Product Line Solutions

Cost-effective counter solutions: targeted applications for postal organizations with an evolving infrastructure.

Escher Group has established itself as the leading provider of peer-to-peer messaging, data management, and content distribution solutions for the postal industry. The company's technology can automate every aspect of a postal system — from counter workstations to back-end data centers to integration with third-party applications — enabling postal administrations to realize cost savings, improve operational efficiency, deliver profitable new business offerings, and increase customer satisfaction.

While larger postal administrations generally have an existing technical infrastructure and are well positioned to implement a complete end-to-end solution, Escher realizes that many organizations are just beginning to automate their services and would prefer to do so one step at a time. To address the needs of these postal operators, Escher has developed two stand-alone Product Line Solutions (PLS) for mails and money order/transfer services. Based on the company's award-winning WebRiposte™ technology, Escher's Product Line Solutions make it easy and affordable to automate these key postal services.

Benefits

With Escher Group's Product Line Solutions, organizations realize the following benefits:

- ▶ *CONVENIENCE* Each solution solves a specific business problem and is easy to implement across a counters network, reducing the amount of time it takes to automate these services.

- ▶ *COST SAVINGS* These solutions can readily adapt to changing business needs; new services can be incorporated to generate additional revenue with no additional software cost.

- ▶ *EASE OF USE* A simple graphical interface helps staff learn to use these solutions quickly and with minimal training, reducing the need for extensive technical documentation and help-desk support.

- ▶ *OPERATIONAL RELIABILITY* At the heart of these Product Line Solutions is WebRiposte, Escher's peer-to-peer messaging, data management, and content distribution platform. Peer-to-peer messaging replicates information to every computer in its defined group, ensuring that no machine ever acts as a single point of failure.

ESCHER GROUP™

PLS Mails

PLS Mails offers postal organizations a complete postage-assessment application that automates all related activities, from purchasing postage and mailing packages to printing postage labels and assigning services to mail items. Additional services — such as track and trace — may also be incorporated into PLS Mails.

PLS Mails includes the application software, an easy-to-use desktop interface, integrated training and Help tools, and accounting and reporting functionality.

PLS Mails provides the infrastructure for delivering postal services in an increasingly competitive market. It encourages counter clerks to establish better relationships with customers, thereby increasing the value of services offered and making it easier to conduct business with the post office.

With PLS Mails, users have a full range of functionality at their fingertips. The product's peripheral-management capabilities enable peripheral sharing between workstations and automatically launch applications based on data received from input devices. For example, when a parcel is placed on a weigh scale, the weight is fed directly into the Mails application and the clerk is then prompted to enter a destination to calculate the correct postage. Based on those variables, the application then displays a full range of available services. When the transaction is complete, PLS Mails prints out a postage label and a receipt.

PLS Mails offers a wide range of functionality:

▸ **DATA DRIVEN** Automatically launches the application and displays products and services available when a stable reading is received from a weigh scale.

▸ **SECURITY** Allows postage labels to be printed with unique data identifiers, including value, place of origin, track and trace code, and other relevant data.

▸ **RATE SHOPPING** Enables customers to evaluate the costs of various letter and parcel mailing services, such as ground delivery, second class, first class, express, and overnight.

▸ **ADD-ON SERVICES** Displays the cost of additional services — such as insurance, registered mail, and tracking — so that customers can make informed decisions.

All postal transactions are conducted via the PLS Mails Desktop, which also allows users to generate reports, suspend or swap a session, access Help, and more.

System Requirements and Recommendations

PLS Mails and PLS Money Orders and Transfers require the WebRiposte Correspondence Server software. Individual workstations communicate outside of their local group by replicating messages to the Correspondence Server, which handles access to central systems and provides backup and recovery operations.

Both solutions also require hardware and peripherals:

▸ **HARDWARE** Organizations that do not currently have computer-based workstations can purchase a PLS appliance with Escher's application software pre-loaded.

▸ **PERIPHERALS** Each workstation requires a monitor to run the Desktop interface; a touch-screen monitor is recommended. PLS Mails is designed for use with a weigh scale and postage label printer, while PLS Money Orders and Transfers requires a printer capable of producing paper-based money orders. Both of these solutions require a receipt printer.

PLS Money Orders and Transfers

PLS Money Orders and Transfers supports the sale and redemption of paper-based and electronic money orders for both national and international use. This solution eliminates the need for pre-numbered stock of money order forms. At the point of sale, postal customers supply their name and address as well as the desired amount. The counter clerk then prints the entire money order, which includes a unique identifier that proves the document was produced at a specific post office. For electronic money orders — more commonly known as money transfers — the information is converted into an electronic form and transmitted to the recipient's local post office. To facilitate international money transfer services, the PLS Money Orders and Transfers application provides currency exchange and multiple language support.
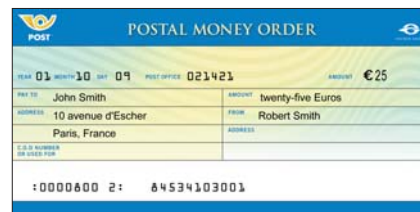
PLS Money Orders and Transfers includes the application software, a user-friendly desktop interface, integrated training and Help tools, and accounting and reporting functionality.

The PLS Money Orders and Transfers application allows users to trace money orders and transfers from creation to encashment, verify the status of a transaction, initiate a stop payment, and more from any internal or external machine connected to the network. Other important features include:

- **SECURITY** Allows for the creation of a bar code or other symbology containing a unique identifier, the transfer amount, origin, expected delivery location, and other relevant data.

- **VERIFICATION** When a recipient cashes a money order, the unique identifier enables the clerk to verify that the amount is correct at time of payment.

- **VALIDATION** Ensures that all of the required information is entered before the print and payment processes occur.

- **INTERNATIONAL TRANSFER SUPPORT** Facilitates transfers between partner postal organizations in different countries.

- **RATE SHOPPING** Enables the customer to determine what the cost would be for sending a specified amount via money order, post-to-post money transfer, or third-party money transfer.

- **ADDED-VALUE SERVICES** Supports a range of add-on services that provide convenience for customers and maximize the sales value of each transaction. The sender of a money transfer can purchase notification services to let the recipient know that funds are available for pick-up and to alert the sender when the funds have been collected. These services might include notification via mail, telephone, e-mail, or SMS (Short Message Service).

PLS Money Orders and Transfers features an easy-to-use graphical interface and integrated administration, training, and Help tools. It also supports add-on services that provide convenience for customers and generate revenue for the postal organization.

Money orders can be printed with a unique identifier, eliminating the need for pre-numbered stock.

Add-On Products and Services

To increase the functionality of Escher's Product Line Solutions, customers have the option of purchasing additional products and services.

▸ **SECURE PRINTING** While PLS Money Orders and Transfers contains a number of security features, Escher's advanced SpectraSeal™ and FiberFingerprint™ technologies protect the document's authenticity and make it virtually impossible for paper-based money orders to be counterfeited.

▸ **CUSTOMIZATION** Each PLS application is delivered as a complete solution, pre-configured with the customer's specified reference data (including rates, services, and more). As the organization's needs evolve, Escher's team of professional developers is available to provide further customization — from applying rate changes to integrating new services.

▸ **ENTERPRISE COMMUNITY PROFILE MANAGER** This application can be integrated with both the PLS Mails and PLS Money Orders and Transfers applications. It works in conjunction with a Post Services Card or other token that contains a unique identifier. It enables the postal service to record transaction information for participating customers, business accounts, employees, or other communities. When the card or token is presented at the counter, the clerk has immediate access to the customer's profile and can use that information to up-sell or cross-sell Mails services or to automatically fill in the sender's information (as well as the recipient's, when available) for money orders or transfers. When the transaction is completed, a record of it is then stored for future reference.

▸ **ENTERPRISE SALES OPTIMIZER** This application is available for use with both the PLS Mails and PLS Money Orders and Transfers applications. It allows postal organizations to offer transaction-based sales incentives to staff to encourage up-selling and cross-selling of products and services. When this component is activated, counter clerks are able to see which transactions will earn incentive points and how many points can be earned for each transaction. For example, if a customer is mailing a parcel to an international destination, the clerk may be able to earn points for selling added services such as express delivery, insurance, and/or tracking. Alternately, if a customer is transferring funds to someone, the clerk may earn points by selling add-on notification services.

▸ **WEBRIPOSTE TRACK AND TRACE** Escher's Track and Trace application integrates tracking information on a single platform and allows postal customers to track the status of a letter or parcel as it travels though the mail stream. This value-added Mails service generates additional revenue for the postal organization and provides a convenience for postal customers, who can log onto a postal Web site to determine when an item was collected, when it was delivered, and who signed for it. They can also track items that were not delivered, and find out why the delivery was not successful.

▸ **COMMERCIAL CUSTOMER OFFERING** Postal organizations can offer PLS Mails to their commercial customers as a postage meter and shipping application. With the ability to easily calculate shipping charges and print postage labels, these commercial customers are more likely to send packages through the post instead of using other shipping services.

▸ **THIRD-PARTY MONEY TRANSFERS** PLS Money Orders and Transfers supports the transmission of money transfer information to standard external systems such as Western Union, MoneyGram, and Eurogiro.

A World of Possibilities

Escher Group's flexible products are designed to meet the needs of a growing organization, whether it is just beginning the automation process or wishes to dramatically expand its business offerings to include banking, bill processing, pension payments, license sales, and other services. With Escher's complete range of postal solutions, the possibilities are endless.

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