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(54) Title: METHOD FOR WORKFLOW PROCESSING THROUGH COMPUTER NETWORK

(57) Abstract: A computer system facilitates communication and business activities between multiple business entities by use of a common communications network, such as the Internet. The system stores a plurality of business objects which define business activities between parties. Each business object has a plurality of states each representing a stage of processing. A group of work units define functions that are performed for the business object and typically each work unit involves a transition between states of the business object. A series of business rules defines the validity of the work units for each state as well as restrictions on activities that can be performed by the business object. Preprocessing and postprocessing steps corresponding to the current environment are performed respectively before and after a completed data file is stored in a system database. A defined file format, such as XML, is utilized for the internal processing and storage of data for a business transaction. The system can receive the standardized file format or can translate any proprietary file into the standardized format. Communication to a recipient is done as a file with a format defined by the recipient. The output files can be either in the standardized format or translated into a particular required format associated with the recipient. New business objects can be added to the system to expand the range of business activities that can be supported. This is done on a modular basis so that any type of business activity and a wide range of businesses can be processed by the system.

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