

June 30, 2007

MARTENS Suite
Service Fulfillment Solutions

SASKTEL INTERNATIONAL

MICA News

2007 MICA Conference

SaskTel International's 2007 MARTENS International Client Association (MICA) Conference was held in the historic city of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The theme of this year's conference was "The Road to Self Serve" with a focus on the importance of developing optimum efficiencies in your systems and processes as a basic principal in developing a Self Serve strategy for your company. The MARTENS Suite of products is a key component of this strategy as it enables flow-through provisioning and activation of the Triple Play.

Guest speaker Michael Greeson, founder and CEO of the Diffusion Group, provided the attendees with his view of the concept of Self Serve in an on-demand world with his presentation entitled "*I Want It All, and I Want it Now*". The expectations of today's consumers and the role technology has played in building those expectations are defining the new world of service delivery. The challenge before service providers is to create a service delivery environment based on flow-through or low-touch processes that will enable them to provide their customers with the on-demand service experience.

Candace Bligh, Customer Services Solutions Manager for SaskTel, shared SaskTel's journey on the Road To Self Serve, the initiatives they are implementing as part of their strategy, and the benefits to SaskTel as well as their customers. Key messages in this presentation were the need to have a plan, the support of the executive and a change management initiative for departments and employees.

The Birds of a Feather sessions were well received and generated great discussions amongst the MICA members. The topics discussed included:

- Network Device Grooming
- OpenSwitchGate Auto Discovery
- Prequalification for Broadband Service
- Process Changes to Achieve Self Serve

New to the conference this year was an executive forum attended by Aliant, CenturyTel and SaskTel. This session marks the first of regularly scheduled meetings and conference calls where the executives from the MICA client base will be given the opportunity to share experiences and insight on the telecommunications industry, challenges and strategic initiatives.

Philadelphia proved to be an excellent conference site as it presented attendees with an opportunity to take in the historical landmarks, experience a scenic cruise down the Delaware River on the "Spirit of Philadelphia" and enjoy a delicious dinner at the 18th Century City Tavern restored to its original likeness of 1774.

Thank you to all who attended this year's conference. All presentations from the MICA conference can be viewed on the SI web site at www.sasktelinternational.com.



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Broadband Pre Qualification

Pre qualifying broadband services has been an issue for MICA members for a number of years. It is an exercise in determining what broadband services can be provided at a customer's address. It started with determining if DSL or a DSLAM was available at an address, to provide a 1.5 meg high speed internet service, and has grown into a much more complicated issue.

Today, there are many considerations to be made when pre qualifying broadband services. Instead of one broadband service, there is the triple play with many different services in each category of voice, data and video. Instead of one technology, ADSL, there are now many flavours of DSL (ADSL, ADSL2+, VDSL etc.). The media is also changing, instead of only copper, fibre and wireless are

now available. All this, as well as other issues to consider such as distance, cable gauge and interference. The days of using manual procedures to qualify service have now passed.

MARTENS currently has an address qualification routine which, given a set of services, will determine whether these services can be provided at a particular address. The advantage of using MARTENS for qualification is that the existing assign modules can be used and no further standalone development or integration is required.

Recent discussions with MICA members suggested that the MARTENS address qualification should be enhanced. As part of Release 14.0, new functionality will be added to determine the maximum bandwidth available at an address in order to enable

a customer to pick and choose services that could be provided by that bandwidth. This new functionality could also be used for market studies to determine if customers are using the bandwidth available and for up sell opportunities. It was also suggested that the cable gauge be re-evaluated in order to determine if it would be appropriate to include in the qualification routines. Cable pair bonding, another new technique, must also be considered.

These qualification routines could then be used to pass the required information to a web based front-end that could be made available to all staff members as well as customers. This is another example of how the valuable information stored in the MARTENS application can be used to your advantage.

New Faces at SaskTel International



Steve Sousa - Vice-President, SaskTel International

As Vice-President of SaskTel International, Steve is responsible for Software Solutions as well as marketing SaskTel International's vast knowledge and strong technical expertise in the telecom industry internationally.

Prior to joining SI seven years ago, Steve was the Senior Trade Finance Specialist for the Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership (STEP). Steve also spent some time working in Washington, DC at the office of Liaison with the International Financial Institution at the Canadian Embassy prior to his term at STEP. Steve's outstanding career achievements and contributions to the province earned him a nomination for the Ontario Premier's Award in 2000.

With his vast telecom knowledge and extensive international experience, Steve is a great asset to SaskTel International and our clients. If you have any questions for Steve please feel free to email him at steve.sousa@sasktel.com.

Derrick Duczek - Assistant Vice President of Marketing and Sales

Derrick is the AVP of Marketing and Sales for SaskTel International and is responsible for marketing SaskTel International's products, services, and expertise to potential clients.

Prior to joining the SaskTel International team, Derrick spent the last seven years as the Market Manager for SaskTel's leading-edge IPTV product. With over eighteen years of experience in the telecommunications industry, Derrick has held a variety of positions at SaskTel, working in departments such as Market Research, Finance, and Sales Support. Derrick was also the Product Manager for the Long Distance portfolio during the advent of competition. As well, he has worked on developing telecom business opportunities in Australia and Canada prior to joining the SI team.



Network Grooming

Many of the MICA clients have inventoried the transport network in MARTENS over the past several years. As their network configuration evolves to add devices and bandwidth, their inventory in MARTENS must also change to reflect the updates. The process used to update, or 'groom' the network in MARTENS was discussed during one of our popular "Birds of a Feather" sessions at MICA 2007.

The session participants agreed that changes to a DSLAM seemed to be the easiest grooming process. This usually involved inventorying a new DSLAM and using 3270 scripts or MOIs to post SOCHG orders to move the customers to the new Access Identifier. MICA clients performed this process while MARTENS was available, sometimes during normal working hours. One of the MICA clients also sent the programming commands generated by the SOCHG orders to OSG to activate the new AID during off-peak hours.

Grooming of the network behind the DSLAM is more complex. This process used SOCHG orders to update subscribers, but it also required batch utilities to be run after hours to apply some of the changes. In particular, applying pre-provisioning to paths assigned to working line cards requires a batch job which must be run while the company is shut down.

SaskTel International has created some tools to help with your grooming process, and further analysis of the procedures will be done. Utilities have been created to rename devices or AID prefixes, or to change a DSLAM device type. Our next step will be to update the pre-provisioning utility to allow it to run during normal production hours while the MARTENS application is available to online users. In the near future another "Birds of a Feather" session will be held for our clients to interact and discuss this topic.

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Auto-Discovery in the MARTENS Suite

During the 2006 MICA Conference, Michael Moore's OpenSwitchGate presentation included a discussion of the enhancements and new features included in OpenSwitchGate Release 5.0. This presentation also outlined items of future interest to the OpenSwitchGate team, that are not currently being considered for implementation. The first item discussed was Auto-Discovery.

Anyone who attended the OpenSwitchGate presentation at the 2006 MICA Conference may be surprised to learn that a pilot for Auto-Discovery is now included in OpenSwitchGate Release 5.0, which will be generally available in September 2007. How did Auto-Discovery go from "Blue Sky" to pilot in a little over a year?

To answer this question we need to understand what Auto-Discovery is and what motivates the concept. There is no doubt that an accurate, mechanized inventory of telephony components, such as MARTENS provides, is a fundamental requirement for automated service provisioning, assignment and activation. However, the sheer number of components in the network, their complex relationships and the sometimes frequent changes they undergo makes maintenance of such an inventory a difficult task.

Add to this the problem of keeping the inventory accurate. Those responsible to update the inventory must be notified when anything changes in the network. This communica-

tion link can and does break down. Also, human error can introduce inaccuracies.

SaskTel International recognizes the vital and growing need to automate the process of updating the inventory database in MARTENS. One way to do this is by mechanically detecting changes in the network as they occur and automatically updating the inventory with this 'discovered' data. This process is called Auto-Discovery.

Described in this way Auto-Discovery sounds simple, but it definitely is not. There are many factors which complicate the process and in some cases prevent full automation. One is the fact that not all telephony components can be mechanically discovered. These undiscoverable components include copper cable, access points and the frame. These components are important to the automated provisioning and assignment of a service but must continue to be entered in the inventory by hand.

Another element is the fact that discovered data may or may not need to be manually audited before being updated in the inventory. While hardware components probably do not require manual auditing, since the hardware inventory must reflect what really exists, discovered services will need to be.

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Auto-Discovery in the MARTENS Suite...con't

Finally, discovered data cannot simply be updated directly in the MARTENS inventory. This is because the MARTENS complete line card contains data from many devices while discovery is done one device at a time.

Most of these difficulties affect the MARTENS side of the Auto-Discovery process in the MARTENS Suite. MARTENS will be responsible for applying the discovered data to its inventory. While this task may be technically simple, it is functionally complex. On the other hand, OpenSwitchGate's responsibility is to detect changes in the network, discover all the data associated with these changes and deliver this data to MARTENS in a format that is understandable and device agnostic. This task is technically complex but functionally simple since we need to be concerned only with one device at a time.

With the release of OpenSwitchGate 5.0 the infrastructure for auto-discovery will be in place, including the de-

sign of the processes necessary to detect new devices of various types and the format for delivery of DSLAM type devices to MARTENS.

Supported by this infrastructure the intelligence necessary to auto-discover any devices managed by the Adtran TotalAccess EMS will be added to the Adtran TotalAccess delegate. Thus the Adtran TotalAccess EMS is known as the Auto-Discovery Pilot Device. When MARTENS 13.2 is released it will contain preliminary functionality to take advantage of auto-discovered data in the inventory load process for new devices.

Auto-discovery promises to be a very exciting addition to the MARTENS Suite of products. However, the challenges are great and the functionality being delivered now is preliminary. After the pilot has been tested by MICA members in a real world environment we will evaluate the feedback and determine what, if any, our next steps should be.

SaskTel International Conversion Services

Jim Dickenson's "We Do Conversions Too" presentation at the 2007 MICA Conference described SaskTel International's conversion projects over the past few years, while outlining the types of conversion services that SI offers to its clients. Many of our clients have already used our personnel to assist with their conversion projects, but SI wanted to ensure that all of the MICA members are aware of what SI can offer.

SI's conversion teams have assisted clients with many types of projects. Some of the areas that we have assisted with include:

- ◇ Structure loading facilities into MARTENS
- ◇ Adding new linecards
- ◇ Inventorying or updating network devices and the transport access path
- ◇ Adding broadband services to existing subscribers
- ◇ Adding Centrex IDs and subscribers
- ◇ Updating configuration information on existing equipment (ie: changing the edge distance on access points)
- ◇ Moving data from other applications into MARTENS

Our conversion teams have a number of tools or methods that we use to assist with our projects. These new tools

and expertise have allowed us to drop our prices by approximately 60% since 1995. Besides the original data collection for linecard and access point areas, we have employed data entry teams, custom batch conversions and our S3270 toolkit. The S3270 toolkit allows us to automate repetitive data entry using the MARTENS online screens.

The composition of the team that SI puts together for each conversion project depends on the requirements of the client site. This is usually based on the project time requirements, the types of data sources, and the available implementation window.

Once an occasional project, conversion has since evolved into a permanent part of the services that SI offers to our clients. Contact Debby Kennedy or Valerie DeCorby for further information on what we can provide for your next conversion project.

"These new tools and expertise have allowed us to drop our prices by approximately 60% since 1995."

The folks at SI would like to wish everyone a safe and happy summer!

