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(continued on next page)

(54) Abstract Title: **Pay-per-call performance based advertising**

(57) In an advertising system, a advertiser is assigned a unique telephone number and an advertisement is provided on a media channel on behalf of the advertiser, the advertisement including the unique number or a reference to the unique number. Telephone calls to the unique number are monitored and the collected data is used to bill the advertiser for calls to the unique number in accordance with a predefined model. The system enables entities without suitable web pages to be included in paid placement or paid inclusion search results produced by a search engine for subsequent contact via the telephone. May also be used in conjunction with telephone-based directory enquiries.

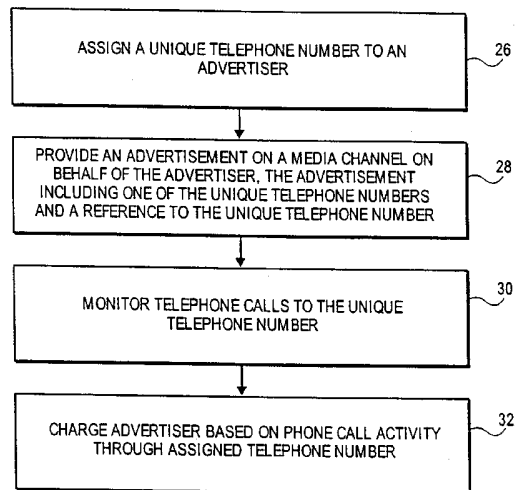


FIG. 3

GB 2 407 229 A

GB 2407229 A continuation

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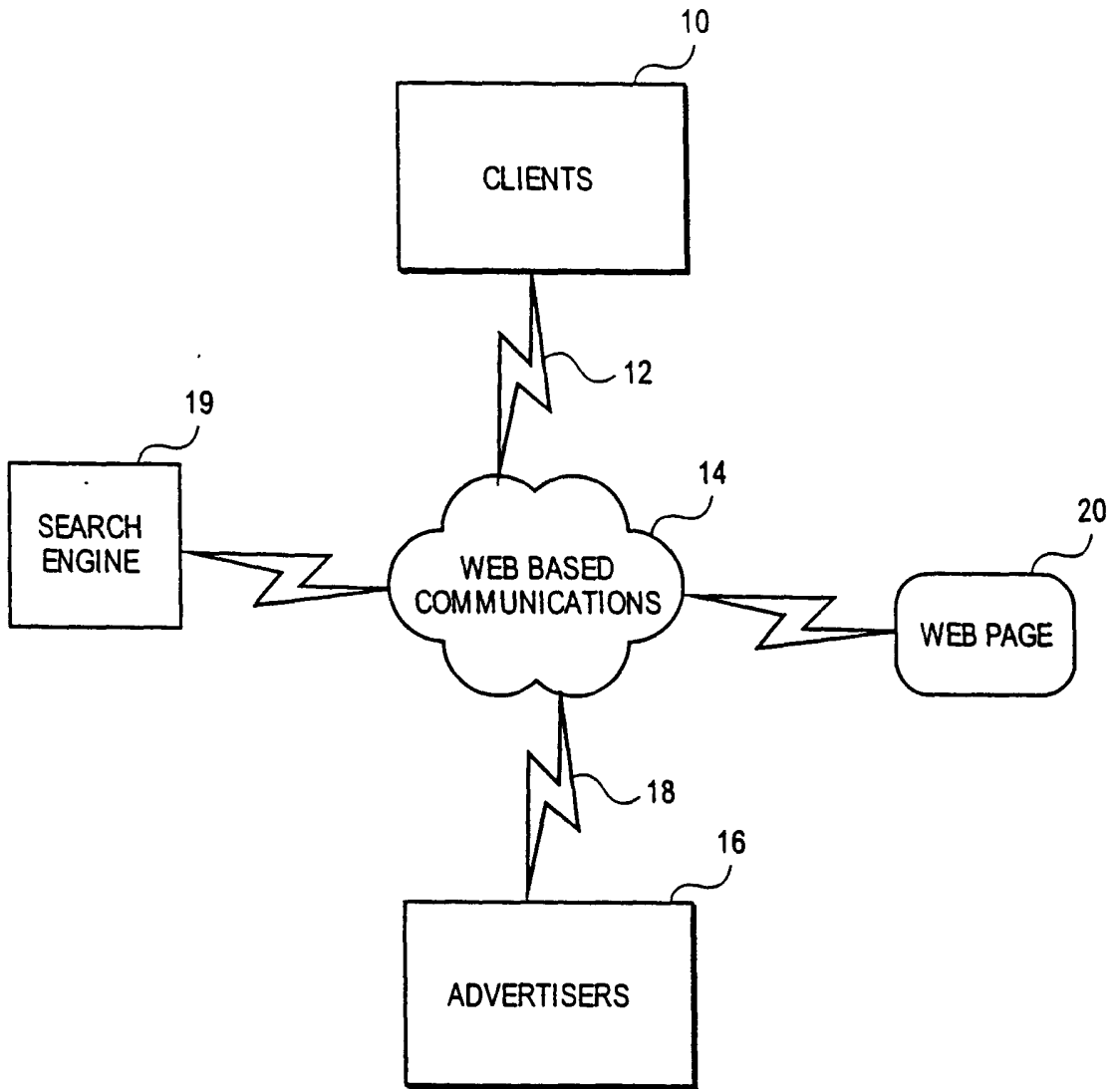


FIG. 1

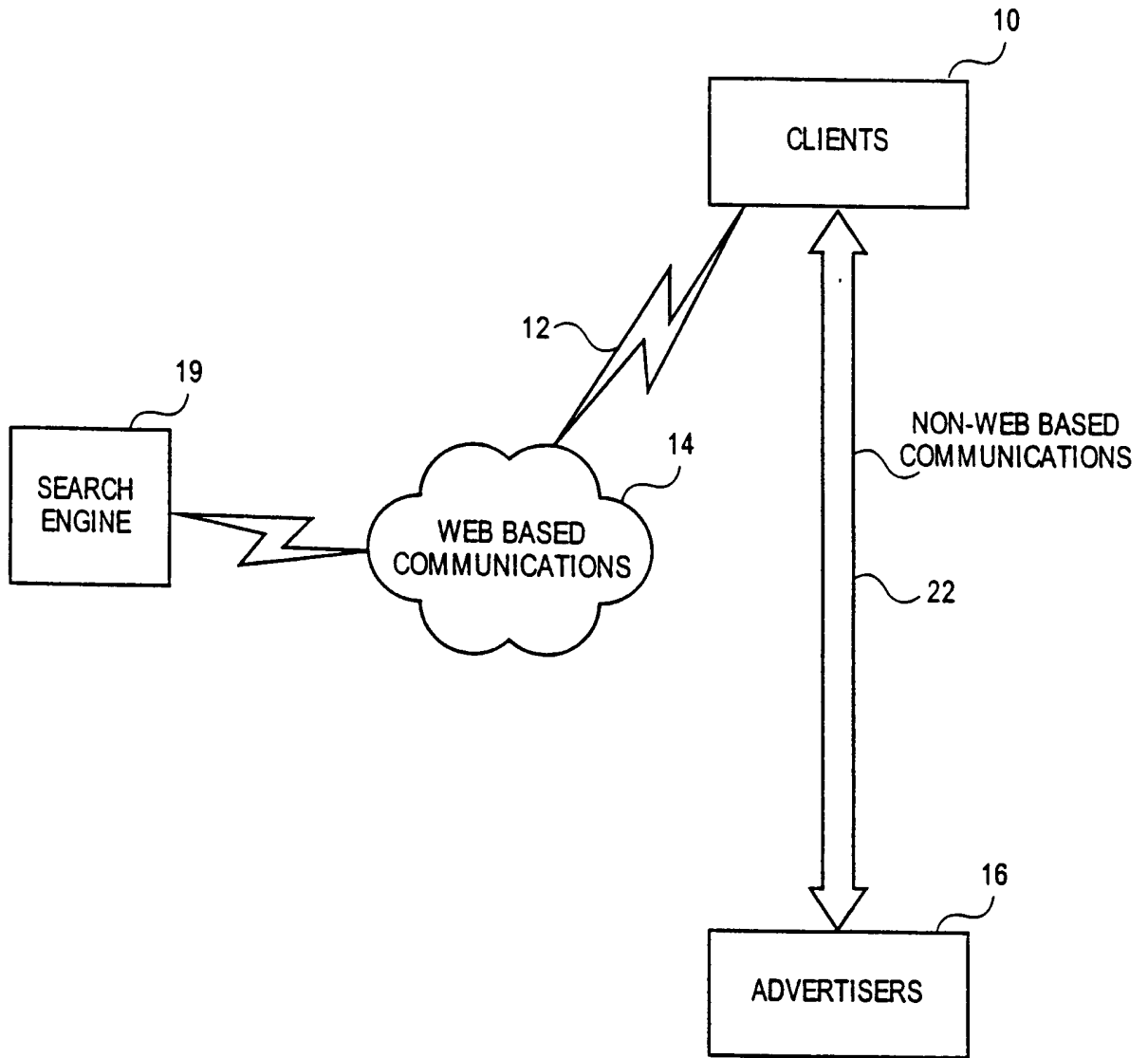


FIG. 2

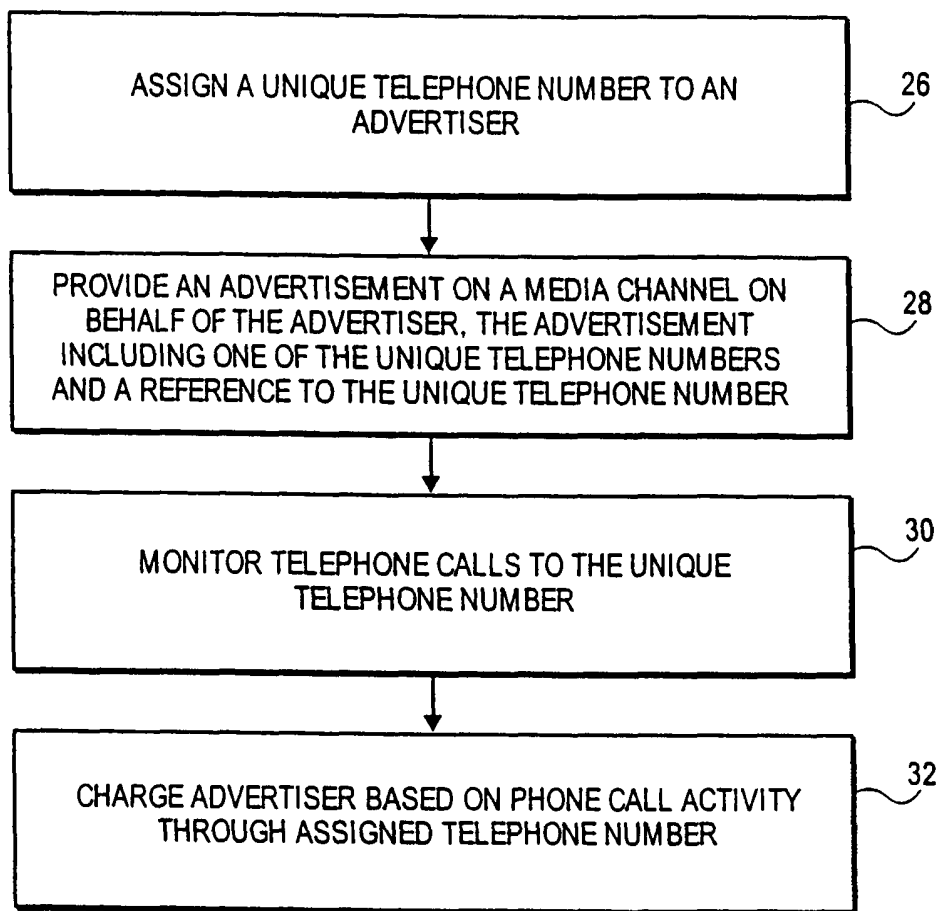


FIG. 3

FUNCTIONAL DESCRIPTION OF SYSTEM

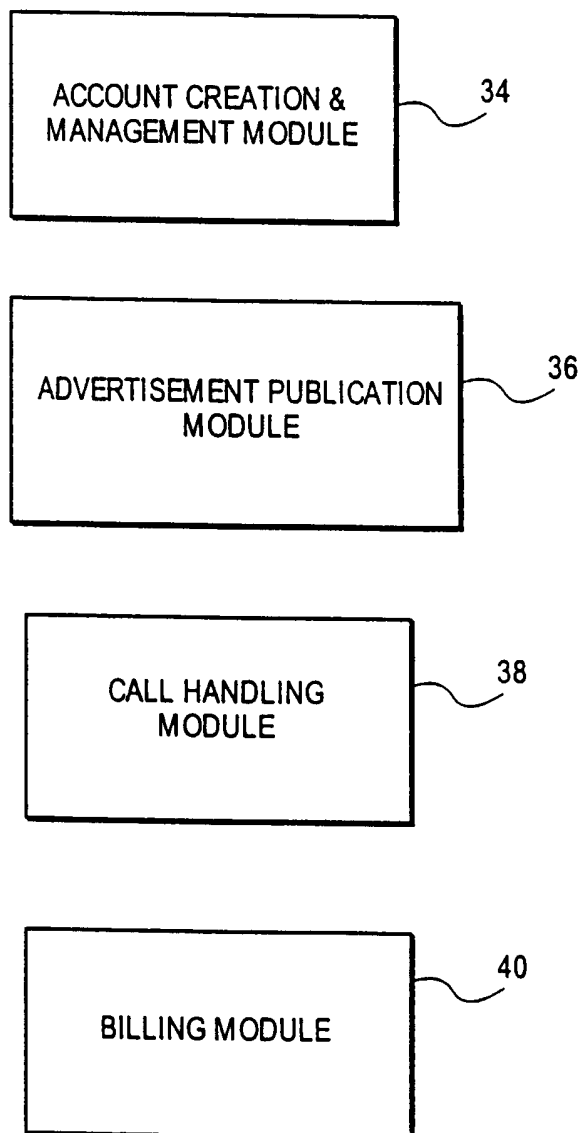


FIG. 4

5/12
ACCOUNT CREATION & MANAGEMENT
MODULE

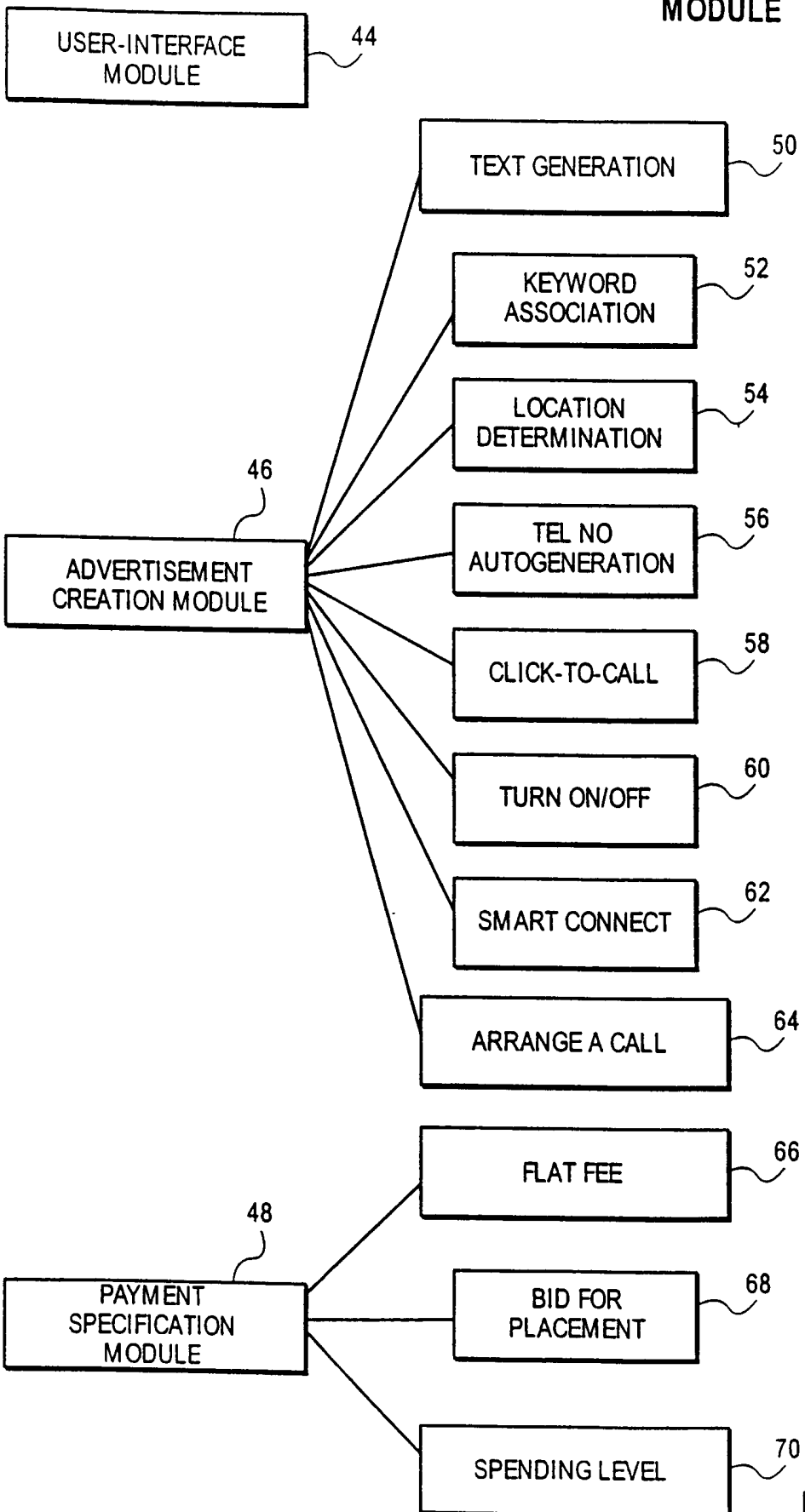


FIG. 5

ADVERTISEMENT PUBLICATION MODULE

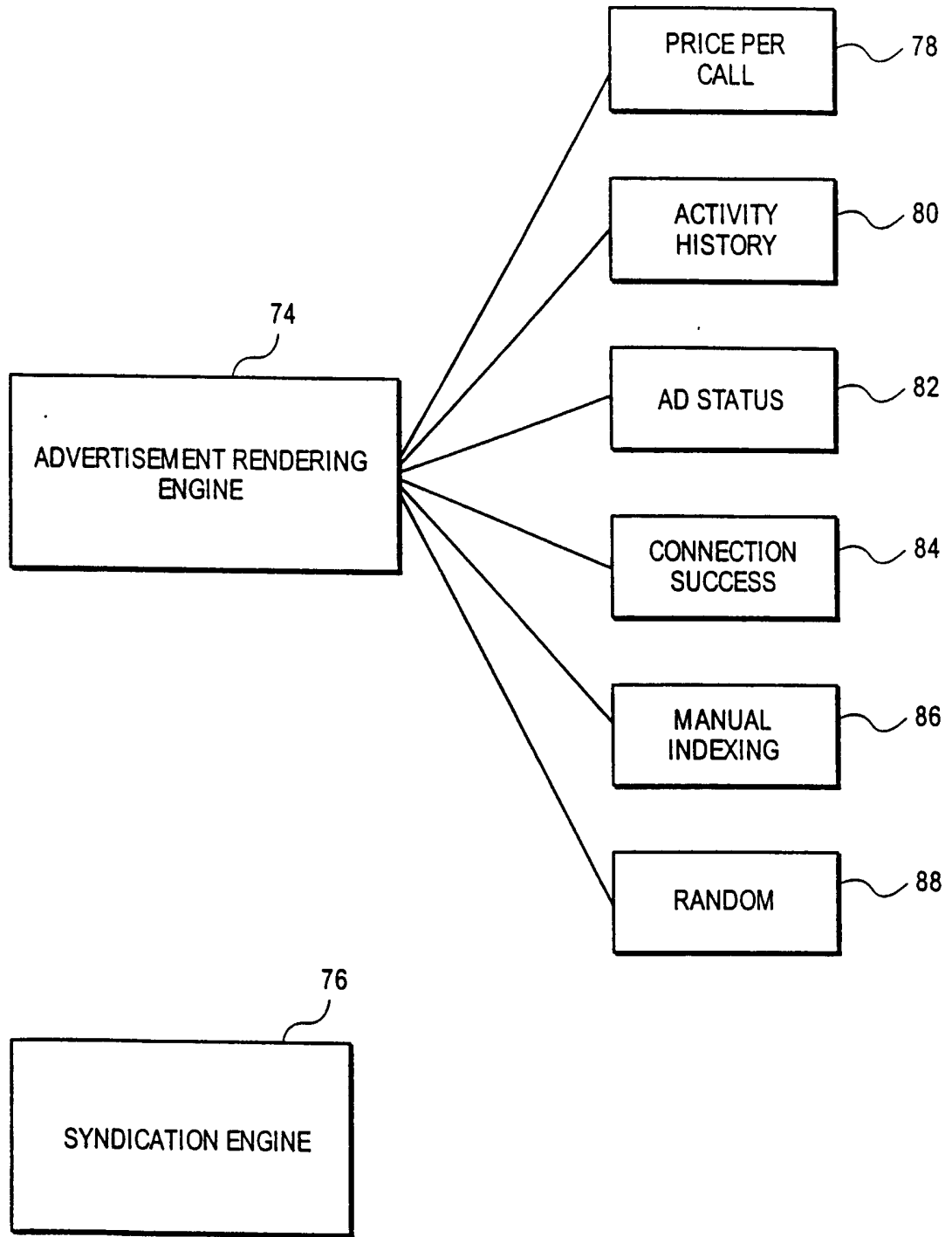


FIG. 6

CALL HANDLING MODULE

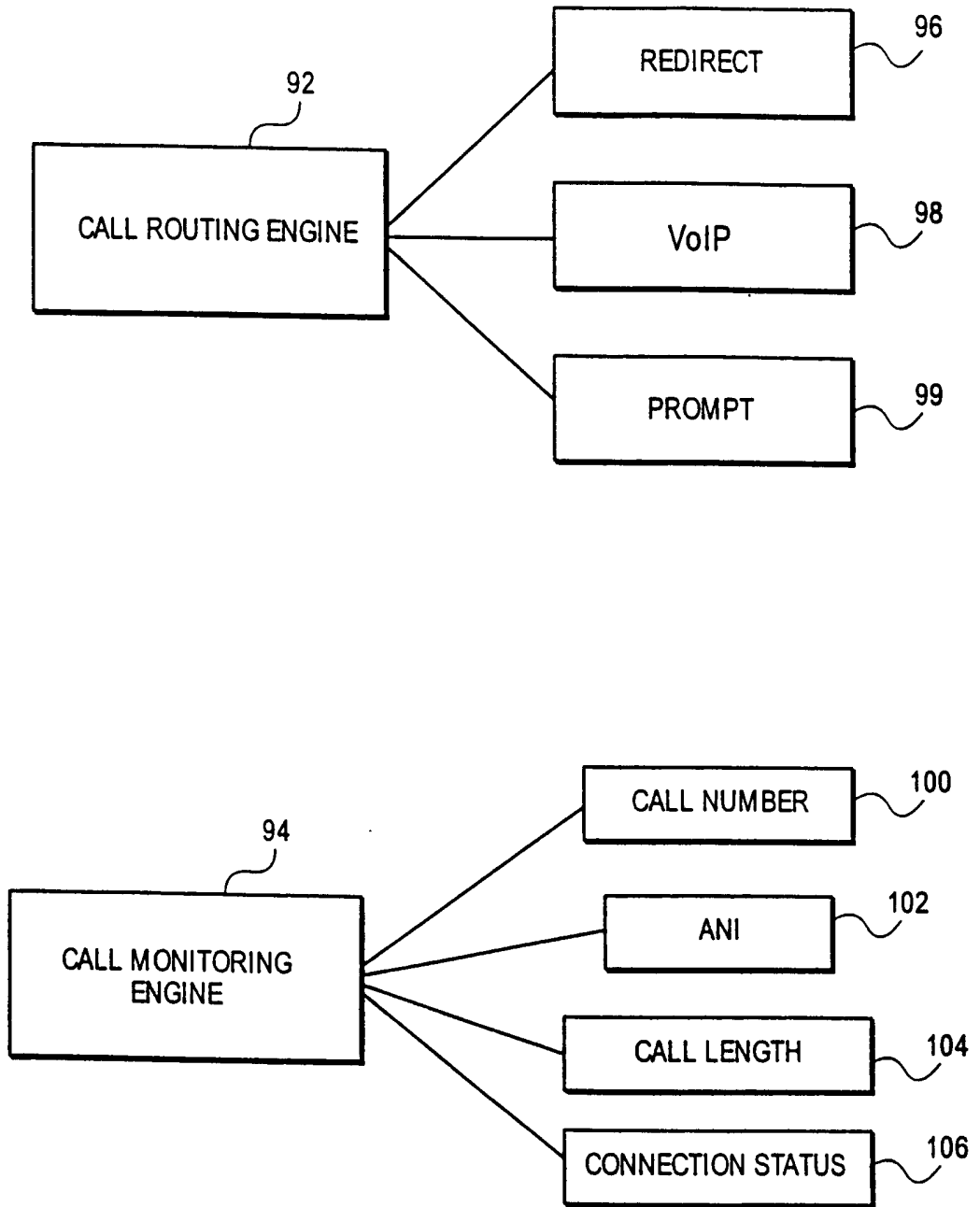


FIG. 7

Create your ad by entering a headline, two lines of description and a URL

Example.
Bert's Plumbing
 Best Plumbers in San Francisco
 800-555-5407
 Interest

To maximize your clickthrough rate and your ad's position, be as specific as possible in the description lines, and be sure you meet the requirements for ad format and content listed in the AdWords Editorial Guidelines.

Headline (maximum 26 characters)

Description line 1 (maximum 36 characters)

Description line 2 (maximum 36 characters)

Phone number

Google

Plumbing - San Francisco
 Plumbing - San Francisco
 Plumbers - San Francisco

Plumber's of San Francisco
 Scott's Plumbing Services
 Better Homes - Plumbing

Bert's Plumbing
 San Luca Plumbing
 San Fran Plumbing

- Create an account on ingenio
- Create ad (see left)
- Determine keywords and geography (city, state, zip etc)
- Determine bid amounts daily budget
- Launch campaign
- Unique 800# is automatically generated and rendered in advertisement. 800# redirects to LONON's actual phone number
- LONON pays for each phone call received

FIG. 8A

113

Campaign Management Interface

Headline

Dream Car Rentals

Channel	Category	Max Bid
SBC	Automobiles	\$3.50
QwestDex	Car Rentals	\$3.40
Ingenio	Keyword "Car"	\$3.25

Continue >>

FIG. 8B

114



SCROLL DOWN to see more listings

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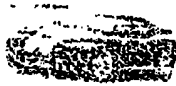
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LAS VEGAS, NV
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Fax: (702) 555-6665

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City Gold

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LAS VEGAS, NV 89119
Phone: (702) 555-2692
Fax: (702) 555-2044



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Save with Expedia.com, your one-stop source for flights, hotels, vacation packages, cruises, and rental

FIG. 9

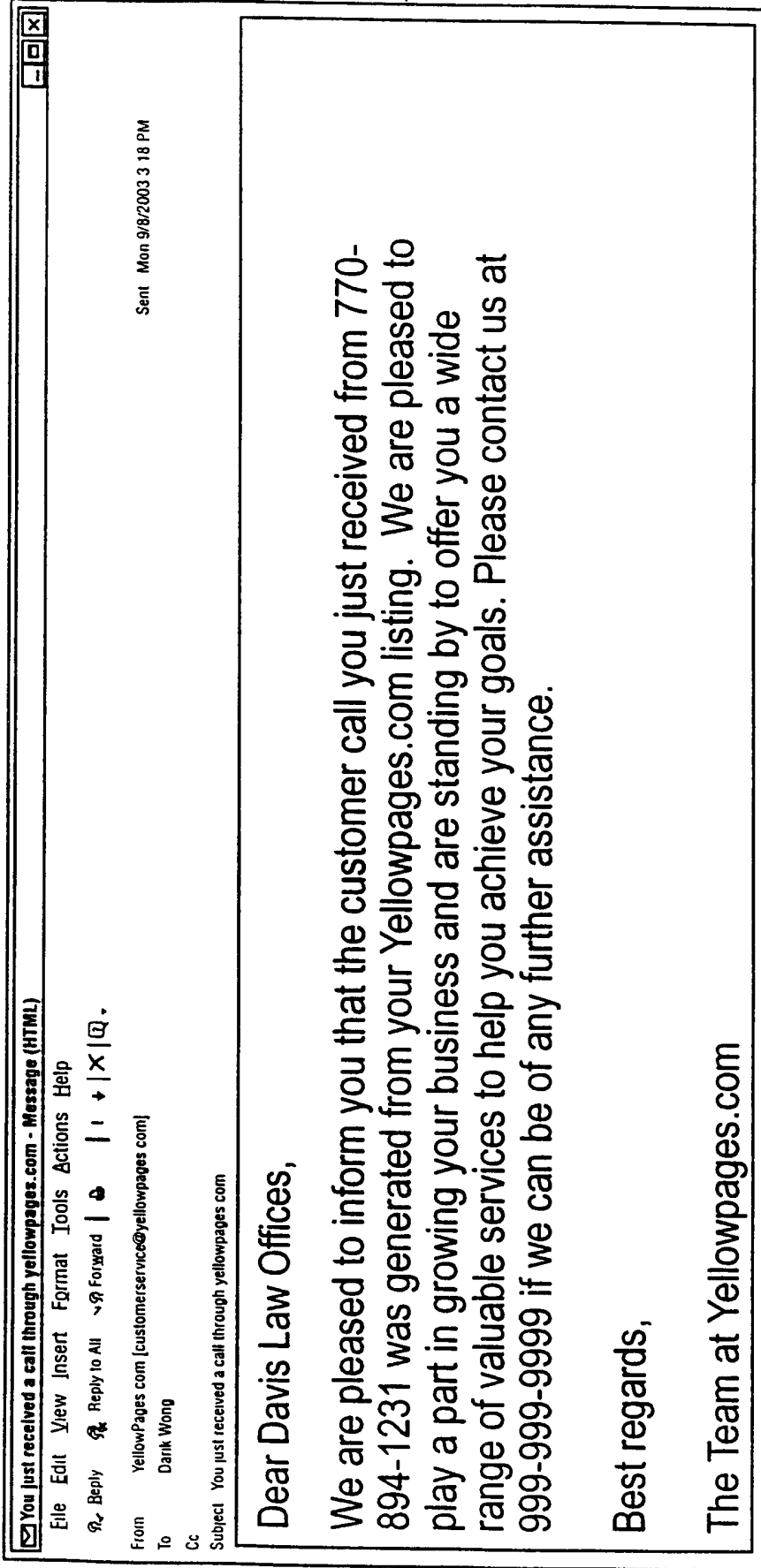


FIG. 10

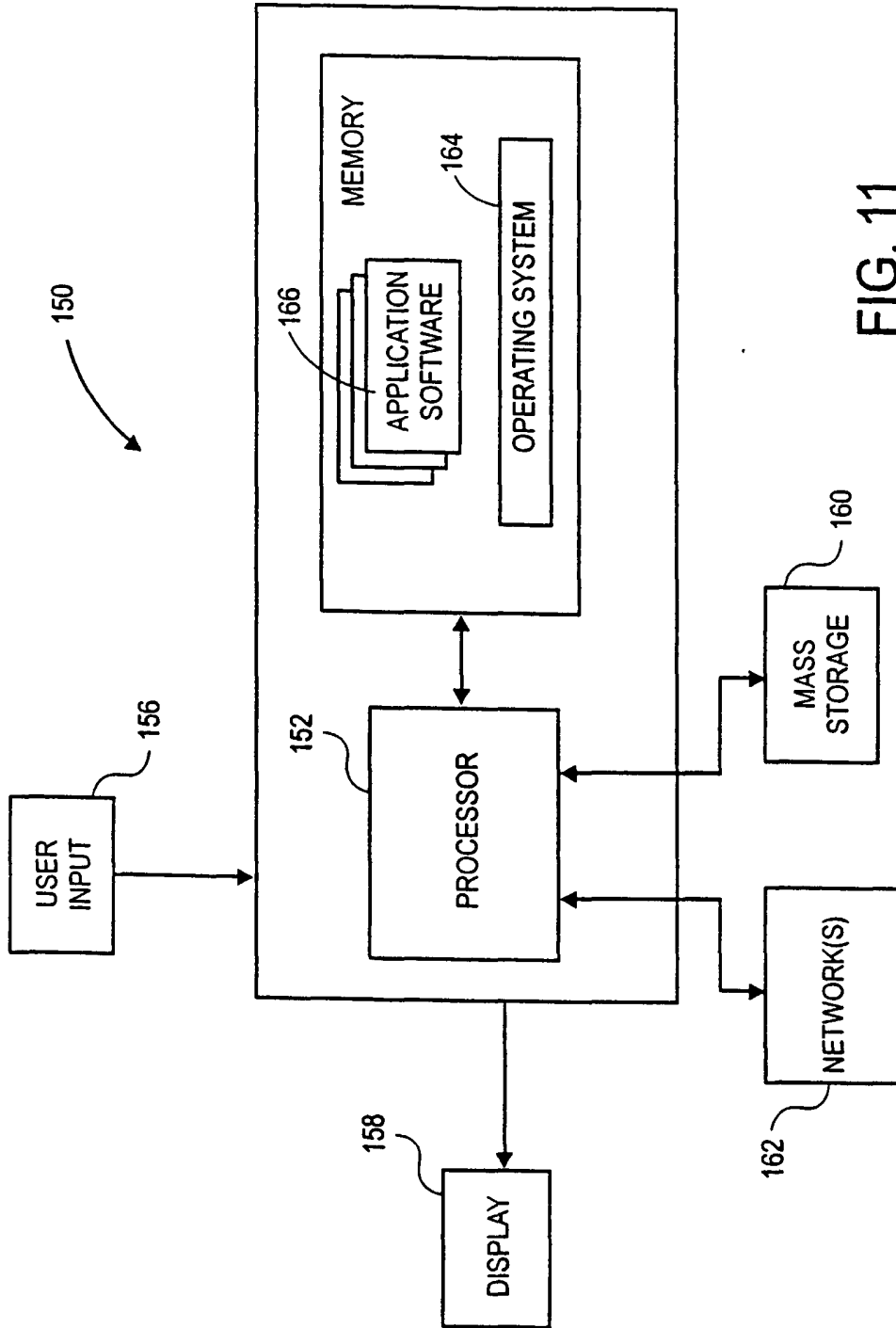


FIG. 11

**METHOD AND APPARATUS TO PROVIDE
PAY-PER-CALL PERFORMANCE BASED ADVERTISING**

5 This invention relates to advertising. In particular, the invention relates to performance-based advertising.

 Performance based advertising refers to a type of advertising in which an advertiser pays only for a measurable event that is a direct result of an advertisement being viewed by a consumer. For example, paid inclusion advertising is a form of performance-based search advertising. With paid inclusion advertising, an
10 advertisement is included within a search result page of a key word search. Each selection (“click”) of the advertisement from the results page is the measurable event for which the advertiser pays. In other words, payment by the advertiser is on a per click basis.

15 Another form of performance-based advertising includes paid placement advertising. Paid placement advertising is similar to paid inclusion advertising in that payment is on a per click basis. However, with paid placement advertising an advertiser ranks a particular advertisement so that it appears or is placed at a particular spot, e.g., at the top of a search engine result page, thereby to increase the
20 odds of the advertisement being selected.

 Both forms of performance-based advertising, i.e., paid placement and paid inclusion, suffer from the limitation that an advertiser or participant within a paid placement or paid inclusion advertising program is required to have a web presence, in the form of a web page. However, there are advertisers that either (a) do not have
25 web pages, or (b) have web pages that are not effective at capturing the value of a web visitor, and are therefore unable, or unwilling, to participate in performance-based advertising, as described above.

 The present invention relates to a method and apparatus to provide pay-per-call performance based advertising. According to a first aspect, the present invention
30 provides a method, comprising assigning a unique telephone number to an advertiser; providing an advertisement on a media channel on behalf of the advertiser, the advertisement including one of the unique telephone number and a

reference to the unique telephone number; monitoring telephone calls to the unique telephone number; and billing the advertiser for telephone calls to the unique telephone number in accordance with a predefined billing model.

5 In a preferred embodiment there is provided a computer-readable medium having stored thereon a sequence of instructions, which when executed by a computer cause the computer to perform the aforementioned method.

10 According to a second aspect, the present invention provides a system, comprising a first unit to assign a unique telephone number to an advertiser; a second unit to provide the advertisement on a channel selected by the advertiser; a third unit to monitor telephone calls to the unique telephone number; and a fourth unit to bill the advertiser for telephone calls made to the unique telephone number based on a predefined billing model.

15 In one embodiment, a unique telephone number is assigned to an advertiser. An advertisement including the unique telephone number or a reference to the unique telephone number is provided on a media channel. Thereafter, telephone calls to the unique telephone number are monitored, and an assortment of data associated with the telephone calls is collected. The advertiser is charged for telephone calls to the unique telephone number in accordance with a predefined billing arrangement.

20 Preferred embodiments of the present invention will now be described by way of example and with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 shows how clients and advertisers interact with each other using a paid placement, or a paid inclusion advertising model, in accordance with the prior art;

25 **Figure 2** shows an interaction between clients and advertisers, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 3 shows a flowchart of operations performed in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention;

30 **Figure 4** shows a high level functional description of a system in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 5 illustrates the Account Creation and Management module of the system, in greater detail;

Figure 6 illustrates the Advertisement Publication Module of the system, in greater detail,

Figure 7 illustrates the Call Handling Module of the system, in greater detail;

5 **Figure 8A** shows an example of a user interface that may be presented to a user during advertisement creation, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 8B shows a campaign management interface that is presented to a user, in accordance with one embodiment.

10 **Figure 9** shows an example of a search engine result page, which includes an advertisement generated, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 10 shows an example of an email alert that is sent to an advertiser, when a call is generated, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention; and

15 **Figure 11** shows a high level hardware block diagram of a system that may be used to implement the system, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention.

In the following description, for purposes of explanation, numerous specific details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of the invention. It will be apparent, however, to one skilled in the art that the invention can be practiced without these specific details. In other instances, structures and devices are shown in block diagram form in order to avoid obscuring the invention.

20 Reference in this specification to “one embodiment” or “an embodiment” means that a particular feature, structure, or characteristic described in connection with the embodiment is included in at least one embodiment of the invention. The appearances of the phrase “in one embodiment” in various places in the specification are not necessarily all referring to the same embodiment, nor are separate or alternative embodiments mutually exclusive of other embodiments. Moreover, various features are described which may be exhibited by some embodiments and not by others. Similarly, various requirements are described which may be requirements for some embodiments but not other embodiments.

Figure 1 of the drawings illustrates how clients and advertisers interact with each other in accordance with the paid placement, and paid inclusion advertising models of the prior art. Referring to **Figure 1**, a number of clients indicated by reference numeral 10 are coupled to a wide area network (WAN) 14, such as the Internet via a communications path 12. Advertisers 16 are coupled to the WAN 14 via a communications path 18. The communications paths 12 and 18 may support the TCP/IP protocols, in one embodiment. Each advertiser 16 has a web page 20 which in accordance with the paid placement, and paid inclusion advertising models described above, may be included in a results page of a key word search initiated by a user of a client 10, which search is performed by an online search engine 19. Based on the paid placement, or the paid inclusion models, the web page 20 of an advertiser 16 is included within a results page compiled by the search engine 19 and sent via the communications path 12 to the client 10 that initiated the search, so that the web page 20 may be selected or viewed by a user of the client 10 that requested the search. As noted above, if an advertiser 16 does not have a web page 20, or does not have a web page 20 that is effective at capturing the value of a web visitor, then currently, such an advertiser may not participate, or effectively participate, in performance-based marketing such as paid placement, and paid inclusion programs.

Further, the techniques disclosed herein are not limited to publishing or providing advertisements for the advertisers 16 through web pages. Thus, in alternative embodiments, the unique telephone number assigned to an advertiser may be published or provided using a directory without the creation of a web page for the advertiser. The directory may be an existing directory or a new directory. The placement or ranking of the telephone number within the directory may be controlled through ranking techniques described below.

Referring now to **Figure 2** of the drawings, a method for allowing advertisers to participate in a pay per call advertising program, without requiring that the advertisers have a web presence, in accordance with one embodiment, is illustrated. As will be seen, the clients 10 are coupled to the WAN 14 via the communications path 12, as before. However, the communications path 18 between the advertisers 16 and the WAN 14 is purely optional. In other words, the techniques of the present invention, allow an advertiser 16 to participate in a

performance-based advertising program without the requirement that the advertiser 16 be coupled to the WAN 14 via the communications path 18. In fact, in accordance with the techniques disclosed herein, it is not necessary that the advertisers 16 have web pages 20. Instead, in accordance with the techniques disclosed herein, an alternative non-web based communications path 22 is provided between the clients 10 and the advertisers 16. According to embodiments of the present invention, the non-web based communications path 22 may be provided by a conventional telephone network. Alternatively, the non-web based communications path 22 may utilize Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology to couple a client through switches of the network 14, and switches of a public telephone network, in a manner that does not require the advertisers 16 to have a connection to the network 14. In addition, the advertiser could be notified via other media channels, such as email, chat, instant message, etc.

Figure 3 of the drawings illustrates a technique to establish the non-web based communications path 22 of **Figure 2**, in accordance with one embodiment. Referring to **Figure 3**, at block 26, a unique telephone number is assigned to an advertiser 16. Thereafter, at block 28, an advertisement associated with the advertiser 16 is provisioned or published on a publication or media channel on behalf of the advertiser. The advertisement includes either the unique telephone number, or a reference to the unique telephone number. At block 30, telephone calls to the unique telephone number are monitored, as will be described. At block 32, the advertiser is charged based on the phone call activity through the assigned telephone number, as will be described.

Figure 4 of the drawings shows a functional description of a system to implement the method of **Figure 3** is shown. Referring to **Figure 4**, the system includes *account creation and management module 34*, *advertisement publication module 36*, *call handling module 38*, and *billing module 40*. In alternative embodiments, additional, less, or different modules may be included in the system without departing from the invention.

The components of the *account creation and management module 34*, in accordance with one embodiment, are shown in more detail in **Figure 5** of the drawings. Referring to **Figure 5**, it will be seen that the *account creation* and

management module 34 includes a *user interface module 44*, an *advertisement creation module 46*, and a *payment specification module 48*. The *user interface module 44* includes logic to present information to a user, and to receive information from the user. For example, in one embodiment, the *user interface module 44* causes a web page such as the web page 112 of **Figure 8** to be displayed on a browser of a client.

The advertisement creation module 46 includes *text creation logic 50*. The purpose of *text creation logic 50* is to allow an advertiser 16, or an agent working on behalf of an advertiser 16, to input text for an advertisement which is ultimately created by the *advertisement creation module 46*. In order to enhance understanding of the present invention, for the remainder of this description, a local business enterprise called “Burt’s Plumbing” will be used as an example of an advertiser that may benefit from the techniques disclosed herein. Burt’s Plumbing may or not have direct connectivity to the network 14. If Burt’s Plumbing does not have direct connectivity to the network 14, then a representative of Burt’s Plumbing (hereinafter “Burt”) will have to gain access to a computer that does have connectivity to the network 14 in order to view the web page 112 of **Figure 8A**. For example, Burt could use a computer of a friend, a computer at a local library, etc. In another embodiment, a search operator, an Internet yellow page provider or other type of publisher could perform or administer this activity on behalf of Burt. The text creation logic 50 allows Burt to input for e.g. the text “Burt’s Plumbing in San Francisco. Check out our special deals,” which will be included in the advertisement when it is rendered. The module 46 also includes *key word association logic 57* that allows Burt to input certain key words which are then associated with Burt’s advertisement. The idea here is that when one of the clients initiates a search through the search engine 19 using a key word that matches one of the key words entered by Burt, then Burt’s advertisement will be displayed within a result of the search. Since Burt’s Plumbing is not a national operation or enterprise it is necessary to display Burt’s advertisement to clients within a certain geographic area. Thus, the module 46 includes *location determination logic 54* that builds a geographic location association to Burt’s advertisement. In one embodiment, the *location determination logic 54* allows Burt to select a particular

geographic location of interest, say for example San Francisco, so that Burt's advertisement will only be displayed to clients within the San Francisco area.

The module 46 also includes *telephone number auto generation logic* 56 that automatically generates a unique telephone number, maps the unique telephone number to Burt's actual telephone number such that when the unique number is called, Bert's phone rings, and associates the unique phone number with Burt's advertisement. In one embodiment, the telephone number that is automatically generated, may be a toll free number. In one embodiment, the telephone number may be a local number with the same area code as Burt's actual telephone number. In one embodiment, the telephone number may be an easily recognizable 800 number, modified by a unique extension mapped to Burt's business telephone number. For example, in one embodiment, a number could be the number "1-800-YEL-PAGES-1234." The 1234 portion of the 800 number is the unique extension that is mapped to Burt's telephone number so that when a searcher calls the number 1-800-YEL-PAGES-1234, the call will be automatically routed to Burt's telephone as will be described in more detail below.

In one embodiment, the *advertisement creation* module 46, automatically inserts the unique telephone number assigned to Burt directly into Burt's advertisement. Alternatively, *click to call logic* 58 may be invoked in order to generate a button, or a clickable telephone number, which is automatically inserted into Burt's advertisement, so that when the button or telephone number is selected or clicked by a user operating a client 10, a telephone call is automatically initiated to Burt's telephone number.

The module 46 also includes *on/off logic* 60 that allows Burt to selectively turn on or turn off an advertisement. Alternatively, the *turn on/off logic* 60 allows Burt to assign an active or an inactive status to a particular advertisement. When an advertisement is turned off or flagged as inactive, it is considered withdrawn, at least temporarily, from an advertisement campaign, and is therefore not made published e.g. through the search engine 19. Alternatively, only advertisements that are turned on, or have a status of "active" are published in accordance with the techniques disclosed herein.

The module 46 includes *smart connect logic* 62 that allows automatic routing of calls to various telephone numbers. For example, Burt may include a primary telephone number, and one or more secondary telephone numbers to be associated with his advertisement. Thus, in one embodiment, the *smart connect logic* 62 first
5 routes the call to Burt's primary telephone number, and if no connection is achieved, then cyclically through Burt's list of secondary telephone numbers, until a connection is achieved.

The module 46 also includes *arrange a call logic* 64 that allows a searcher to input a time at which the searcher wishes to speak to Burt. The system then contacts
10 Burt in order to arrange the call with the searcher. Burt may be contacted in a variety of ways, for example by sending a facsimile to Burt, by sending an email to Burt, by telephoning Burt, etc. to alert him of the arranged telephone call. In alternative embodiments, additional, less, or different logic may be included in the advertisement creation module without departing from the invention.

The *payment specification module* 48, allows Burt to select a particular
15 model and various parameters associated with billing. The module 48 includes *flat fee logic* 66 that presents an option to Burt through the *user interface module* 44, which if selected will cause Burt to be billed on a flat fee basis for each telephone call received within a particular category, or subcategory. The module 48 also
20 includes *bid for placement logic* 68, that, through the *user interface module* 44, presents an option to Burt to choose to be billed on a bid-for-placement basis, as described above. The logic 68 supports proxy bids, and maximum/minimum bids.

The module 48 also includes *spending level logic* 70 that allows Burt to specify daily/weekly/monthly spending levels. The specified spending level
25 essentially defines a budget per time period such that if the budget is exceeded within a particular time period, then Burt's advertisement will be automatically flagged as inactive or turned off, for the remainder of the time period. Burt is notified of this activity by the system and Burt is given the option of reactivating his advertisement by adding additional funds to his account.

In one embodiment, the *billing module* 40 includes logic to automatically
30 waive charges for leads (calls) from searchers/customers who have called Burt recently. For example, if a customer calls on one day, and then dials the same

number for a follow-up call a day later, the system automatically waives the charge for the second call since this lead has already been paid for. Thus, the advertiser (Burt) does not have to be concerned about a customer using the advertised telephone number more than once and causing multiple charges. In one
5 embodiment, the system of the present invention may be configured to waive the charges on leads from customers who have already called a particular advertiser within a specified number of days. In alternative embodiments, additional, less, or different logic may be included in the without departing from the invention.

Referring now to **Figure 6** of the drawings, the components of the
10 *advertisement publication module 36*, are shown in greater detail. As will be seen, the module 36 includes an *advertisement rendering engine 74*, and an *advertisement syndication engine 76*. The purpose of the *advertisement rendering engine 74* is to automatically render Burt's advertisement on a particular channel. In some embodiments, the *advertisement rendering engine 74* causes a campaign
15 management interface 113 (see **Figure 8B** of the drawings) to be displayed to an advertiser. The interface 113 allows the advertiser to choose a channel, e.g., SBC, QwestDex, Ingenio, and a category in which the advertisement is to be provisioned/published. The interface 113 allows the advertiser to specify the maximum bid amount that the advertiser is willing to pay to provision the
20 advertisement using the selected channel and category. **Figure 9** of the drawings shows an example of a web page 112 within which includes an advertisement rendered/provisioned in accordance with the techniques described herein. In one embodiment, this publication channel may be a web-based publication channel which is operated by an operator of the system of the present invention.

25 Alternatively, the *syndication engine 76* may be used to syndicate Burt's advertisement to a number of third parties that host publication channels selected by Burt. Thus, in one embodiment, the *syndication engine 76* may cause Burt's advertisement to be syndicated to third party search engines, Internet yellow pages, online directories, and other media.

30 As will be seen in **Figure 6** of the drawings, the advertisement rendering engine 74 includes *price per call logic 78*, *activity history logic 80*, *call status logic 82*, *connection success logic 84*, *manual indexing logic 86*, and *random logic 88*.

Each of the logic components 78-88 controls a parameter that forms a basis of how Burt's advertisement is ultimately rendered. The *price per call logic* 78 causes Burt's advertisement to be published on a price per call basis. Thus, for example, if Burt is willing only to pay a low amount for each call, then his advertisement will be placed or ranked low down within a search result page or category of advertisers. Alternatively, if Burt is willing to pay a high price per call, then his advertisement will be placed higher up in the search result page or category of advertisers. The table below shows how the *price per call logic* 78 would rank or place advertisers within a channel based on a bid amount per call that an advertiser is willing to pay:

Placement	Advertiser	(Bid Amount per call)
1	800-349-2398	(\$3.88)
2	866-324-3242	(\$3.22)
3	800-323-5321	(\$2.01)

The *activity history logic* 80 analyzes the number of calls Burt received in a give time period, for example, the last day/week/month, and will rank Burt's advertisement within a display page based on the activity history. The *call status logic* 82, examines the status (active or inactive) of Burt's advertisement, and selectively publishes Burt's advertisement based on the status. The *connection success logic* 84 measures a connection success rate for calls to the telephone number assigned to Burt's advertisement and ranks Burt's advertisement within a display page based on the connection success rate. For example, if Burt's telephone number enjoys a low connection success rate then the logic 84 will cause Burt's advertisement to be ranked lowly within a publication page. The *manual indexing logic* 86 allows an operator to manually index or rank Burt's advertisement within a publication page. The *random logic* 88 allows Burt's advertisement to be randomly ranked or placed within a result page. In one embodiment, the ranking of Burt's advertisement within a display page may be based on any combination of the parameters controlled by the logic components 78-88, which may be dictated by a third party who employs the system. In alternative embodiments, additional, less, or

different logic may be included in the advertisement rendering engine 74 without departing from the invention

Referring now to **Figure 7** of the drawings, the components within the *call handling module* 38 include a *call routing engine* 92, and a *call monitoring engine* 94. As will be seen, the *call routing engine* 92 includes *redirect logic* 96 to cause redirection of a telephone call to the number assigned to Burt's advertisement. The redirection is to a telephone number specified by Burt during creation of the advertisement using the *advertisement creation module* 46. The call routing engine 92 also includes *VoIP logic* 98 to route a telephone call to or from a client to a telephone number specified by Burt in the advertisement using VoIP technology.

The call routing engine 92 may also include *prompt logic* 99 that causes a prompt to be played to a caller before routing of a telephone call to Burt's telephone number. In one embodiment, the prompt logic 99 plays an information prompt to the caller to inform the caller of Burt's actual telephone number. Thus, the caller may, in future, call Burt directly using Burt's actual telephone number instead of the telephone number assigned to Burt by the system. In such cases, Burt will not be billed by the system for telephone calls to his actual telephone number. In one embodiment, the *prompt logic* 99 may also cause an information prompt to be played to Burt to inform Burt of the source of the telephone call. In some cases, the *prompt logic* 99 may cause an email or facsimile alert to be automatically generated and sent to an advertiser, in order to inform the advertiser of the telephone number of the caller. An example of such an email is shown in **Figure 10** of the drawings and is marked as reference numeral 116. In alternative embodiments, additional, less, or different logic may be included in the call routing engine 92 without departing from the invention.

The call monitoring engine 94 includes *call number logic* 100 to track the number of calls generated in response to Burt's advertisement. The call monitoring engine 94 also includes *Automatic Number Identification (ANI) logic* 102 to identify the number of unique numbers of callers that call Burt, automatically. The call monitoring engine also includes *call length logic* 104 that monitors the length of each call to Burt. *Connection status logic* 108 monitors whether a call is successful, whether an engaged or busy tone is encountered, or whether Burt simply did not

answer his telephone. Based on information supplied by logic components 100-106, a report is compiled and may be viewed by Burt. In one embodiment, the report includes a number of calls, the number of calls from unique telephone numbers, the telephone numbers of the callers, the length of each call, and the number of calls that
5 were successful, for which an engaged tone was returned, or that went unanswered. The report may be used by Burt in order to monitor the effectiveness of an advertisement campaign, and to optimize the campaign. In alternative embodiments, additional, less, or different logic may be included in the call monitoring engine 94 without departing from the invention.

10 In one embodiment, the advertising publication module may publish the advertisement on a telephone-based advertising service. For example, the advertisement can be delivered to a consumer through audio as part of a voice portal or telephone-based directory such as a 411 telephone directory.

Referring to **Figure 11** of the drawings, reference numeral 150 generally
15 indicates hardware that may be used to implement the above-described system. The hardware 150 typically includes at least one processor 152 coupled to a memory 154. The processor 152 may represent one or more processors (e.g., microprocessors), and the memory 154 may represent random access memory (RAM) devices comprising a main storage of the hardware 150, as well as any
20 supplemental levels of memory e.g., cache memories, non-volatile or back-up memories (e.g. programmable or flash memories), read-only memories, etc. In addition, the memory 154 may be considered to include memory storage physically located elsewhere in the hardware 150, e.g. any cache memory in the processor 152, as well as any storage capacity used as a virtual memory, e.g., as stored on a mass
25 storage device 160.

The hardware 150 also typically receives a number of inputs and outputs for communicating information externally. For interface with a user or operator, the hardware 150 may include one or more user input devices 156 (e.g., a keyboard, a mouse, etc.) and a display 158 (e.g., a Cathode Ray Tube (CRT) monitor, a Liquid
30 Crystal Display (LCD) panel).

For additional storage, the hardware 150 may also include one or more mass storage devices 160, e.g., a floppy or other removable disk drive, a hard disk drive, a

Direct Access Storage Device (DASD), an optical drive (e.g. a Compact Disk (CD) drive, a Digital Versatile Disk (DVD) drive, etc.) and/or a tape drive, among others. Furthermore, the hardware 150 may include an interface with one or more networks 162 (e.g., a local area network (LAN), a wide area network (WAN), a wireless
5 network, and/or the Internet among others) to permit the communication of information with other computers coupled to the networks. It should be appreciated that the hardware 150 typically includes suitable analog and/or digital interfaces between the processor 152 and each of the components 154, 156, 158 and 162 as is well known in the art

10 The hardware 150 operates under the control of an operating system 164, and executes various computer software applications 166, components, programs, objects, modules, etc. (e.g. a program or module which performs operations described above. Moreover, various applications, components, programs, objects, etc. may also execute on one or more processors in another computer coupled to the
15 hardware 150 via a network 152, e.g. in a distributed computing environment, whereby the processing required to implement the functions of a computer program may be allocated to multiple computers over a network.

In general, the routines executed to implement the embodiments of the invention, may be implemented as part of an operating system or a specific
20 application, component, program, object, module or sequence of instructions referred to as "computer programs." The computer programs typically comprise one or more instructions set at various times in various memory and storage devices in a computer, and that, when read and executed by one or more processors in a computer, cause the computer to perform operations necessary to execute elements
25 involving the various aspects of the invention. Moreover, while the invention has been described in the context of fully functioning computers and computer systems, those skilled in the art will appreciate that the various embodiments of the invention are capable of being distributed as a program product in a variety of forms, and that the invention applies equally regardless of the particular type of machine or
30 computer-readable media used to actually effect the distribution. Examples of computer-readable media include but are not limited to recordable type media such as volatile and non-volatile memory devices, floppy and other removable disks, hard

disk drives, optical disks (e.g., Compact Disk Read-Only Memory (CD ROMS), Digital Versatile Disks, (DVDs), etc.), among others, and transmission type media such as digital and analog communication links

5 In one embodiment, the invention provides a method. The method includes assigning a unique telephone number to an advertiser; providing an advertisement on a media channel on behalf of the advertiser, the advertisement including one of the unique telephone number and a reference to the unique telephone number; monitoring telephone calls to the unique telephone number; and billing the advertiser for telephone calls to the unique telephone number in accordance with a predefined model.
10

Although the present invention has been described with reference to specific exemplary embodiments, it will be evident that the various modification and changes can be made to these embodiments without departing from the invention as defined in the appended claims. Accordingly, the specification and drawings are to be regarded in an illustrative sense rather than in a restrictive sense.
15

CLAIMS

1. A method, comprising:
assigning a unique telephone number to an advertiser;
5 providing an advertisement on a media channel on behalf of the advertiser,
the advertisement including one of the unique telephone number and a reference to
the unique telephone number;
monitoring telephone calls to the unique telephone number; and
billing the advertiser for telephone calls to the unique telephone number in
10 accordance with a predefined billing model.
2. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the media channel is selected from
the group consisting of a web-based channel, a telephone-based advertising service,
an email channel, an instant message channel, and an online chat channel
15
3. A method as claimed in claim 1 or 2, further comprising providing an
interface to facilitate creation of the advertisement.
4. A method as claimed in claim 3, wherein the interface is web-based.
20
5. A method as claimed in any of claims 1 to 4, wherein the predefined billing
model specifies a flat fee per call to be paid by the advertiser.
6. A method as claimed in claim 5, wherein the predefined billing model is a
25 bid for placement billing model.
7. A method as claimed in any of claims 3 to 6, wherein the interface includes
functionality to allow an advertiser to bid for placement of the advertisement on the
publication channel.
30
8. A system, comprising:
a first unit to assign a unique telephone number to an advertiser;

a second unit to provide the advertisement on a channel selected by the advertiser;

a third unit to monitor telephone calls to the unique telephone number; and

5 a fourth unit to bill the advertiser for telephone calls made to the unique telephone number based on a predefined billing model.

9. A system as claimed in claim 8, wherein the first unit comprises key word association logic to allow an advertiser to associate a key word with text of the advertisement.

10

10. A system as claimed in claim 8 or 9, wherein the first unit comprises bid for placement logic to allow the advertiser to bid for the placement of the advertisement within a results page generated by a search engine

15

11. A system as claimed in any of claims 8 to 10, wherein the first unit comprises location determination logic which allows the advertiser to input a geographic location to be associated with the advertisement.

20

12. A system as claimed in any of claims 8 to 11, wherein the second unit comprises a syndication engine to syndicate the advertisement to the channel.

25

13. A system as claimed in any of claims 8 to 12, wherein the channel is selected from the group consisting of a web-based publication channel, a telephone-based publication channel, an email channel, an instant message channel, and an online chat channel.

30

14. A system as claimed in any of claims 8 to 13, wherein the first unit comprises telephone number auto generation logic to automatically generate the unique telephone number.

15. A system as claimed in any of claims 8 to 14, wherein the first unit comprises click to call button creation logic to create a button which when selected

by a consumer who views the advertisement, causes a telephone call to the unique telephone number to be initiated.

16 A system as claimed in any of claims 8 to 15, wherein the third unit is
5 configured to not bill for repeat telephone calls made from a same telephone to the unique telephone number, within a predefined period.

17. A computer-readable medium, having stored thereon a sequence of
instructions, which when executed by a computer, cause the computer to perform a
10 method as claimed in any of claims 1 to 7

18 A method, system or computer-readable medium substantially as
hereinbefore described with reference to figures 2 to 11

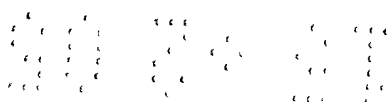
15

Amendments to the claims have been filed as follows
18

CLAIMS

1. A method, comprising:
assigning a telephone number to an advertiser;
providing an advertisement on a media channel on behalf of the advertiser, the
advertisement including one of the telephone number and a reference to the unique
5 telephone number;
monitoring telephone calls to the telephone number; and
billing the advertiser for the advertisement in response to telephone calls to
the telephone number.
- 10 2. The method of claim 1, wherein the media channel is selected from the group
consisting of a web-based channel, a telephone-based advertising service, an email
channel, an instant message channel, and an online chat channel.
3. The method of claim 1, further comprising providing an interface to facilitate
15 creation of the advertisement.
4. The method of claim 3, wherein the interface is web-based.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein the billing further comprises billing a flat fee
20 per call to be paid by the advertiser.

6. A system, comprising:
- a first unit to assign a telephone number to an advertiser;
 - a second unit to provide the advertisement on a channel selected by the
- 5 advertiser;
- a third unit to monitor telephone calls to the telephone number; and
 - a fourth unit to bill the advertiser for the advertisement in response to
- telephone calls made to the telephone number .
- 10 7. The system of claim 6, wherein the first unit comprises key word association logic to allow an advertiser to associate a key word with text of the advertisement.
8. The system of claim 6, wherein the first unit comprises bid for placement logic to allow the advertiser to bid for the placement of the advertisement within a results
- 15 page generated by a search engine.
9. The system of claim 6, wherein the first unit comprises location determination logic which allows the advertiser to input a geographic location to be associated with the advertisement.
- 20
10. The system of claim 6, wherein the second unit comprises a syndication engine to syndicate the advertisement to the channel.



11. The system of claim 6, wherein the channel is selected from the group consisting of a web-based publication channel, a telephone-based publication channel, an email channel, an instant message channel, and an online chat channel.

5

12. The system of claim 6, wherein the first unit comprises telephone number auto generation logic to automatically generate the unique telephone number.

13. The system of claim 6, wherein the first unit comprises click to call button
10 creation logic to create a button which when selected by a consumer who views the advertisement, causes a telephone call to the unique telephone number to be initiated.

14. The system of claim 6, wherein the third unit is configured to not bill for
15 repeat telephone calls made from a same telephone to the unique telephone number, within a predefined period.

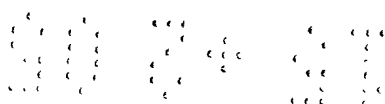
15. A computer-readable medium, having stored thereon a sequence of instructions, which when executed by a computer, cause the computer to perform a method comprising:

20

assigning a telephone number to an advertiser;

providing an advertisement on a media channel on behalf of the advertiser, the advertisement including one of the telephone number and a reference to the telephone number;

monitoring telephone calls to the telephone number; and



2)

billing the advertiser for the advertisement for telephone calls to the telephone number.

5 16. The computer-readable medium of claim 15, wherein the media channel is selected from the group consisting of a web-based channel, a telephone-based advertising service, an email channel, an instant message channel, and an online chat channel.

10 17. The computer-readable medium of claim 15, wherein the method further comprises providing an interface to facilitate creation of the advertisement.

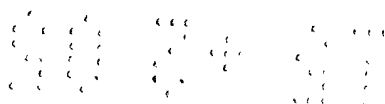
18. The computer-readable medium of claim 15, wherein the billing further comprises billing a flat fee per call to be paid by the advertiser.

15 19. A method, comprising:
a first party providing an advertisement on behalf of a service provider, the advertisement to include at least a reference to a telephonic connection with the service provider;

the first party collecting a fee for the advertisement from the service provider in response to a telephone call to the service provider.

20

20. The method of claim 19, wherein the service provider is an advertiser.



21. The method of claim 19, wherein the advertisement is placed on a media channel.

5 22. The method of claim 21, wherein the media channel is an Internet.

23. The method of claim 19, wherein the first party providing the advertisement includes providing a reference to be selected by a customer to initiate a telephone call to the service provider.

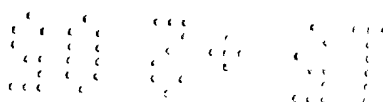
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24. The method of claim 23, wherein the reference includes a hyper-link to be selected by a customer to initiate a telephone call to the service provider.

25. The method of claim 19, further including the first party providing
15 advertisements on a media channel on behalf of multiple service providers, the advertisements to include at least a reference to a telephonic connection with the respective service providers;

the first party collecting a fee from the respective service providers in response to a telephonic connection being established between the respective service provider
20 and a customer.

26. The method of claim 23, wherein the first party providing the advertisement includes providing a reference to be selected by a customer to initiate a voice-over IP telephone call to the service provider.



27. The method of claim 19, wherein the advertisement is provided in response to a search performed by a consumer.

5 28. The method of claim 27, wherein the advertisement is provided in response to a search performed by a consumer for geographic location.

29. The method of claim 27, wherein the advertisement is provided in response to a search performed by a consumer for a subject matter.

10

30. The method of claim 27, wherein the advertisement is provided in response to a key word search performed by a consumer.

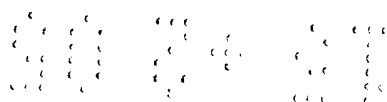
31. A system comprising:

15 a means for a first party providing an advertisement on behalf of a service provider, the advertisement to include at least a reference to a telephonic connection with the service provider;

a means for the first party collecting a fee for the advertisement from the service provider in response to a telephone call to the service provider.

20

32. A machine-readable medium having stored thereon a set of instructions, which when executed, perform a method comprising:



a first party providing an advertisement on behalf of a service provider, the advertisement to include at least a reference to a telephonic connection with the service provider;

5 the first party collecting a fee for the advertisement from the service provider in response to a telephone call to the service provider.

33. The method of claim 3, further comprising:

 receiving a bid from a first advertiser to place a corresponding advertisement
10 in a prominent location on the media relative to a location without the bid;

 comparing the bid from the first advertiser to bids from other advertisers; and
in response to the bid from the first advertiser being higher than the bids from the
other advertisers, placing the corresponding advertisement in the prominent location.

15 34. A computer program comprising computer program code means adapted to perform all the steps of any of claims 1 – 5, 19 – 30 or 33, when the program is run on a computer.

35. A method as claimed in claim 1 or 19, substantially as herein described with
20 reference to each of the examples shown in the accompanying drawings.

36. A system as claimed in claim 6 or 31 and substantially as herein described with reference to each of the examples shown in the accompanying drawings.



37. A computer-readable medium as claimed in claim 15 or 32 and substantially as herein described with reference to each of the examples shown in the accompanying drawings.

5





INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Application No: GB0411904.6
Claims searched: 1-18

Examiner: Mr Jared Stokes
Date of search: 21 October 2004

Patents Act 1977: Search Report under Section 17

Documents considered to be relevant:

Category	Relevant to claims	Identity of document and passage or figure of particular relevance
X,Y	X: 1-10, 12-14, 16-17; Y: 11, 15	US2004/0107137 A1 (Skinner) See paragraphs 43, 44, 46 and 47
X	1,3,5,7,8	US5793851 A (Albertson) See abstract, column 1 lines 32-62, column 2 line 65- column 3 line 16
Y	11, 15	US5850433 A (Rondeau) See abstract

Categories:

X	Document indicating lack of novelty or inventive step	A	Document indicating technological background and/or state of the art.
Y	Document indicating lack of inventive step if combined with one or more other documents of same category.	P	Document published on or after the declared priority date but before the filing date of this invention.
&	Member of the same patent family	E	Patent document published on or after, but with priority date earlier than, the filing date of this application.

Field of Search:

Search of GB, EP, WO & US patent documents classified in the following areas of the UKC^W :

G4A; H4K

Worldwide search of patent documents classified in the following areas of the IPC⁰⁷

G06F; H04M

The following online and other databases have been used in the preparation of this search report

EPODOC, JAPIO, WPI