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scher Group is dedicated to providing business-driven solutions to its customers and is committed to developing new and innovative products that will enable organizations to capitalize on changing business models and strategies. Using the WebRiposte™ platform, customers are proactively changing the way they do business.

WebRiposte is built on open industry standards, and supports secure, highly scalable, transaction processing, making it the ideal platform for rapidly developing and deploying e-business solutions both within an enterprise and between organizations.

WebRiposte provides a solid foundation for growth by allowing organizations to develop new business applications and processes that were previously difficult or impossible due to software incompatibilities and proprietary technologies. Using WebRiposte, organizations can add new product offerings while leveraging their initial infrastructure investment and realizing increased savings and revenue opportunities.

This product catalog describes the WebRiposte peer-to-peer messaging platform, explains how customers are using WebRiposte as the foundation for deploying a variety of mission-critical business applications, and highlights the emerging products and technologies currently in the early stages of development at Escher Group.

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WebRiposte[™]

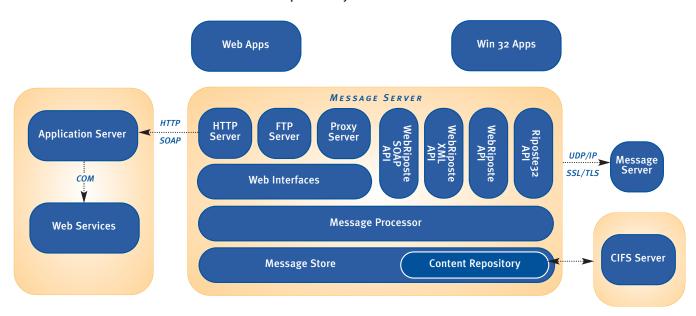
WebRiposteTM is Escher Group's standards-based, peer-to-peer messaging, data management, and content distribution platform. With a full suite of Web-based interfaces and built-in support for secure, highly scalable transaction processing, WebRiposte supports the development and deployment of e-business solutions within the enterprise and between organizations.

Currently, WebRiposte and its predecessor, Riposte®, are licensed on over 100,000 workstations in more than 55,000 business locations worldwide. This platform processes over 15 million transactions per day, amounting to a value of \$225 billion annually. Escher Group's customers are using WebRiposte as their platform of choice for deploying applications for services such as banking, retail, logistics, and much more.

Benefits

- COST SAVINGS Efficient software deployment eliminates the need for third-party systems management software.
 - Better use of network bandwidth allows organizations to operate offline for 95% of the transactions processed.
 - Automated network backup, synchronization, and recovery eliminate the need for full-time administrators and dramatically reduce the ongoing cost of owning and maintaining a distributed system.
- ► FLEXIBILITY With full support for open standards, such as XML (eXtensible Markup Language) and SOAP (Simple Object Access Protocol), WebRiposte easily integrates with existing enterprise applications.
- ► OPERATIONAL RELIABILITY Peer-to-peer messaging replicates information to every computer in its defined group, so that no machine ever acts as a single point of failure.
- CONVENIENCE Web-based tools can be accessed locally or remotely via a thin client to provide a means of configuring and administering WebRiposte.
- FINANCIAL SECURITY Integrated accounting functionality provides a complete and accurate audit trail for every transaction.

WebRiposte System Overview



Features

- NATIVE SUPPORT FOR XML With WebRiposte, developers use XML throughout the application-development process.
- ► BUILT-IN SUPPORT FOR STANDARD PROTOCOLS HTTP (HyperText Transfer Protocol), FTP (File Transfer Protocol), and CIFS (Common Internet File System) allow WebRiposte to function as an enterprise content and application distribution channel.
- SUPPORT FOR WEB SERVICES Web services provide an open application-development platform that is supported by all major vendors including Microsoft, Sun, and IBM.
- ► COMPLIANCE WITH MICROSOFT'S .NET FRAMEWORK AND VISUAL STUDIO .NET Integrated support for SOAP and related XML technologies including WSDL (Web Services Description Language) and UDDI (Universal Description Discovery Integration) ensures efficient software deployment.

WebRiposte provides a Web-enabled HTTP interface, with support for secure, Web-based transactions and application development. The product is designed to support distributed applications, and is ideal for a high-volume transaction processing environment.

WebRiposte conforms to XML standards for data interchange and provides public XML-compliant programming interfaces that can be used to build Web-enabled, interactive business applications for accessing and manipulating data in a WebRiposte Message Store.

The WebRiposte infrastructure provides a complete messaging system — with message distribution and message storage — and supports a Web service development platform, in which applications can be developed using standard Web technologies.

Active Replication

Message Synchronization and Recovery

Message Servers synchronize their Message Stores via Escher Group's active replication protocol. When all the Message Servers in a group are online, all the members of the group will have identical copies of the Message Store.

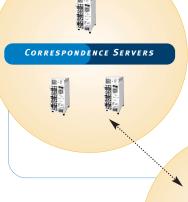
When a new member joins the group, or if a member is offline and comes back online, its Message Store must be synchronized with the rest of the group.

The peer-to-peer model allows these messages to be retrieved from any member in the group. In fact, a Message Store can synchronize or recover messages from multiple members of a group simultaneously — thus, no Message Server ever acts as a single point of failure.

Middle-Tier Integration

Message Servers communicate outside their local group by replicating messages to a Correspondence Server. The Correspondence Servers handle access to central systems, provide backup and recovery operations, and remotely extend the group's abilities.





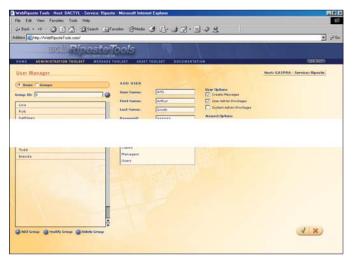


WebRiposte[™] (continued)

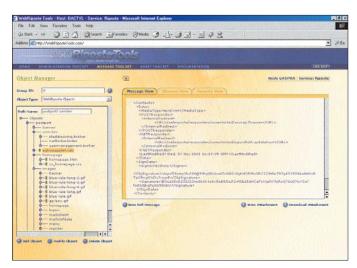
WebRiposte offers a number of facilities to simplify system administration and provide a more productive environment for application development. It is a proven platform upon which multi-channel applications are built and mission-critical information is reliably exchanged.

WebRiposte Tools

WebRiposte's browser-based tools provide a means of configuring and administering the system. These tools provide ease-of-use and convenience. Administrative functions such as system configuration, message archival, and user definition can be accessed locally or remotely, thereby reducing the cost of on-site administration for each installation.



Administrators can create user accounts within User Manager.



Administrators can view Web Objects and messages using Object Manager.

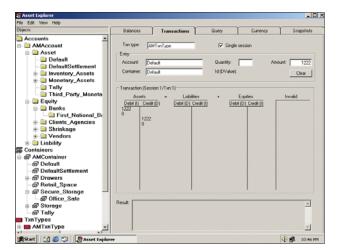
Peripheral Server

WebRiposte contains more than 30 drivers, supporting peripherals from a variety of manufacturers. The Peripheral Server's open architecture makes it possible for Escher Group to add new peripheral drivers on a regular basis. This flexibility also enables organizations to easily add new peripherals as needed.

Asset Manager

Asset Manager provides a complete, integrated solution for tracking and managing accounting information for all WebRiposte transactions. This includes managing physical inventory, payment methods, reference data, value stock, fees, and taxes. Asset Explorer provides a graphical interface for viewing and managing accounting and financial system data.

Asset Manager supports the definition of multiple accounting currencies and the specification of cross-currency exchange rates on a time-dependent basis. Asset Manager provides everything necessary to create fully Euro-compliant applications.



Administrators can use Asset Explorer to view a chart of accounts with a summary of recent transactions. Asset Manager also supports currency exchange functionality for implementing bureau de change applications.

Essential, Powered by WebRiposte™

Essential

Essential is Escher Group's retail product. It is built on the WebRiposte platform and includes a set of standard application components supporting a broad range of transactions, from postal to agency.

Essential enables the rapid development, deployment, and management of secure, high-performance applications across distributed, multi-channel networks. The product's unique ability to blend complex functionality and diverse data into a single, integrated, user-friendly system makes it a viable, cost-effective option for postal organizations chartered with a counter automation initiative.

Benefits

With Essential, organizations realize the following benefits:

- INCREASED REVENUE OPPORTUNITIES Essential makes it easy to add new services for retail items and third-party transactions, allowing the system to quickly adapt to the organization's evolving needs.
- Cost Savings Built-in support for peripheral sharing between workstations within a postal outlet allows for more efficient use of hardware, such as expensive weigh scales.
- **CONVENIENCE** Essential's ready-made components can be easily transformed into applications, reducing the time to automate the postal organization and to offer additional services based on new business opportunities.
- EASE OF USE Counter clerks learn to use Essential applications quickly and with minimal training, reducing the need for extensive technical documentation and help-desk support.
- STREAMLINED PROCESSES With Essential, summarized accounting information can be easily uploaded to a corporate accounting system such as SAP on a daily basis, or as required by the postal administration.



Components

The following Essential components provide the framework for rapid application development:

- **ESSENTIAL DESKTOP** Applications are launched from this user-friendly interface.
- POSTAGE ASSESSMENT AND LOGISTICS Data configured using this component supports postage assessment and parcel tracking.
- ► AGENCY Data configured using this component supports transactions such as bill payments for third-party clients.
- BANKING Data configured using this component supports banking transactions.
- RETAIL Data configured using this component supports sales transactions for merchandise that is sold by the post office.
- SETTLEMENT This component enables administrators to define payment options and the structure for completing transactions.
- ► **STOCK MANAGEMENT** Data configured using this component supports stock remittance, stock transfer, and stock balance.
- Accounting Administrators can set up a chart of accounts by using the Asset Manager functionality.
- USER MANAGEMENT Administrators can add, modify, and delete users and assign passwords.
- ► **DESKTOP ODBC DRIVER** Reports can be created at the postal counter using this industry-standard technology.

Essential, Powered by WebRiposte™ (continued)

Design Studio

In addition to the standard set of components, Essential includes Design Studio, which provides all of the tools needed to design, develop, and deploy robust applications. This integrated application development environment can be used to design screens, scripts, receipts, peripheral impulses, and data for use at the retail counter.

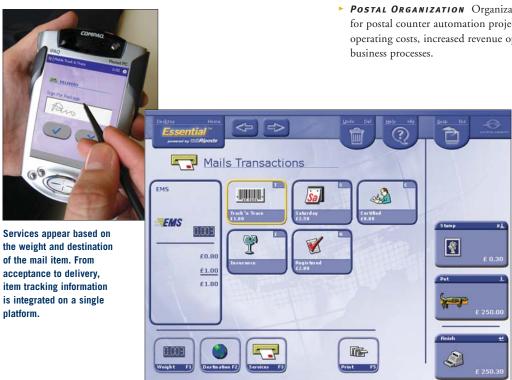
Enhanced Peripheral Support

Essential's support for peripherals provides a solution that streamlines transaction complexity, eliminates inaccurate data entry, and dramatically decreases transaction time. Essential's peripheral-management capabilities enable users to share peripherals between workstations and automatically launch applications based on data received from input devices. Essential contains more than 30 drivers, supporting peripherals from various manufacturers. An SDK (Software Development Kit) is available for creating additional drivers.

In addition to enhanced peripheral support, postal organizations are realizing the benefit of legacy-free networks. The term legacy-free refers to the industry-wide initiative to replace older components of a traditional PC architecture with newer, more intelligent technology. Microsoft, Intel, Compaq, IBM, and other PC-industry leaders spearheaded the legacy-free initiative. The goal is to reduce total cost of ownership by simplifying the PC; for example, by providing plug-and-play peripheral support.

With Essential, everyone benefits:

- COUNTER AUTOMATION DEVELOPMENT TEAM Essential's readymade components minimize the amount of work required to develop, deploy, and maintain postal applications.
- ► **POSTAL COUNTER CLERKS** Essential applications are intuitive and easy to understand, reducing the need for extensive technical documentation, training, and help-desk support. Postal counter automation simplifies processes that were previously time-intensive for the counter clerk.
- ► POSTAL CUSTOMERS A wider range of services is provided in a timely and efficient manner, increasing customer satisfaction and loyalty.
- ► POSTAL ORGANIZATION Organizations deploying Essential for postal counter automation projects benefit from reduced operating costs, increased revenue opportunities, and streamlined



Services appear based on of the mail item. From acceptance to delivery, item tracking information is integrated on a single

Enterprise Applications, Powered by WebRiposte™

Enterprise Applications

Escher Group's Enterprise Applications create a foundation for developing and deploying customer-aware, enterprise-level applications with tools for enhanced data exchange, analysis, and reporting. They comprise a range of products that can be used for compiling business intelligence based on customer- and product-specific transaction data. These products can also be leveraged to provide enhanced functionality for existing Essential applications.

Postal networks conduct many thousands — if not millions — of transactions each day. Escher's Enterprise products allow postal administrators to track, process, and analyze these counter activities, converting the existing data into a powerful source of critical business information. In turn, this information serves as the basis for strategic enterprise management and enables postal organizations to define, manage, and control the key value drivers of the business.

Benefits

With Enterprise Applications, organizations realize the following benefits:

- ► INCREASED REVENUE OPPORTUNITIES Enterprise Applications are based on an open platform that enables users to rapidly develop and deploy new product and service offerings on behalf of the post office and third-party agencies, creating an infrastructure that is able to take immediate advantage of profitable new business opportunities.
- ► LOW RISK AND COST EFFECTIVE Enterprise Applications work with existing WebRiposte and Riposte Desktop environments, providing a low-risk implementation and easy upgrade path for current customers. The various Enterprise Applications can be combined to create complete end-to-end solutions, eliminating the need for additional hardware or software.
- ► **SEAMLESS INTEGRATION** Enterprise Applications provide seamless integration between an organization's counter network, data center, and back-end systems. They also enable postal organizations to securely exchange data with third-party clients for activities such as bill payments, banking, and money transfers.
- BETTER-INFORMED DECISION MAKING Enterprise Applications enable postal administrators to track customer buying trends, analyze staff and branch performance, view real-time transaction data, and quickly access several years' worth of historical data providing them with a complete picture of their business and helping them to make better-informed decisions.
- ► STREAMLINED PROCESSES Enterprise Applications combine data warehousing, customer management, trend reporting, and analysis all in one integrated platform, simplifying back-end processes and eliminating the need for complex middle-tier systems. Furthermore, by providing real-time access to customer profiles and account activity at the counter, Enterprise Applications can speed transaction times and increase customer satisfaction.









Applications

Enterprise Applications are built on WebRiposte and deliver powerful features to help organizations become more business- and customer-aware. Each application offers distinct benefits, and customers can combine multiple Enterprise products to achieve a complete, end-to-end solution.

Enterprise Sales Optimizer

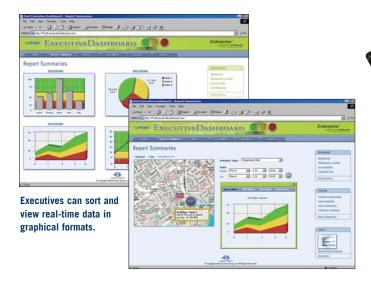
This product provides up-sell/cross-sell functionality — which can be linked to staff incentives — in order to maximize every sales opportunity. The Sales Optimizer prompts counter staff to suggest additional or upgraded products and services with each transaction, enabling post offices to increase the value of each sale and provide customers with a more personalized, targeted service. With an incentive program, reward-earning opportunities are automatically displayed on the desktop buttons as transactions occur, and employees can check their point totals, view reward options, and redeem points for rewards via a Staff Rewards Web site.



Enterprise Applications, Powered by WebRiposte™ (continued)

Enterprise Analytics Engine

The Analytics Engine enables postal organizations to conduct enhanced analysis of real-time data directly from the WebRiposte Correspondence Server or Shadow Correspondence Server. Its open interfaces, compliance with industry standards, and advanced reporting capabilities allow organizations to make informed decisions by viewing current data in a rapidly changing environment. With this valuable information, organizations can generate performance-measurement reports to show activity by product type, salesperson, and geographical region, and create sales campaigns based on local and regional preferences.



Enterprise Shadow Correspondence Server

The Shadow Correspondence Server resides in the data center and can store several years' worth of transaction information, enabling organizations to manage terabytes of data and maintain an archive of all counter transactions. This product serves as a more efficient, reliable, and cost-effective alternative to traditional tape backups. It allows immediate access to historical data and eliminates the need to search through old tapes to locate archived transaction information, saving the organization time, money, and resources.

Enterprise Content Manager

The Content Manager enables post offices to run all counter applications directly from the WebRiposte Message Store, without having to purchase expensive systems management software for the counters network. With the product's HTML and CIFS interfaces, postal organizations can distribute CBT (Computer-Based Training) and in-flight training modules, browser-based Help, internal and external Web sites, and organization-wide announcements to all users via the Desktop.

Enterprise Workflow Manager

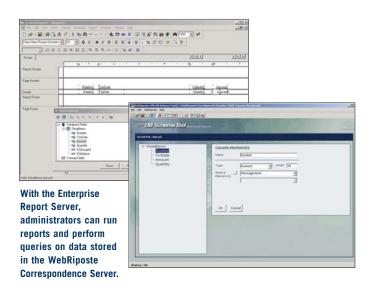
The Workflow Manager provides enhanced application integration capabilities by facilitating the movement of data from the WebRiposte environment to other software packages and legacy systems. It also provides a complete, integrated solution for tracking and managing accounting information at the data center, rather than the postal outlet, eliminating the need to execute bespoke, intricate business logic. This allows existing complex applications to operate unchanged at the counters, simplifies the back-end integration process, and saves on application integration and deployment costs.

Enterprise Community Profile Manager

The Community Profile Manager allows postal administrators to link an individual transaction to a specific customer, counter clerk, and postal outlet. Each user is issued a Post Services Card (or other token) with a unique identifier. When the card is

presented at the counter, any related transactions are recorded to the user's profile. These transaction histories can be analyzed to understand trends in customer and staff behavior and take advantage of sales opportunities at the counter in real-time. With the ability to track individual buying patterns, postal organizations can deliver more targeted service offerings — which ultimately lead to improved customer service and increased revenue.





Enterprise Report Server

The Report Server product bundles several components, including Enterprise ODBC Driver, IIS (Internet Information Server), and Crystal Enterprise. It allows organizations to leverage third-party tools (such as Crystal Reports, Excel, and .NET applications) for reporting and performing queries on data stored in the WebRiposte Correspondence Server. The WebRiposte Correspondence Server becomes the data warehouse from which data is viewed, eliminating the need to transfer data to an external database. As a result, organizations benefit from significant savings in reduced hardware and software licensing fees and administration costs.

Enterprise Mails

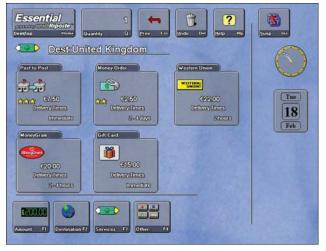
Enterprise Mails is Escher Group's most comprehensive postage assessment and logistics product. It supports a range of activities such as purchasing postage, mailing packages, printing postage labels, assigning services to mail items, and tracking parcels as they move through the mail stream. In addition to advanced peripheral-management capabilities, it features a highly capable and robust data set that enables postal authorities to extend the Mails application outside of their organization. For example, commercial customers can register bulk mail lots and complete the necessary forms online then complete the transaction at the post office, where they drop off the mail items and pay for the shipping charges. The counter clerk is able to verify the order against the information entered online, thereby eliminating paperwork and reducing the amount of time commercial customers need to spend at the post office.

Enterprise Money Orders and Transfers

The Money Orders and Transfers application supports the sale and redemption of paper-based and electronic money orders for both national and international use. At the point of sale, postal customers supply their name and address, the desired amount, and the recipient's information. The counter clerk can then print a money order with a unique identifier, which eliminates the need for pre-numbered stock. If the sender opts to conduct a money transfer, the information is converted into an electronic form and transmitted to the recipient's local post office. To facilitate international money transfer services, the Money Orders and Transfers application provides currency exchange and multiple language support. This application includes a number of security features, and additional security measures can be incorporated into money order documents via various data encryption methods.



An SMS (Short Message Service) alert can be forwarded to a sender's mobile phone to confirm that transferred funds have been collected.



Customers can compare rates for various money order and transfer services.

WebRiposte™ Track and Trace

Track and Trace

From the moment that an item is mailed until it is delivered and signed for, postal customers can track the status of that item as it travels though the mail stream. Escher Group's Track and Trace runs on WebRiposte, so item tracking information is integrated on a single platform. Via the Internet, customers can 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 the reason why the delivery was not successful.

The critical success factors for the implementation of any track and trace system are:

High-Volume Scanning

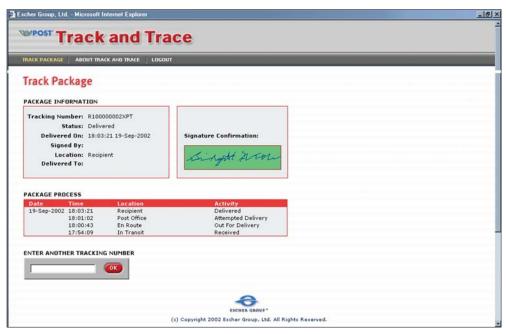
High-volume letter and parcel scanning is an important element in operating a tracking system. Distribution centers cannot delay the departure of a delivery vehicle while awaiting the completion of letter or parcel scanning. The WebRiposte platform has proven its ability to handle high-volume processing at the post office counter. With Escher's Track and Trace, post offices can take advantage of this benefit in order to streamline back-office processes.

Simplicity of Scanning

A key factor in ensuring that letters and parcels are consistently and correctly scanned is the simplification and automation of the scanning process. WebRiposte Track and Trace is not only easy to understand, but it enforces the rules defined by the business logic. Validation ensures that all items scanned to a particular "Out for Delivery" list are correct.

Data Availability and Integrity

The ability to provide letter and parcel tracking information at any time is critical in serving both management information requirements and customer inquiries. Because Escher's Track and Trace adheres to open standards, it easily integrates with back-end systems and can also be directly accessed via the Internet by customers interested in tracking parcels. WebRiposte's peer-to-peer model and active replication ensures that no data is lost in the case of hardware or system failure. WebRiposte provides a rock-solid foundation for the deployment of Track and Trace, ensuring fault tolerance and customer satisfaction.



Detailed routing information is presented through a browser-based application.

Integration with Existing Services

A key feature of any system is the ease with which it can interface with external systems, such as integrated financial systems, CRM (Customer Relationship Management) systems, and international tracking systems. Seamless integration is facilitated through the use of industry standards — such as XML, FTP, HTTP, and SOAP — allowing the solution to be deployed over the Internet directly into customer locations.

Standard Graphical User Interface

The provision of a standard interface simplifies the operating process for the user, as all functions are present in a consistent format. Ease of use and user-interface consistency help to reduce the level of training required when new users are introduced to the system.

Scalability

The ability to deliver functionality to meet new requirements within a short timeframe enables the post office to respond to customers' needs faster and to deliver new products to the market before the competition.

Administration

Escher Group's Track and Trace allows administrators to define services and postal routes within the network. Additionally, through the use of ACLs (Access Control Lists), administrators can restrict access to individual components within the application.

Inquiries and Reporting

Administrators can perform queries on items by defining search criteria such as date, local post office, product type, and route. Queries can also be performed on lists of items to determine the number of open and closed lists. Statistical data can also be obtained for a particular date specified by the end user.



At the distribution center, items are scanned to an "Out for Delivery" list.

StampStudio™

With StampStudioTM and off-the-shelf hardware, post offices are able to offer their customers the ability to create custom, personalized postage at the counter in just a few minutes.

Many current personalized postage products require customers to submit their image to the post office weeks in advance. By deploying Escher's solution at the retail counter, postal customers will receive their personalized postage almost immediately.

The convenience of this offering can also be extended beyond the retail counter to self-service kiosks. With a digital camera option, customers won't even need to bring a photo into the post office, as one can be taken on the spot.

StampStudio is based on WebRiposte, which provides a highly scalable, fault-tolerant foundation for the definition, sale, and delivery of personalized postage.

While the primary benefit of StampStudio is its ability to expand the post office's sales and customer base, there is more to it than that. Following are a few benefits that make it even more attractive:

- CONVENIENCE Whether at the retail counter, over the Internet, or at a self-service kiosk, the deployment options are numerous.
- Cost Savings The product's intuitive interface requires minimal training and support, reducing the cost of operating and maintaining the system.
- CUSTOMER SATISFACTION Providing personalized postage in minutes gives customers immediate gratification and encourages them to return to the post office for more service.
- INCREASED REVENUE OPPORTUNITIES Customers can order or re-order personalized postage online, broadening the addressable market from the local population to the population of the entire world.



The postal customer provides a hardcopy photograph, uploads one from the Internet, or has one taken at the post office. The image can be scanned, formatted, and/or cropped, and a sheet of personalized stamps is then printed from a color inkjet printer.

Subscription Mail Service

Escher Group's Subscription Mail application introduces the idea of subscription plans to the post office mailing service. Similar to the way a cell phone customer selects a monthly plan, the Subscription Mail customer chooses a mail services plan based on the maximum number of mail items they expect to mail out each month. The post office offers a discounted rate for monthly payment plans.

The customer doesn't need a meter, or any other postal security device. The post office can offer any number of methods for mailer identification, from pre-printed customer identification numbers on adhesive labels, to allowing customers to print at their convenience. Rather than depending on security at the origination of the mail item, enforcement occurs at the post office sorting center, where equipment already exists to scan incoming mail pieces.

During the regular OCR (Optical Character Recognition) scan, the post office can automate the process to include the new Subscription Mail customer identification number. WebRiposte transactions and Essential Desktop applications are provided for statistical sampling for fraud detection, customer setup, tracking of mail items, and standard accounting and invoicing options.

Escher Group's Subscription Mail service offers a stable, predictable revenue model for the post office, and reduces the volume of low-margin stamp purchases at the counter.



A customer identification number is printed on the postage.

MicroMeter™

In addition to transferring money, MicroMeterTM uses Escher Group's patented technology for representing and loading postage value into a software-only meter. The technology allows software-only postage meters to print postage offline, without a network connection. Previously, software-only systems had to be connected to a central server while postage was printing. Systems that could print postage offline have always required secure hardware. Escher's technology provides the best of both worlds: the convenience of an all-software meter, and a less costly way to print postage offline.

The technology uses proven cryptographic algorithms, which allow value to be printed on a stamp securely and with a small number of bits. This level of security, combined with a software-only solution, means lower costs for everyone.



Escher's MicroMeter allows customers to print postage offline.

About Escher Group

Escher Group Limited is a leading provider of peer-to-peer messaging and data management solutions and services. The company offers a business-to-business, XML-based transaction management environment that is used in thousands of locations worldwide. Escher introduced Riposte® — its flagship peer-to-peer messaging solution — in 1993, and later extended the product's functionality with support for Internet-based applications when it launched WebRiposte™ in 2000. Today, the Riposte family of products has established Escher as the market leader in post office counter automation. The company is a proud sponsor of the MIT Media Lab's "Things That Think Consortium," which researches advances in information technologies. In addition to its headquarters in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Escher has offices in Dublin, London, and Singapore.



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