DIGITAL SECRETARY

Abstract

A telephone answering machine (104) and method of use utilizes speech recognition (106) to identify a caller from a pre-defined list (111) of possible callers. The list may be generated by various input techniques, including a spoken voice at the called party's location, and keyboard or graphical input techniques. If the caller is identified as being on the list (203), the machine allows the call to progress along a first sequence, which includes ringing the called phone (204). If the called phone does not answer (205), the first sequence may provide for responding with a customized message (212) for the calling party. If the caller is not identified as being on the list, the machine allows the call to progress along a second sequence, which includes responding with a standard recorded message (207). In either case, the caller is typically allowed to record a message for the called party (209). Additional pre-defined lists may be provided, as for determining the context of a call.