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# United States Patent [19]

## Staples et al.

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[54] **SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR PROVIDING A REMOTE USER WITH A VIRTUAL PRESENCE TO AN OFFICE**

[76] Inventors: **Leven E. Staples**, 9641 Airpark Dr., Granbury, Tex. 76049; **W. B. Barker**, 9 Inwood Mist, San Antonio, Tex. 78248; **Kenneth L. Witt**, 8503 Watchtower, San Antonio, Tex. 78250

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[58] **Field of Search** ..................................... 370/401, 402, 370/522, 389, 392, 352, 404, 458, 357, 419; 379/90.01, 93.01, 93.02, 93.03, 93.09, 210, 211, 219, 220; 395/200.33, 200.39, 200.35, 200.47, 200.48, 200.49; 345/329, 330, 331

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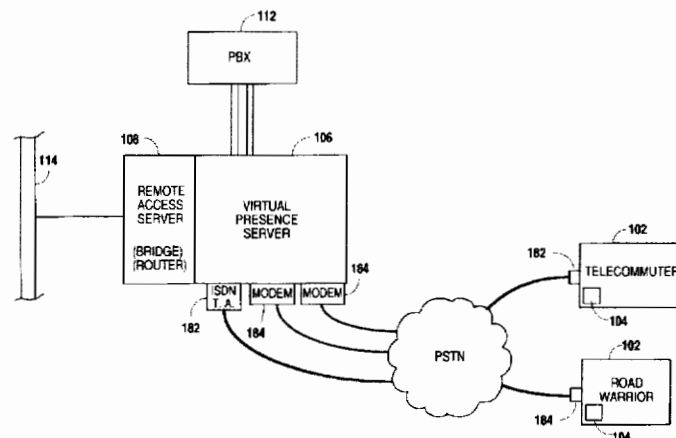| | | | |
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*Primary Examiner*—Curtis Kuntz
*Assistant Examiner*—Paul Loomis

*Attorney, Agent, or Firm*—Conley, Rose & Tayon; Jeffrey C. Hood

[57] **ABSTRACT**

A system and method for enabling a remote user to maintain a virtual presence at a corporate office and behave substantially as if the user were physically present at the corporate office. The remote user's telephone behaves as a PBX extension, and the remote user may send and receive faxes and email, have Internet access and maintain LAN connectivity, substantially as if the user were present at the corporate office. The remote computer system includes an individual remote worker unit or communication device, and the remote computer executes virtual presence software according to the present invention. The corporate office includes a virtual presence server according to the invention which connects to the corporate PBX and also to the corporate LAN. The virtual presence server executes software which enables the remote user to maintain a virtual presence at the corporate office. First the remote user establishes a virtual presence at the corporate office, including providing identification and security information. Once the remote user is connected, the virtual presence server instructs the corporate PBX to automatically forward all calls to the remote user. The virtual presence server also routes email, faxes, and LAN data to the remote user. The virtual presence server also extends the corporate PBX and corporate LAN features to the remote user, just as if the remote user were physically located in the corporate office. According to the invention, the remote user makes outgoing telephone calls, sends faxes, transmits data, sends email and performs Internet access as if the remote user were physically present in the corporate office. Likewise, incoming calls, faxes, data transmissions and email received at the corporate office are routed to the remote user as if the remote user were physically present in the corporate office. Therefore, a co-worker or external party who telephones the user at the corporate office, or sends email or a fax to the user at the corporate office, is unaware that the user is actually not physically located at the corporate office, but rather is at a remote location. The present invention also includes methods for disconnecting and re-establishing virtual presence to reduce message rate charging.

**50 Claims, 13 Drawing Sheets**

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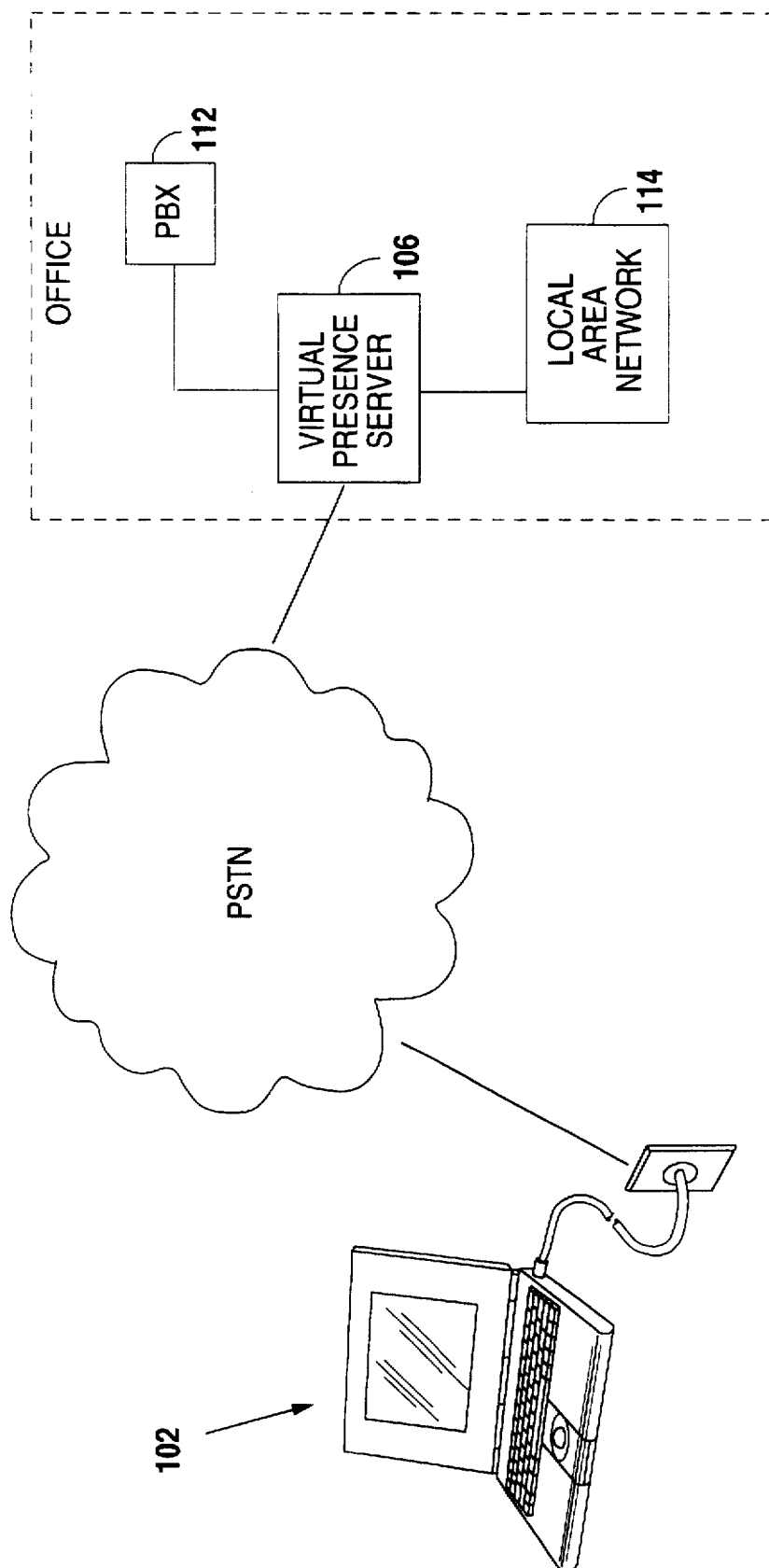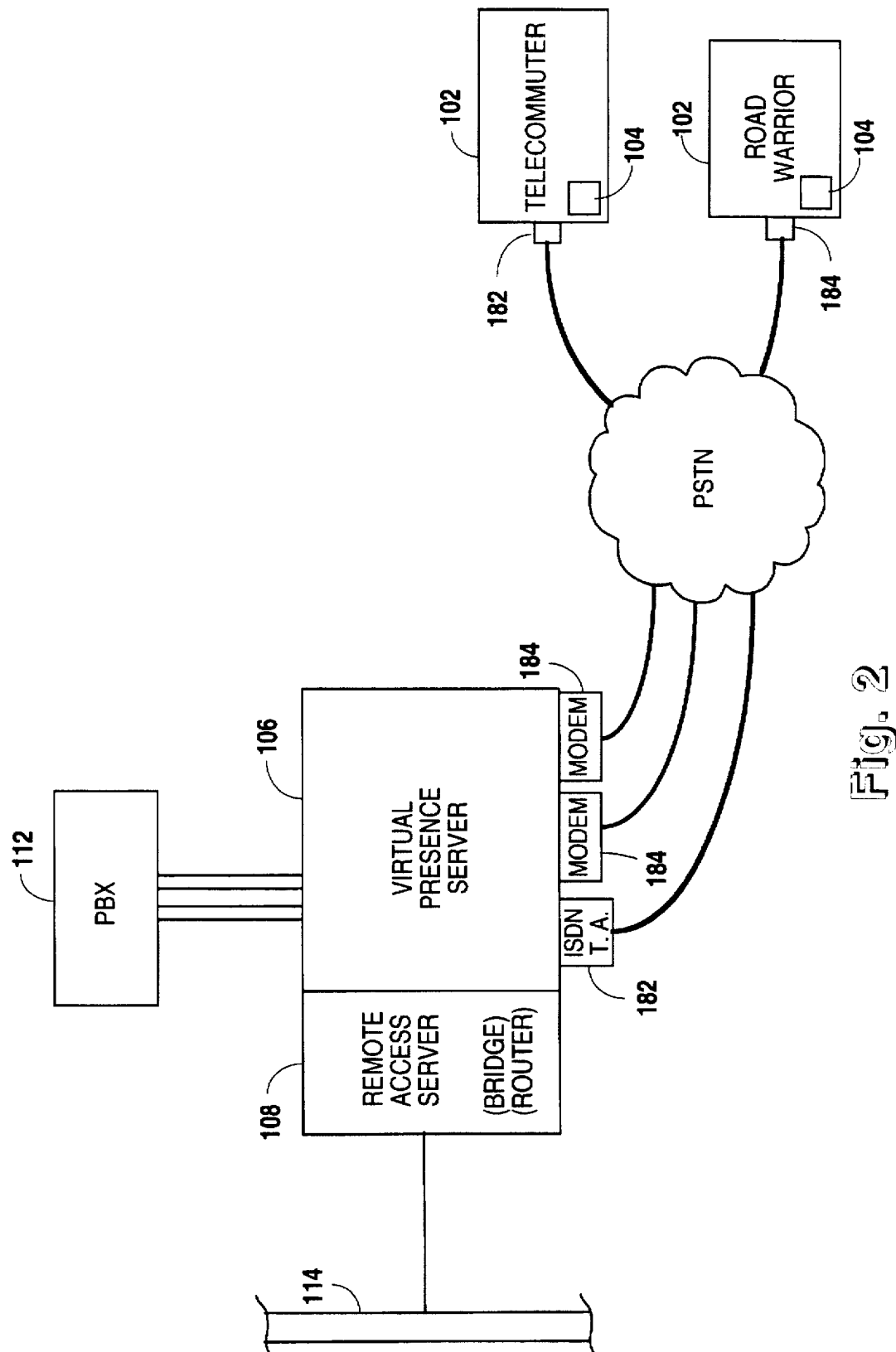*Teltone OfficeLink*, Teltone advertising brochure (Pub. Jan. 10, 1995).

OFFICE

PBX 112

VIRTUAL PRESENCE SERVER 106

LOCAL AREA NETWORK 114
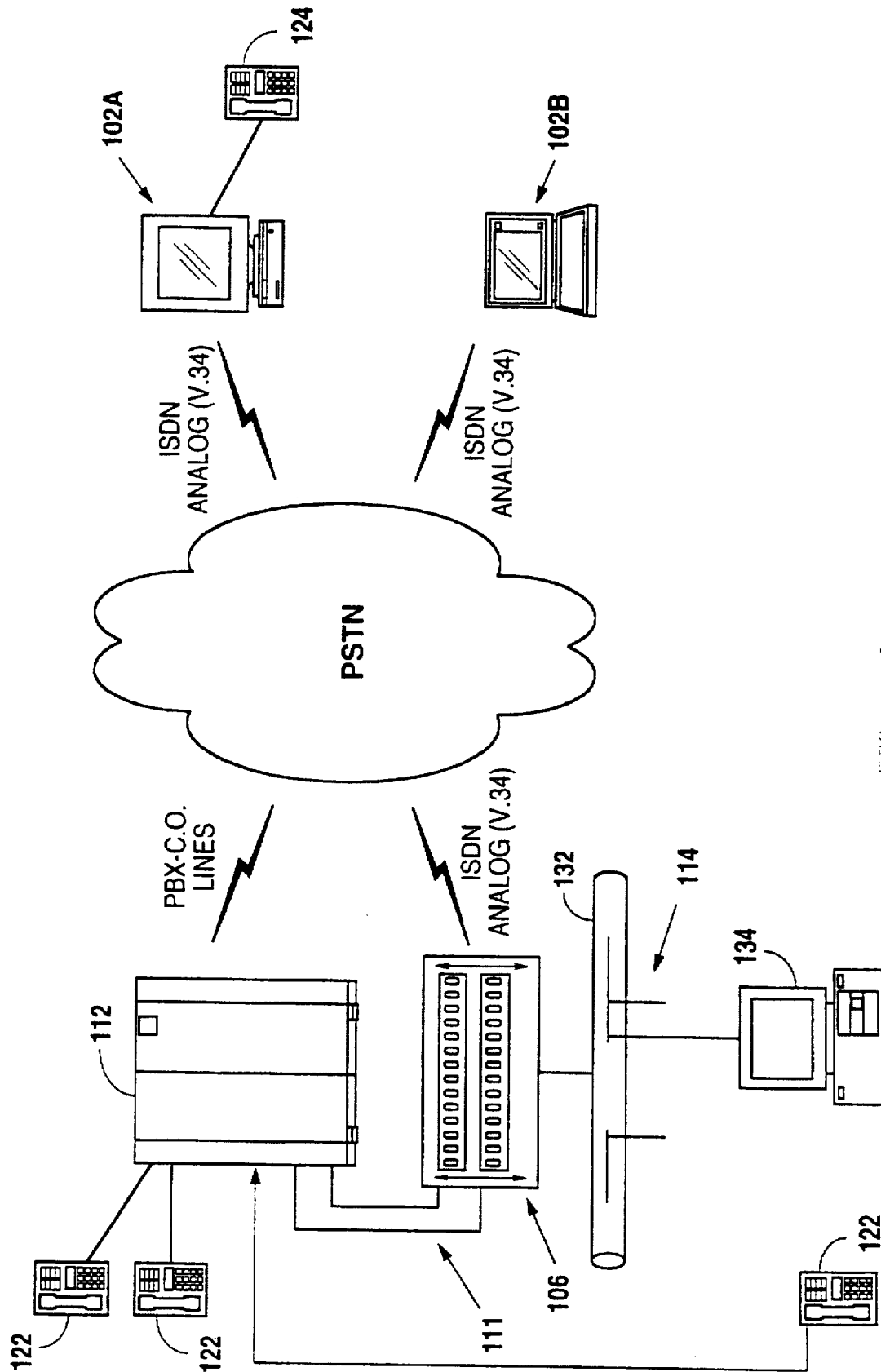
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102

**Fig. 1**

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

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