



*The Evolution to
Ensite EBS*

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About Ensite EBS

In 2006, ECI² is introducing a new generation of business system technology. These applications incorporate smart-client architecture, SQL databases, the Microsoft® .NET programming framework, and a completely redesigned user interface. These changes provide very real benefits to you:

- Improved performance and reliability
- Ability to accommodate future growth
- Simpler customization
- Better security.

Ensite EBS (Enterprise Business System) is Windows®-based with a new GUI (graphical user interface) utilizing the .NET platform. Programming is done in Microsoft Visual C#. Ensite EBS lets us completely detach from TBL — all business logic will be rewritten.

Technology History

In the past, the DDMS system was based on TBL code. TBL is a text-based proprietary language database with limited features and extendability. Text-based functionality is restricted by UI (user interface).

As technology changed, we outgrew the TBL language and moved to a graphical interface with Ensite Pro. Ensite Pro is a Windows server-based, graphical interface written in VB6 (Visual Basic commercial programming language). It includes an expanded feature set such as network access, third party devices, and other new technologies. However, Ensite Pro is still anchored by TBL. A TBL interpreter links applications to the operating system.

Architecture

Starting with Ensite Pro Version 7.11, we integrated a new programming platform. We incorporated Microsoft's latest SQL Server database architecture and the Microsoft .NET framework. The SQL database provides you with a true relational database and improved performance. Some of the advantages are:

- **Increased efficiency and reduced time-to-market of maintenance work & enhancements.** The .NET toolset allows us to create a framework of templates that can streamline development. The new code base lets us break away from writing redundant code for both graphical and text-based interfaces. ECI² can design and release the enhancements you want for your dealership more quickly than ever.

The Evolution to Ensite EBS

- **Revolutionized code scalability, portability, and integration.** This initiative gives us new relational database architecture, Windows services and industry-standard protocols. As a result, data access and manipulation is much more portable than with the original flat-file DBFs. You can export data for reports easily. It is easier to integrate with the systems of your vendors, customers, and partners. You can also deploy solutions that synchronize or connect directly with Web services and mobile handheld equipment.
- **Consistent, intuitive, user-friendly, task-oriented look-and-feel.** End-user task flow is more simplified. Order entry code, for example, is standardized and more easily scalable among supplies, furniture, machines, and other industries, with differences based on the needs of each industry. The new wizardlike interfaces walk users through each task with even better guidance than our standard tabbed applications do today.

Figure 1: The Customer Price Plan Window

The screenshot displays the 'Customer Price Plan' application window. The title bar reads 'Customer Price Plan' and includes standard window controls. Below the title bar is a menu bar with 'File', 'View', 'Databases', 'Options', and 'Help'. A toolbar contains 'Back', 'Save', and 'Print' icons. The main content area is titled 'Create a New Price Plan' and contains the following elements:

- Price Plan Tasks:** A list of actions including 'Create a New Price Plan', 'Edit an Existing Price Plan', 'Duplicate a Price Plan', 'Refigure Price Plans', 'Mass Add Items', 'Mass Substitute Items', 'Mass Delete Items', and 'Change dates'.
- Current Options:** A section for managing options.
- Form Fields:**
 - Instructions: 'Enter the global data fields for the new Price Plan.' and 'Enter a unique identifier for the new price plan. You can also assign a specific customer or customer group.'
 - Fields for 'Price plan:', 'Group:', and 'Account #:'.
 - 'Desc:' text field.
 - 'Start date:' and 'End:' date pickers.
 - 'Gross profit %:' and 'Discount %:' numeric input fields, both set to 0.00.
 - 'Cost to use:' dropdown menu (selected: 'Primary Wholesaler - W').
 - 'List to use:' dropdown menu (selected: 'Wholesaler Catalog - W').
 - 'Fixed price' checkbox.
 - Section: 'Select a specialty price plan or set options for non-specialty plans below.'
 - 'Specialty price plan:' dropdown menu (selected: '<none>').
 - Non-specialty Price Plan Options:** Includes 'Set cost:' and 'Set list:' dropdowns (both set to 'No - N'), and 'Matrix price' and 'Two decimal prices' checkboxes.
- Navigation:** 'Next >>' and 'Cancel' buttons.

You may have already seen some of this new framework. The new Customer Price Plan module, shown in Figure 1, is based on .NET and SQL framework. Its spreadsheet-style interface makes it easy to build, change, and assign customer contracts without ever leaving the application. You can also perform price plan modeling and what-if scenarios, and even export price plan data to Microsoft® Excel for additional analysis.

Benefits of New Technology

The DDMS system will be easier to enhance and maintain. Utilizing this new technology makes one major difference: standard coding practices.

Smart client architecture combines the advantages of thick and thin client designs. Currently, Ensite Pro uses thick client architecture; business logic in client application, processing occurs on both the server and client, and higher hardware and network requirements. Thin client architecture is for most hosted applications, little or no business logic in client application, processing occurs on the server, and low client hardware requirements.

Smart client architecture provides faster processing and server response because most processing occurs on the server. Hardware and network requirements for the client remain low. Smart client architecture eliminates manual updates of client software and hardware.

Strong data typing: In DBF, all data is stored as alphanumeric characters, whether it's a number, date, or text. With the new SQL architecture, we ensure that all values are stored as intended.

Code Reuse (Object Oriented Programming): Base functionality is common to several areas. For example, in order entry, you select a customer, add items to the order, price the item, and end the order. These functions only need to be written once, then reused for commercial order entry, furniture, serialized, etc., with specific changes for each.

The Future of Ensite Pro

We are looking into ways to distribute server workload across multiple machines. We are also searching for ways to run Ensite Pro on separate servers — dedicate individual servers to specific tasks or applications. Databases can be stored on separate servers. This reduces downtime for routine maintenance and hardware failures.

Also, we are researching the ability to run software as a Web application for remote locations — using a standard TCP/IP Internet connection with no Terminal Server or Citrix required. This may significantly lower costs for remote locations.

The Evolution to Ensite EBS

TBL will be removed from the system. All databases will be converted to SQL, .NET, smart-client, etc.

As we mentioned earlier, you've already seen the new Customer Price Plan module and perhaps Bank Reconciliation. Our next projects include: reporting, project management, and price modeling. This new pricing logic becomes a shared resource for order entry, allowing O/E to be faster and eventually converted to the new architecture.

TBL Interpreter links VB applications with remaining TBL applications business logic.



