customer will therefore not be available to the public servers **45**, **47**. In these instances, it is possible to at least track session information. This may be done in one of two ways. Certain browsers support single session cookies which makes session information available to the public server **45** (see FIG. **3**). It is also possible to program the monitoring function **58** on the public server **45** to store session information in an instance where the potential customer refuses cookies and the potential customer's browser does not support session cookies. An example of such a table is illustrated in FIG. **7**. Using the table shown in FIG. **7**, it is possible to determine how much time a potential customer has spent at the public server **45** and to track the pages being currently viewed. Business decisions respecting when contact becomes worthwhile may then be made and criteria set to reflect those decisions so that an alert message is sent to a telemarketing agent when a customer's behaviour is deemed to indicate an interest in the products or services advertised or promoted by the public server **45**, **47**.

It will be well understood by those skilled in the art that the table shown in FIG. **7** must be regularly maintained in order to limit the number of records it contains. The table is therefore periodically scanned and records are deleted when, for example, more than five minutes have elapsed since a potential customer last accessed to the public server **45**, **47**. The criteria for deleting records from the potential customer activity table is, of course, programmable and will depend on the needs and experience of the operators of a particular public server.

The invention therefore provides a flexible system which permits a novel approach to telemarketing. The system enables a personal presence at a web site in much the same way that a personal presence may be maintained in a retail outlet. The innovative applications of the methods and system in accordance with the invention are limited only by the imagination and skill of users. For example, the system and methods in accordance with the invention may be used for personnel support in a corporate environment. As such, a help server could be monitored to alert support personnel when an employee has spent a predetermined amount of time in a help function. The alert would direct support personnel directly to the individual requiring assistance. Many other applications of the methods and system are also known to be useful and practical.

It will be understood by those skilled in the art that the method in accordance with the invention may be implemented using a system other than the one described above. For example, the Telephony Application Programming Interface (TAPI) is a public domain protocol allowing computers to communicate with switching equipment in a switched telephone network to complete calls using the methods in accordance with the invention. A private domain tool such as Nortel's Compucall® may also be used to implement the invention in a switched telephone network such as the PSTN.

Although the method and system described above have been described with reference to the WWW only, it should be understood that customer activities such as file transfer protocol (ftp), for example, may be tracked and also serve as a basis for telemarketing agent alerts.

The embodiments of the invention described above are intended to be exemplary only. The scope of the invention is therefore intended to be limited solely by the scope of the appended claims.

We claim:

1. A method of alerting a telemarketing agent of a promotion opportunity in response to activity of a potential customer browsing a public server, comprising steps of:

monitoring the public server using software, which is active on the public server, to determine if past or present browsing activity of the potential customer satisfies a predefined criteria, and examining information associated with the potential customer; and

sending a message to the telemarketing agent, the message being generated by the software active on the public server, to advise the telemarketing agent of the promotion opportunity without any action by the potential customer to initiate communication with the telemarketing agent if the browsing activity of the potential customer or the information satisfies the predefined criteria, the message including means for identifying the potential customer to permit the telemarketing agent to dispatch an assistance invitation that is displayed to the potential customer to invite the potential customer to request communication with the telemarketing agent.

2. A method as claimed in claim **1** wherein the public server is monitored by software which is active on the public server, and the software forwards information to a telemarketing analysis server for analysis, the telemarketing analysis server sending the message to the telemarketing agent when the information satisfies the predefined criteria.

3. A method as claimed in claim **1** further comprising a step of inserting in the message an IP address of the potential customer and a URL of a page on the public server where the potential customer is active.

4. A method as claimed in claim **3** further comprising a step of inserting in the message a priority value associated with the potential customer, the priority value being inserted in the message before the message is sent.

5. A method as claimed in claim **3** further comprising a step of inserting in the message other information known about the potential customer, such as frequent purchases or past behaviour.

6. A method as claimed in claim **1** further comprising a step of including in the assistance invitation sent to the customer a form inviting communication, and the assistance invitation displays a menu of options from which the potential customer may select a preferred type of communication with the telemarketing agent.

7. A method as claimed in claim **2** wherein on receipt of the message the telemarketing agent sends the assistance invitation to the potential customer inviting communication and the assistance invitation displays a menu of options from which the potential customer may select a preferred type of communication with the telemarketing agent.

8. A method as claimed in claim **7** wherein the options include opening a text chat window in order to enable communications between the telemarketing agent and the potential customer.

9. A method as claimed in claim **7** wherein the options include establishing a voice connection in order to enable communications between the telemarketing agent and the potential customer.

10. A method as claimed in claim **9** wherein on selecting the option of establishing a voice connection with the telemarketing agent, a request for establishing the voice connection is examined for a phone number or an IP address of the potential customer.

11. A method as claimed in claim **7** wherein the assistance invitation displays a menu of options that permits the potential customer to enter a telephone number, request a VoIP session or a text chat session with the telemarketing agent, send an electronic mail message to the telemarketing agent, or reject a communications session with the telemarketing agent.