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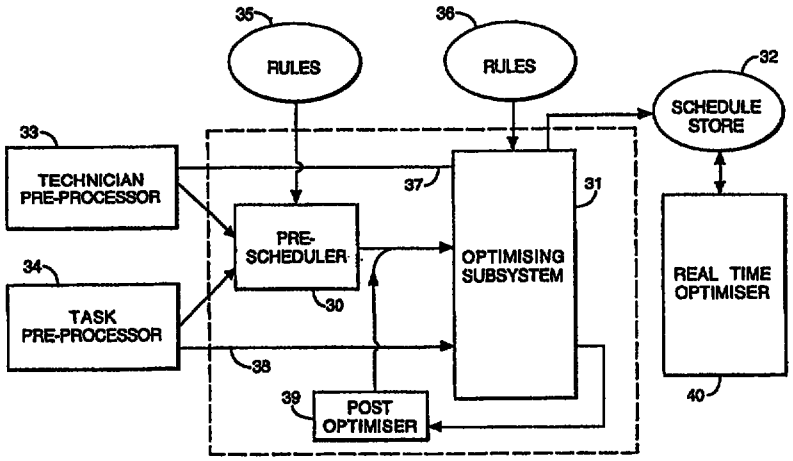
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(54) Title: RESOURCE ALLOCATION



(57) Abstract

A plurality of resources, typically service operatives, are allocated to a plurality of tasks by a method in which initial information relating to the tasks to be allocated and the resources available to perform the tasks is provided to first generate an initial series of schedules allocating resources to the tasks, and then modifying the individual schedule of at least one resource in response to updated information, whereby changes to individual schedules may be made in response to such updated information independently of the schedule generation means. The initial series of schedules may be generated in a two–stage process in which a rule–based system (30) allocates tasks selected as being difficult to allocate (e.g. because they are linked to other tasks), and then a stochastic (non–systematic) search system (31) compiles the rest of the schedule. Periodically, the stochastic system may be interrupted to allow a further rule–based system (39) to analyse the schedules created thus far, and fix the best ones in the schedule, so that the stochastic system (31) can then concentrate on improving the remaining schedules. In order to allow the system to handle rapid changes in the requirements for tasks and the resources, on a scale faster than the time required to generate the schedules, a schedule modification system (40) is arranged to make changes in the short term in between schedule updates delivered by the schedule generation system (30, 31).