- 20 -

CLAIMS

1.   In a computer system having a first and a second
software entity, each supporting one or more features,
a feature exchange method comprising:

        transferring, from said first to said second
software entity, indications of features supported by
said first software entity,

        comparing, by said second software entity, said
indications of features supported by said first software
entity with indications of features supported by said
second software entity,

        transferring, from said second software entity
to said first software entity, said indications of
features supported by said second software entity,

        transferring, from said second software entity
to said first software entity, an error indication if
said first software entity does not support a feature
required by said second software entity,

        comparing, by said first software entity, said
indications of features supported by said second software
entity with said indications of features supported by
said first software entity, and

        taking an error action, by said first software
entity, if said second software entity does not support
a feature required by said first software entity or if
said first software entity receives said error indication.

2.   The method of Claim 1 wherein said indications
of features supported by said first software entity and
said indications of features supported by said second
software entity comprise bit masks where a bit thereof
represents a feature and wherein

        each said comparing step comprises a bitwise
comparison of said bit masks.