

Summary of the Invention

The aforementioned and other objects of the invention are achieved by the invention which is a system for installing a software application to a remote computer via a network. The network is one which has at least one content server located thereon, which serves data to a plurality of attached computer clients. This network model is intended to include both intranets and internets. That is, the network may be an internal corporate network, an intranet, or a global network of networks such as the Internet, for example. The system comprises a server module and an agent module.

The server module is disposed on the server. The server module maintains a database of software applications and constraints associated therewith. In the case of commercial distribution of the software application, the server module also maintains a database that includes billing information.

The agent module can be embedded in more than one type of software application, and is actuatable by the remote computer to initiate installation of the software application on the remote computer. Upon initiation, the agent module electrically communicates with the server module which selectively enables the installation. In the case of a commercial distribution of the software over the Internet, for example, the user, upon finding a software application which the user wishes to purchase, the user selects the software application. An agent module would then communicate with the server module.

In one embodiment, the agent module would be embedded in the software application the user selected to purchase, and it would be actuatable by the remote computer. After actuation by the remote computer the agent module would communicate with the server module. In another embodiment, the agent module embedded in the software application would remain inactive until after the software application was installed. In this embodiment, a second agent module, which for clarity will hereinafter be referred to as a plug-in, disposed on the remote computer would communicate with the server module. The plug-in would