software instructions. Processors **297** and **299** comprise microprocessors. The processors **297** and **299** retrieve the software instructions from the respective storage devices **296** and **298** and perform actions in accordance with the software instructions. For example, the software instructions serve to cause the processor **297** to initiate the plurality of screening outcalls, respond to the incoming call, and to process the screening in-call as described herein.

Turning to FIG. 3, the messaging system component **105**, the network **110**, and the telephony devices **120**, **125**, and **130** route the incoming call from the telephony device **120** to the telephony device **125** by performing one or more steps, for example, STEPS **302**, **304**, **306**, and **308**.

As illustrated in the STEP **302**, the telephony device **120** initiates the incoming call to the telephony device **125**. The network **110** receives the incoming call and routes the incoming call to the switch **135**. The switch **135** routes the call to the telephony device **125**, as illustrated in the STEP **304**. Where the telephony device **125** fails to respond to the call, the network **110** re-routes the incoming call to the messaging system component **105**, as illustrated in the STEP **306**, as will be understood by those skilled in the art. The messaging system component **105** provides for the termination of the incoming call based on the one profile associated with the telephony device **125**. The messaging system component **105** employs the one profile associated with the telephony device **125** to provide for the screening of the incoming call from the telephony device **130**. The messaging system component **105** initiates the screening outcall to the telephony device **130** based on the profile associated with the telephony device **125**, as illustrated in STEP **308**. The messaging system component **105** bridges the screening outcall with the incoming call in the listen-only mode and monitors the incoming call for the trigger.

Turning to FIG. 4, the messaging system component **105**, the switch **135**, the telephony device **120**, and the telephony device **125** route the incoming call from the calling telephony device, for example, the telephony device **120**, to the called telephony device, for example, the telephony device **125**, by performing one or more steps, for example, the STEPS **302**, **304**, **306**, and STEP **402**.

Referring to FIG. 4, the telephony device **125** receives two notifications of the incoming call. In the STEPS **302** and **304**, the telephony device **125** receives the incoming call initiated by the telephony device **120**. Where the telephony device **125** fails to respond to the call, the switch **135** re-routes the incoming call to the messaging system component **105**, as illustrated in STEP **306**. The messaging system component **105** provides for the termination of the incoming call based on the one profile associated with the telephony device **125**. The one profile associated with the telephony device **125** indicates that the telephony device **125** comprises the telephony device. The messaging system component **105** initiates the screening outcall to the telephony device **125**, as is shown in STEP **402**.

Turning to FIG. 5, the messaging system component **105**, the switch **135**, the telephony device **120**, and the telephony device **125** route the incoming call from the calling telephony device, for example, the telephony device **120**, to the called telephony device, for example, the telephony device **125**, by performing one or more steps, for example, the STEPS **302**, **304**, **306**, and STEP **502**.

The telephony device **125** receives the incoming call in the STEPS **302** and **304**. Where the telephony device **125** fails to respond to the call, the switch **135** re-routes the incoming call

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to the messaging system component **105**, as illustrated in STEP **306**. The messaging system component **105** provides for the termination of the incoming call based on the one profile associated with the telephony device **125**. In the STEP **502**, the telephony device **125** initiates the screening in-call to the messaging system component **105**. The screening in-call comprises the called party number of the screening number to the messaging system component **105**. Upon receipt of the screening in-call, the messaging system component **105** associates the calling party number of the screening in-call with the mailbox of the telephony device **125** and bridges the incoming call to the screening in-call in the listen-only mode providing for the screening of the incoming call from the telephony device **125**.

Turning to FIG. 6, the messaging system component **105**, the switch **135**, the telephony device **120**, and the telephony device **130** route the incoming call from the calling telephony device, for example, the telephony device **120**, to the messaging system component **105** by performing one or more steps, for example, STEPS **602**, **604**, and **606**.

In the STEP **602**, the telephony device **120** initiates the incoming call comprising the messaging system number as the called party number. The switch **135** routes the incoming call to the messaging system component **105**, as illustrated in the STEP **604**, based on the called party number. Upon receipt of the call, the messaging system component **105** provides for the termination of the incoming call based on the one profile associated with the telephony device **125**, where the messaging system component **105** associates the messaging system number with the telephony device **125**. The messaging system component **105** in the STEP **606** initiates the screening outcall to the telephony device **130** and bridge the incoming call to the screening outcall providing for the screening of the incoming call from the telephony device **130**.

An illustrative description of exemplary operation of the apparatus **100** is presented, for explanatory purposes.

In one example, the telephony device **120** initiates the incoming call to the telephony device **125**. The network **110** routes the call from the telephony device **120** to the telephony device **125**. Where the telephony device **125** fails to respond to the incoming call within a pre-determined number of alerts, the network **110** re-routes the incoming call to the switch **135**, as is understood by those skilled in the art. The switch **135** routes the call to the messaging system component **105**.

The telephony and signal processing hardware **240** receives the call and parses the call. The protocol stack **235** communicates with the storage component **210** to retrieve the one profile associated with the telephony device **125**. The user interface logic **220** employs the one profile associated with the telephony device **125** to play the one pre-recorded greeting to the telephony device **120** and to provide the telephony device **120** with the opportunity to record the message for the telephony device **125**.

The user interface logic component **220** employs the one profile associated with the telephony device **125** in combination with the screening outcall engine **225** to initiate the screening outcall to the telephony device **130**. The protocol stack **235** initiates the screening outcall to the switch **135**. The switch **135** routes the screening outcall to the network **110**. The network **110** routes the screening outcall to the telephony device **130**. The screening outcall engine **225** in combination with the protocol stack **235** bridge the incoming call to the screening outcall in the listen-only mode providing for the screening of the incoming call from the telephony device **130**. The screening outcall engine **225** monitors the screening outcall for the trigger from the telephony device **130**. Upon receipt of the trigger, the screening outcall engine **225** in

combination with the protocol stack **235** bridges the screening outcall to the call in the two-way mode providing for the interactive session between the telephony device **120** and the telephony device **130** and to halt the recording of the message.

In another example, the telephony device **120** initiates the incoming call to the telephony device **125**. The switch **135** routes the incoming call to the messaging system component **105**. The user interface logic component **220** employs the protocol stack **235** to retrieve the one profile associated with the telephony device **125** from the database **255**. The user interface logic component **220** provides for the termination of the incoming call. The one profile associated with the telephony device **125** indicates that the screening in-call engine **230** responds to the screening in-call.

Upon receipt of the screening in-call, the screening in-call engine **230** associates the calling party number of the screening in-call with the mailbox of the telephony device **125** in which the message is being recorded. The screening in-call engine **230** in combination with the protocol stack **235** bridge the screening in-call with the incoming call in the listen-only mode and to monitor the screening in-call for the trigger.

Upon receipt of the trigger, the screening in-call engine **230** in combination with the protocol stack **235** bridge the incoming call with the screening in-call in the two-way mode providing for the interactive session between the telephony device **120** and the telephony device **130**. The user interface logic component **220** stores the recorded message in the mailbox associated with the telephony device **125**.

In a further example, the telephony device **120** comprise a cellular phone and the telephony device **125** comprises a personal computer. The telephony device **120** initiates the incoming call to the telephony device **125**. The network **110** routes the incoming call to the telephony device **125**. Where the telephony device **125** is dialed-up onto the internet, the telephony device **125** fails to respond to the incoming call. The network **110** re-routes the incoming call to the messaging system component **105**.

The telephony component **205** communicates with the storage component **210** to retrieve the one profile associated with the telephony device **125**. The one profile associated with the telephony device **125** indicates that the telephony device **125** comprises the screening device. The messaging system component **105** initiates a screening outcall of a Voice Over Internet Protocol ("VoIP") call to the telephony device **125**. The screening outcall displays a pop-up window on the display of the telephony device **125** displaying a caller identification functionality. The telephony device **125** selects to screen the incoming call from the pop-up window. The messaging system component **105** bridges the incoming call to the screening outcall where the telephony device **125** selects to screen the call from the pop-up window on the display of the telephony device **125**. The telephony device **125** screens the call as it is played from the telephony device **125**. The messaging system component **105** bridges the incoming call to the screening outcall in the two-way mode where the telephony device **125** selects the interactive session from the pop-up window on the display of the telephony device **125**.

The steps or operations described herein are just exemplary. There may be many variations to these steps or operations without departing from the spirit of the invention. For instance, the steps may be performed in a differing order, or steps may be added, deleted, or modified.

Although exemplary implementations of the invention have been depicted and described in detail herein, it will be apparent to those skilled in the relevant art that various modifications, additions, substitutions, and the like can be made without departing from the spirit of the invention and these

are therefore considered to be within the scope of the invention as defined in the following claims.

We claim:

1. An apparatus, comprising:

a messaging system component that provides for a screening, of an incoming call from a telephony device, wherein the messaging system component is associated with a network; and

wherein the messaging system component conforms to a signaling protocol of the network to communicate with the network; and

wherein upon receipt of the incoming call the messaging system component employs a profile associated with a called telephony device to provide for the screening of the incoming call from the telephony device; and

wherein the profile comprises a) an email address, b) a plurality of numbers associated with the called telephony device, c) a Universal Resource Identifier (URI), and d) one or more filter rules; and

wherein the messaging system component performs a validation on a calling party number of another telephony device to ensure that a message for the called telephony device is being recorded.

2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the messaging system component is located in a peripheral relationship to the network, and wherein the peripheral relationship to the network allows for the addition of providing for the incoming call to be screened from the another telephony device without modification to an architecture associated with the network.

3. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the architecture associated with the network comprises a signaling infrastructure; and

wherein the messaging system component that is located in a peripheral relationship to the network conforms to a signaling protocol associated with the signaling infrastructure; and

wherein the messaging system component allows for the screening of the incoming call from the another telephony device without modification to the signaling infrastructure associated with the network.

4. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising:

telephony and signal processing hardware that conforms to the signaling protocol of the network, wherein a protocol stack employs the signaling protocol to communicate with the network without modification to a signaling infrastructure associated with the network.

5. The apparatus of claim 4, further comprising a screening engine, wherein the screening engine and the protocol stack bridge the incoming call to a screening call, allowing the incoming call to be screened by the another telephony device, and wherein the screening engine and the telephony and signal processing hardware serve to establish the screening call between the messaging system component and the another telephony device.

6. The apparatus of claim 5, wherein the screening engine and the protocol stack bridge the incoming call to the screening call in a listen-only mode that provides for a message to be screened from the telephony device in real-time.

7. The apparatus of claim 5, wherein upon receipt of a trigger the screening engine and protocol stack bridge the incoming call to the screening call in a two-way mode that provides for an interactive session between the telephony device and a calling telephony device, and wherein the calling telephony device initiates the incoming call.

8. The apparatus of claim 5, wherein the called telephony device receives the incoming call, and wherein the screening engine comprises a screening outcall engine, and wherein the

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screening call comprises a screening outcall, and wherein a screening device comprises the telephony device; and

wherein the screening outcall engine and the telephony and signal processing hardware initiate the screening outcall to the screening device associated with the called telephony device; and

wherein the screening engine and the protocol stack bridge the incoming call to the screening outcall provide for the screening, of the incoming call, from the telephony device, and wherein the telephony device responds to the screening outcall.

9. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein the screening outcall comprises a respective messaging number, and wherein the messaging number identifies the screening outcall as a screening call.

10. The apparatus of claim 5, wherein the screening engine comprises a screening in-call engine, and wherein the screening call comprises a screening in-call, and wherein the telephony device initiates the screening in-call to the messaging system component; and

wherein upon receipt of the screening in-call from the telephony device the screening in-call engine and the protocol stack bridge the incoming call to the screening in-call to provide for the screening of the incoming call from the telephony device.

11. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the screening in-call comprises a screening number, and wherein the messaging system component associates the screening in-call with a mailbox of a called telephony device based on the screening number of the screening in-call.

12. The apparatus of claim 5, wherein the screening call comprises a Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) call.

13. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the messaging system component provides for the screening, of the incoming call, by bridging the incoming call to a screening call, and wherein the telephony device is associated with the screening call.

14. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a database that stores the profile associated with the called telephony device.

15. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the signaling protocol comprises Signaling System 7 (SS7) protocol.

16. A method, comprising the steps of:

providing for a screening, of an incoming call, from a telephony device by a messaging system component associated with a network; and

conforming to a signaling protocol of the network by the messaging system component to communicate with the network;

wherein upon receipt of the incoming call the messaging system component employs a profile associated with a called telephony device to provide for the screening of the incoming call from the telephony device; and

wherein the profile comprises a) an email address, b) a plurality of numbers associated with the called telephony device, c) a Universal Resource Identifier (URI), and d) one or more filter rules; and

wherein the messaging system component performs a validation on a calling party number of another telephony device to ensure that a message for the called telephony device is being recorded.

17. The method of claim 16, comprising the step of: bridging the incoming call to a screening call in a listen-only mode providing for the screening of the incoming call from the telephony device.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein a calling telephony device initiates the incoming call, comprising the steps of:

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monitoring the screening call from the telephony device;

receiving a trigger from the telephony device;

bridging the incoming call to the screening call in a two-way mode providing for an interactive session between the telephony device and the calling telephony device.

19. The method of claim 16, wherein the step of providing for the screening, of the incoming call, from the telephony device by the messaging system component associated with the network comprises the steps of:

retrieving the profile associated with the called telephony device of the incoming call from a database; and

employing the profile associated with the called telephony device, wherein the messaging system component provides for the screening, of the incoming call, by one of initiating a screening outcall and responding to a screening in-call.

20. The method of claim 16, wherein a screening device comprises the telephony device associated with the called telephony device, and wherein the screening call comprises a screening outcall, and wherein the step of providing for the screening, of the incoming call, from the telephony device by the messaging system component associated with the network comprises the steps of:

initiating the screening outcall to the screening devices associated with the called telephony device, wherein the called telephony device receives the incoming call; and

bridging the incoming call to the one screening outcall in a listen-only mode providing for the screening of the incoming call from the one screening device, wherein the one screening device responds to the screening outcall.

21. The method of claim 16, wherein the screening call comprises a screening in-call, and wherein the step of providing for the screening of the incoming call from the telephony device by the messaging system component associated with the network comprises the steps of:

responding to the screening in-call initiated by the telephony device; and

bridging the incoming call to the screening in-call of the telephony device in a listen-only mode providing for the screening of the incoming call from the telephony device in real-time.

22. The method of claim 21, comprising the step of:

employing a called party number of the screening in-call to associate the screening in-call to a mailbox of a called telephony device, wherein the called telephony device receives the incoming call.

23. The method of claim 16, comprising the step of:

conforming by the messaging system component to Signaling System 7 (SS7) protocol of the network to communicate with the network, wherein conforming to the signaling protocol to provide for the screening of the incoming call by the telephony device requires no modification to a signaling infrastructure associated with the network.

24. A tangible computer-readable medium having computer executable instructions for performing steps, comprising:

means in the one or more media for screening an incoming call from a telephony device by a messaging system component located in a peripheral relationship to a network;

means in the one or more media for conforming to a signaling protocol of the network by the messaging system component to communicate with the network;

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means in the one or more media for retrieving a profile associated with a called telephony device of the incoming call from a database, wherein the profile comprises a) an email address, b) a plurality of numbers associated with the called telephony device, c) a Universal Resource Identifier (URI), and d) one or more filter rules; and  
means in the one or more media for employing the profile associated with the called telephony device, wherein the messaging system component provides for the screen-

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ing, of the incoming call, by one of initiating a screening outcall and responding to a screening in-call;  
wherein the messaging system component performs a validation on a calling party number of another telephony device to ensure that a message for the called telephony device is being recorded.

**25.** The apparatus of claim **1**, wherein the called telephony device is a personal computer.

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