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**(71) Applicant:** ELECTRONIC DATA SYSTEMS CORPORATION [US/US]; 5400 Legacy Drive, M/S H3-3A-05, Plano, TX 75024 (US).

**(72) Inventors:** FLAKE, Wayne, L.; 1508 Iowa Drive, Plano, TX 75093 (US). KAMBHAMPATY, Krishna; 2001 Terracotta Court, Lewisville, TX 75067 (US). MOLSBERRY, Stephen, B.; 2408 Piedra Drive, Plano, TX 75023 (US). CLEM, Gregory, B.; 17820 North 56th Street, Scottsdale, AZ 85254 (US).

**(74) Agent:** GRIEBENOW, L., Joy; Electronic Data Systems Corporation, 5400 Legacy Drive, M/S H3-3A-05, Plano, TX 75024 (US).

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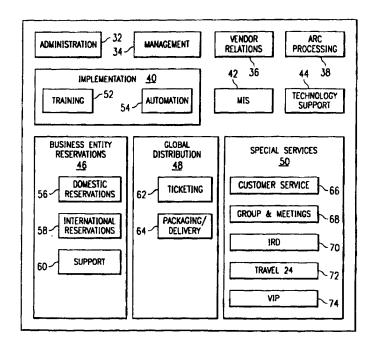
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**(54) Title:** AUTOMATED TRAVEL SERVICE MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM

**(57) Abstract**

A method (1000) of automatically managing travel service information is provided. The method generates a business entity profile and individual profile for customer (1004, 1006), and stores the information in a relational database. Customer reservation services information retrieved from all available sources is also stored in the same database (1010). Consequently, the customer reservation services information and the profile information is made available, simultaneously, for use by an agent in processing a customer's travel request (1013).

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## AUTOMATED TRAVEL SERVICE
## MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM

### TECHNICAL FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates generally to the field of
customer reservation services, and more particularly, to
an automated travel service management information system
5      and method of operation.

## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Travel agencies train and employ agents to coordinate customers' travel plans with travel-related services supplied by airlines, hotels, auto rental agencies, etc. Typically, in order to determine the availability of these services and make reservations, travel agents may access (via a remote workstation) one of a number of proprietary travel reservation systems. For example, in order to determine the availability of seating on a specific airline flight, an agent may access the SABRE System, which is a computer reservation system (CRS) developed and marketed by American Airlines. Other computer reservation systems are also available, such as Worldspan® owned by Pars Marketing Partnership, Apollo® owned by Galileo International Partnership, and System One® owned by Amadeus Global Travel Distribution.

Although a number of proprietary computer reservation systems are available, from a travel agency's viewpoint, these systems are inefficient and not cost effective to use. For example, work-related travel arrangements may be (and usually are) subject to certain restrictions imposed by a customer's employer. Employers often limit airline travel expenditures to tourist class or business class rates. Also, employers often negotiate discounted rates for their employees, such as hotel or automobile rental rates, and then limit travel expenditures to those discounted rates. Although existing proprietary computer reservation systems may maintain such employer-imposed restriction information, in order to obtain that type of information from a particular system, an agent needs to know that system's unique information codes. However, most agents are typically trained to access and use only one or two proprietary computer reservation systems, because cross-training agents to use all of the unique systems would be extremely costly for the agency.

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Furthermore, although a number of proprietary
computer reservation systems are available for use by
agencies, these systems are not integrated to provide all
of the available services at one time.  Consequently, if
5      an agent desires to make a complete set of travel
arrangements for a customer, the agent has to access a
system multiple times.  For example, in order to arrange
for a customer's airline travel, automobile rental, and
hotel accommodations, a travel agent typically accesses
10     the proprietary system to reserve airline seating and
obtain prices and tickets, then again using different
commands to obtain prices and reserve a rental car, and a
third time to obtain prices and reserve a hotel room.
Since an agent's productivity decreases with increases in
15     request processing time, the present sequential method of
processing travel requests is highly inefficient.  Such
inefficiencies result in increased operational costs and
reduced profitability for the agency.  Additionally, the
agent cross-training required for three proprietary
20     systems, significantly increases the agency's costs.
       Presently, in order to minimize operational costs,
travel agencies typically assign specific agents to
process travel requests made by specific customers and
business organizations, and for specific travel-related
25     functions.  However, these specialized uses of agents are
neither very efficient nor cost-effective.  For example,
one agent's corporate customer may request travel
arrangements for several employees, while at the same
time, one or more of the other agents in the office may
30     be idle.

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