

ETU-Term - File Exchange Interface.

Introduction:

ACK have developed a high-level interface to the established ACK core Electronic Top Up (ETU) software that handles all types of ETU and e-voucher transactions.

This new interface is called ETU-Term and is designed to satisfy two principle objectives:

- 1) to simplify the interface between an EPOS application and the ACK software, and
- 2) to greatly simplify the approval by controlling all operator prompts, process sequencing and print data formats.

By meeting both of these objectives, the cost and time taken to add ETU capabilities to existing EPOS systems is dramatically reduced and allows EPOS systems to be upgraded or deployed in a very short timeframe.

Overview:

ETU-Term is, in effect, a PC based version of an ETU standalone terminal: It will allow the user to select payment plans and other available products and seek activation of these with Alphyra, e-pay and Paypoint. It utilises a simple file exchange interface to the EPOS application which is used to initiate a session and supply confirmation of the transaction back to the EPOS.

These advantages include:

- Elimination of keying errors,
- Elimination of reconciliation errors,
- Reduced exposure to fraud,
- Increased efficiency.

Current transaction types supported are:

- Electronic Top Up,
- e-voucher (top-up, text news, ring tones etc.)
- Reversals,

ETU cards may be swiped or PAN Key Entered.

Method of operation:

The process is divided into three stages:

- i) the first stage is to gather the information regarding the transaction (payment plan, product types etc.), which is an off-line function of ETU-Term.
- ii) the second stage is for the payment to be secured (the phone network companies insist that payment must be made in full before the top-up or product is authorised). Payment can be cash, cheque or credit card and must be processed through the EPOS system.
- iii) the third stage is for the top-up or product to be authorised on-line by ETU-Term.

For the first stage the EPOS application must first launch the ETU-Term program which will present the till operator with a simple user interface (see below) that displays the available payment plans and products. The operator must follow the on-screen prompts to select the desired products and press the enter button to proceed.

At this point, the ETU-Term application will terminate and write an output file which the EPOS application must read to determine the total value of the top-up or product purchase. The EPOS application must then prompt the operator to ask for payment which may be added to an existing basket total, or handled entirely separately.

Once payment is complete, the EPOS application must write a confirmation file containing the top-up or products before re-launching ETU-Term. ETU-Term will then initiate a link to the appropriate host system to activate the top-up or product. The transaction is complete once a successful acknowledgement has been received at which point ETU-Term will generate the customer receipt file which will include full instructions for applying any e-voucher product.

Notes:

The ETU-Term application presents the till operator with instructions and status information during the course of the on-line session, including dial-attempts and whether the transaction was authorised or declined.

Following completion of the authorisation process, ETU-Term will write the results to an output file, along with receipt data, before terminating and returning control to the EPOS application.

The EPOS application reads the results in the output file and will complete the transaction by printing the receipt data.

ETU-TERM

Sample Screen Shot

The screenshot shows a software interface titled "ACK Limited - ACKTerm - Sale". At the top, it displays "Sale" and "Amount: £ 0.00". Below this is a section labeled "Action and Progress:" containing a text box with the prompt "Please select network". To the right of this text box are two buttons: "Enter" and "Void". Below the "Action and Progress:" section is a "Status:" label followed by an empty text box. At the bottom, there is a "Networks" section with a grid of buttons for selecting a network: Vodafone, O2, Orange, Virgin Mobile, T-Mobile, Tesco Mobile, 3, and Others...

Technical details:

ETU-Term is a full 32bit application and can be installed and run under Windows 98, Win NT, Win2000 and Windows XP operating systems.

The EPOS application can be a DOS or Windows application - the only prerequisites are that it can write the input file in the correct format, launch ETU-Term, read the output file and print the receipt.