

In an alternate embodiment, if the callee does not respond to the confirmation requests of processes 700 and 900 within a certain timeframe, a default action may be taken. For example, such a default action may be to send a false ringing indication or to accept the call.

Process 1000, in FIG. 9, is an embodiment of the invention in a system implementing the SIP protocol. The SIP protocol is commonly implemented in systems related to Internet telephony. In this embodiment, a caller 135G may place a call through a SIP User Agent (UA) or PSTN Gateway, at block 1002. In SIP terminology, this act may be described as a SIP Invite. The passive call block device 135H receiving the call may be a SIP UA or SIP Application Server. The passive call block device 135H responds with a SIP 100 Trying signal, at block 1004. The passive call block device 135H also compares the caller identification information sent by the caller to a Blocked Caller List 246, at block 1006. If the caller identification information is matched in the blocked caller list, at decision block 1008, the passive call block device sends a passive call block response, at block 1010. In this embodiment, the response may be a SIP 180 Ringing signal. If the passive call block response is sent, the passive call block device does not alert the callee of the incoming call. Upon receiving the SIP 180 Ringing signal, the caller will eventually hang up, sending a SIP Cancel signal, at block 1012.

In alternate embodiments, these processes are easily applied to passively block outgoing calls. In such embodiments, the call is received by the passive call block device 135 prior to being transmitted to the callee. The call is accepted for transmission only if the call is not blocked. Otherwise, the caller is sent a false ringing indication. The subscriber to the passive call block system may also verify the block or acceptance of outgoing calls.

In alternate embodiments, these processes are also easily implemented at the destination switch of a telecommunications network. It is well known in the art that network 110, of FIG. 1, may comprise switches that facilitate the routing of calls from source to destination. For example, in a PSTN environment utilizing the Common Channel Signaling System No. 7 protocol (SS7), passive call block processing may occur at a Service Switching Point (SSP).

The previous description of the embodiments is provided to enable any person skilled in the art to practice the invention. The various modifications to these embodiments will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art, and the generic principles defined herein may be applied to other embodiments without the use of inventive faculty. Thus, the present invention is not intended to be limited to the embodiments shown herein, but is to be accorded the widest scope consistent with the principles and novel features disclosed herein.

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus comprising:
 - a call manager configured to receive a call from a caller, and configured to identify the caller from caller identification associated with the call; and
 - a passive call block assistant configured to send a false ringing indication to a caller when the caller identification matches an entry in a caller database.
2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the call manager is configured to match the caller identification with the entry in the caller database.
3. A method comprising:
 - receiving a call from a caller, the call including caller identification information;

sending a false ringing indication to the caller when the caller identification information matches an entry in a caller database.

4. The method of claim 3, further comprising:
 - accepting the call when the caller identification information does not match the entry in the caller database.
5. The method of claim 3, further comprising:
 - prompting a subscriber to block the call when the caller identification information does not match the entry in the caller database.
6. The method of claim 5, further comprising:
 - accepting the call when the subscriber does not block the call after being prompted.
7. The method of claim 5, further comprising:
 - sending the false ringing indication to the caller when the subscriber blocks the call after being prompted.
8. The method of claim 3, wherein the call is a Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) Invite.
9. The method of claim 3, wherein the false ringing indication is a Session Initiation Protocol 180 Ringing.
10. The method of claim 8, further comprising:
 - responding to the SIP Invite with a SIP 100 Trying.
11. The method of claim 8, further comprising:
 - receiving a SIP Cancel.
12. A method comprising:
 - receiving a call from a caller, the call including caller identification information;
 - accepting the call when the caller identification information matches an entry in a caller database;
 - sending a false ringing indication to the caller when the caller identification information does not match the entry in the caller database.
13. The method of claim 12, further comprising:
 - prompting a subscriber to accept the call when the caller identification information does not match the entry in the caller database.
14. The method of claim 13, further comprising:
 - sending a false ringing indication to the caller when the subscriber does not accept the call after being prompted.
15. The method of claim 13, further comprising:
 - accepting the call when the subscriber accepts the call after being prompted.
16. The method of claim 12, wherein the call is a Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) invite.
17. The method of claim 12, wherein the false ringing indication is a Session Initiation Protocol 180 Ringing.
18. The method of claim 16, further comprising:
 - responding to the SIP Invite with a SIP 100 Trying.
19. The method of claim 16, further comprising:
 - receiving a SIP Cancel.
20. A computer-readable medium encoded with data and instructions, the data and instructions causing an apparatus executing the instructions to:
 - match caller information with an entry in a caller database;
 - send a false ringing indication to a caller when the caller identification information matches the entry in the caller database.
21. The computer-readable medium of claim 20, the instructions further comprising:
 - accepting the call when the caller identification information does not match the entry in the caller database.
22. The computer-readable medium of claim 20, the instructions further comprising: