

5 piracy is inhibited in that the same remote computer 10 must be requesting the update as was the one that originally requested the software application 20. Under some circumstances, the remote computer 10 may change for reasons other than pirating software. Such circumstances can include replacing the computer with a more modern computer or transferring the software application 20 pursuant to the terms of the license agreement to a third party. Under these circumstances, the user may transfer the information specific to the remote computer 10 to the new computer as long as verification is made that the old computer either no longer exists or is no longer loaded with the software application 20.

10 A comparison 74 is then performed in the remote server 24 to check whether the software application 20 is an old version or is a demo version. If it is the most current version 76, then the procedure is complete 92 and the update request is canceled.

15 If this request is not made and it is determined that the user is pirating the software 82, then a signal is sent from the server module 26 to the agent module 22 in the remote computer 10 to disable the program 94. The program will then no longer be usable by the remote computer 10 and only the complete new installation including a purchase of the software will re-enable the software.

If the remote computer 10 is the same machine 84, then the hardware constraints are then rechecked 86. This is to insure that the new updated software does not have additional hardware constraints that the previous version had not had.

20 If the software update is more than simply a maintenance update, there may be additional billing necessary. The user is then enabled to use the previous billing information or input new billing information 88. Upon verification of the billing information, the new version is then installed 90 and the procedure is complete 92.

25 Referring now to Figure 4, another application of the invention is shown. A corporate network 102 is shown having a corporate server 100. The corporate server 100 is in electrical communication with both the corporate network 102 and the outside network