Telephone 'bugs' shaken

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work imposed by NET from about July 1 to August 30, to enable the companies to devote its full manpower efforts to the Eight Hours Switchover, and the intricate testing that such a massive change involved, both before and after the fact. According to Berlan, the number of complaints received immediately after cutover to the new system was not excessive. NET was also suffering from internal problems, from which they are just now recovering. These involved both illness of key personnel, and enormous turnover problems. There are 14 installers working with the MIT-Dagger systems, eleven at MIT and three at Dagger. The longest service is this capacity for any installer is about one year, which is nearly equivalent to his length of service with the phone company.

Finally, there is some question as to whether or not there was full realization of the magnitude of the system or the complexities involved in its "debugging stage" on the part of the user community. Isolated individuals with malfunctioning phones could not easily see the "bigger picture" of thousands of lines installed and operating correctly, or of a phone company struggling to get service in as quickly as possible.

Things have improved, said Berlan, "to the point where the phone company is usually managing our normal delivery schedule." He explained that this involved ten working days for orders affecting six phones or less, and up to one month for more than 100 phones in an order. Phone change orders involve as few as one and as many as 70 phones, Berlan noted, and there are about 40 such orders placed per week.

Even on phones which did work immediately after the change to Dagger, there were a few problems that never existed before the new system was installed. These involved "class of service" problems. There are new class of service features available, ranging from unlimited long distance in some administrative offices, to tie-line restricted phones in lobby locations which cannot even call dormitories. The class of service for any phone is a parameter which is entered at a computer console by a phone company employee. Apparently errors were frequent in this process at first, but there has been a 'noticeable drop in the problem.'

When asked if Centrex had improved overall phone service to the Institute, Berlan replied, "Yes, I think it has. There are many criteria by which one can judge phone service, but an important one is the way people react to changes, and the nature of the complaints we receive. We have heard many good things, and few bad ones about the new system." Berlan noted, when asked, that the call forwarding feature is now installed on some 200 phones. Although it does not work precisely as the phone company said it would - a phone on call forwarding still has a dial tone and can be used while calls are being forwarded. Originally, Telco had stated that a phone whose calls were being forwarded would be unavailable until the call forwarding had been turned off - there have been few problems with it. He believes that the number of offices taking advantage of the feature will grow as a description of its virtues are passed by word of mouth.

Berlan concluded by noting that service may never again be as bad as it was when MIT had its previous on-campus PBX (Private Branch Exchange) system. At that time, all wiring and switching was strictly on campus; now it all runs to a new building off-campus, greatly increasing the amount of paperwork needed to accomplish even the simplest repair or installation.

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