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(54) **Title:** PREMIUM COMMUNICATION SESSIONS

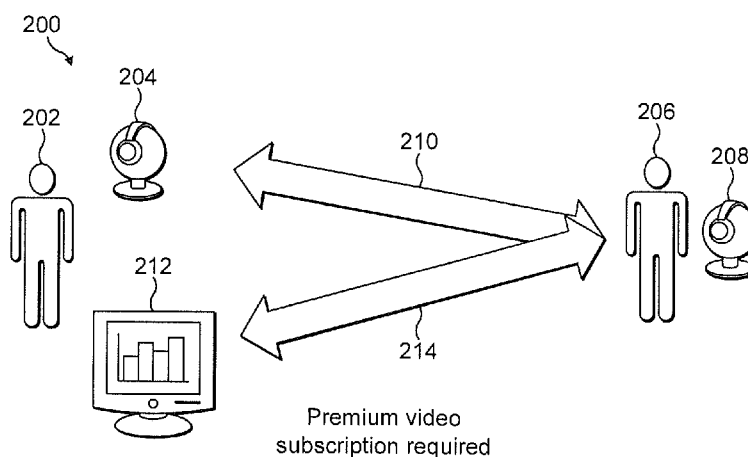


FIG. 2

(57) **Abstract:** Communication systems and methods for providing premium multiparty communication sessions between a plurality of callers. The plurality of callers may comprise an initiating caller who initiates the premium multiparty communication session but who does not have a status in the communication system which is recognized by an operator of the communication system for allowing the premium multiparty communication session to proceed; and a premium multiparty caller who has a status in the communication system which is recognized by the operator of the communication system such that the operator allows the premium multiparty communication session to proceed, wherein the premium multiparty caller is a different caller to the initiating caller. The premium multiparty caller funding the premium multiparty communication session may be transferred and assigned during communication sessions.





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AMENDED CLAIMS

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1. A communication system configured to provide a premium multiparty communication session between a plurality of callers, the plurality of callers comprising:
- an initiating caller who initiates the premium multiparty communication session but who does not have a status in the communication system which is recognized by an operator of the communication system for allowing the premium multiparty communication session to proceed; and
- a premium multiparty caller who has a status in the communication system which is recognized by the operator of the communication system such that the operator allows the premium multiparty communication session to proceed, wherein the premium multiparty caller is a different caller to the initiating caller.
2. A communication system according to claim 1, comprising:
- receiving means for receiving a request from the initiating caller to convert a communication session into a premium communication session;
- determining means for determining whether another one of the plurality of callers has a status which indicates that premium communication sessions are to be allowed to proceed; and
- converting means for converting the communication session into a premium communication session if it is determined that said other one of the plurality of callers has said status.
3. A communication system according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the communication system is configured to allow the premium communication session to proceed on the basis that the initiating caller is initially in a validating condition, the communication system comprising:
- first determining means for determining, during the premium communication session, that the initiating caller is no longer in the validating condition; and

second determining means for determining whether a second of the plurality of callers is in the validating condition which indicates that the premium communication session is allowed to proceed,

wherein the communication system is configured to maintain the premium communication session responsive to the determination that the initiating caller is no longer in the validating condition on determining that the second caller is in the validating condition.

4. A method of providing a premium multiparty communication session between a plurality of callers in a communication system, the method comprising an initiating caller initiating the premium multiparty communication session, wherein the plurality of callers comprises:

the initiating caller who does not have a status in the communication system which is recognized by an operator of the communication system for allowing the premium multiparty communication session to proceed; and

a premium multiparty caller who has a status in the communication system which is recognized by the operator of the communication system such that the operator allows the premium multiparty communication session to proceed,

wherein the premium multiparty caller is a different caller to the initiating caller.

5. The method of claim 4, comprising:

receiving a request from the initiating caller to convert a communication session into the premium communication session;

determining whether another one of the plurality of callers has a status which indicates that premium communication sessions are to be allowed to proceed; and

on determining that said other one of the plurality of callers has said status, converting the communication session into a premium communication session.

6. The method of claim 4 or 5, wherein the initiating caller is initially in a validating condition which indicates that the premium communication session is allowed to proceed, the method comprising:

during the premium communication session, determining that the initiating caller is no longer in the validating condition;

determining whether a second of the plurality of callers is in the validating condition which indicates that the premium communication session is allowed to proceed; and

responsive to the determination that the initiating caller is no longer in the validating condition, on determining that the second caller is in the validating condition, maintaining the premium communication session.

7. The method or system of any preceding claim, wherein the premium communication session comprises:

a one-to-one video call and the method comprises transmitting at least three image data streams between the plurality of callers; or

a one-to-one video call and the method comprises transmitting two image data streams wherein one of the image data streams is a video data stream and the other of the image data streams is a screen sharing data stream; or

a multiparty video call between the plurality of users.

8. The method of claim 5 wherein a video data stream from said one of the plurality of callers requesting to convert the communication session into a premium communication session is transmitted in the premium communication session.

9. The method or system of any preceding claim wherein the status of each of the plurality of callers at a server is stored and optionally updated in real time.

10. The method or system of any preceding claim wherein image data is transmitted between the plurality of callers in the premium multiparty communication session, said image data either (i) being captured using a webcam, or (ii) representing an image displayed on a caller's screen.