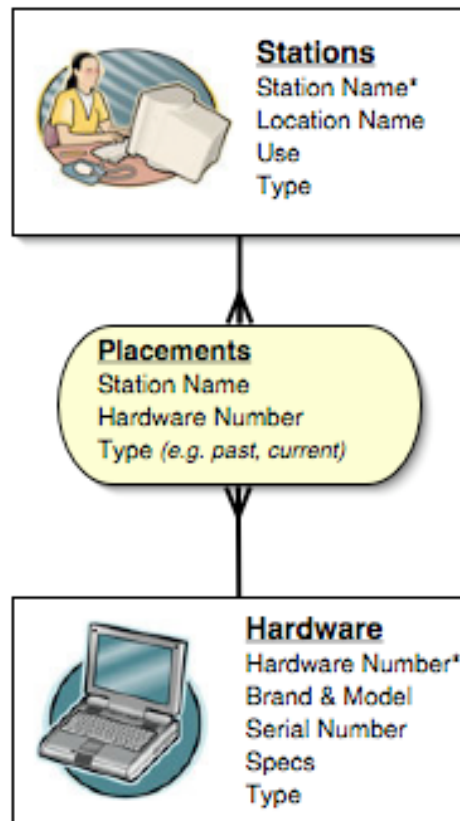


Hansen's TEC-BASE 2 Overview

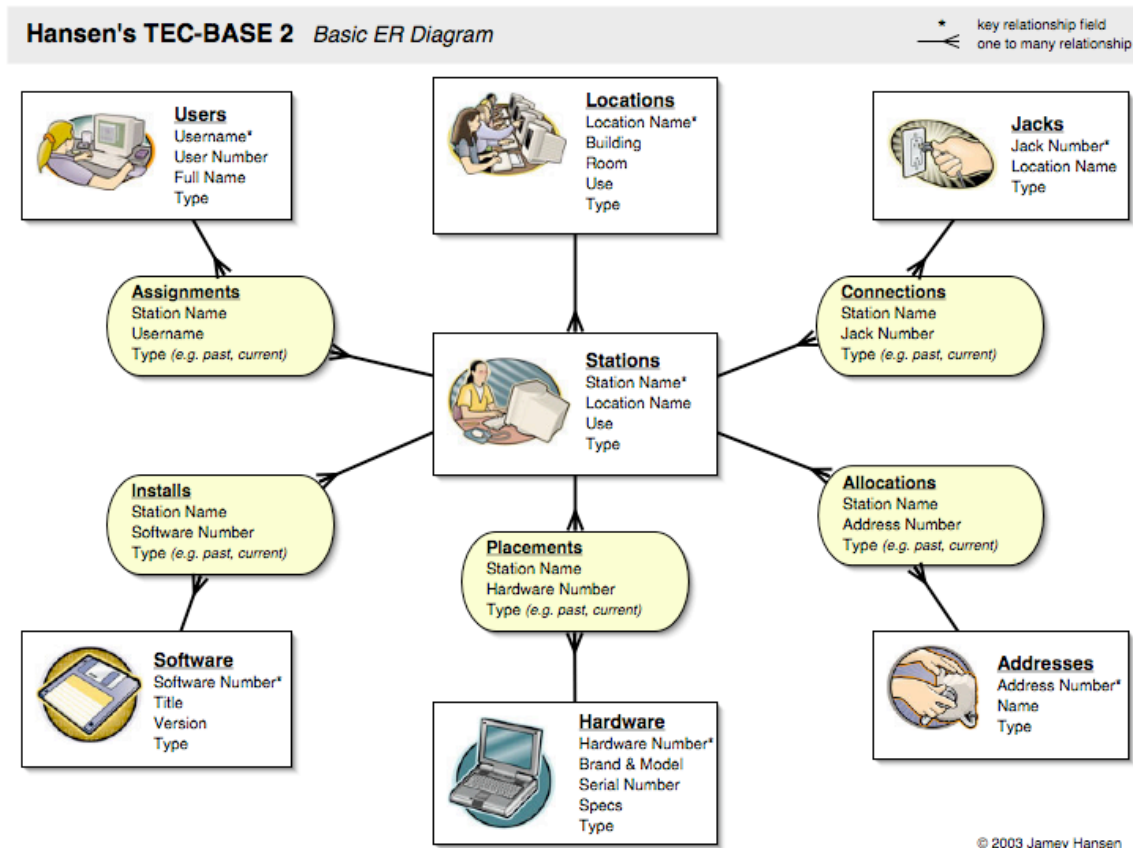
The basic organizational concept of TEC-BASE is both its most versatile feature and, likely, its most confusing. All inventory information from hardware equipment and software licenses to IP addresses and data jacks is tied to a “station.” TEC-BASE has a data table for Hardware, one for Stations, and another *intersection* table for “Placements” (see diagram 1.1).

Diagram 1.1



There is a similar relationship for software, addresses, users, and jacks (data drops). It may be a good idea to read up on relational databases to better understand how TEC-BASE works; it's a good thing to know regardless if you use TEC-BASE or not (see diagram 1.2).

Diagram 1.2



The easiest way to think of stations is to think of a computer lab—each computer referred to by a station number. TEC-BASE requires that every computer be “placed” in a station. All peripherals (*tagged* peripherals, that is) connected to a computer are placed in the same station. For instance, if a station is called “HS-Lab-12,” the computer, the monitor, and possibly a scanner are all placed in HS-Lab-12.

Likewise, all software licenses in use on that computer are also related to that station. TEC-BASE uses the term “installed” to refer to the relationship between Station and Software. If the computer uses a static IP address, then an address is “allocated” to that station. The same goes for data jacks (they are “connected”) and users (who are “assigned”). Just about everything in TEC-BASE is related to the station record.

Benefits of a Station Record

Changes occur often in technology and schools. Computers are moved around the school. Hardware items break and need to be replaced (either temporarily or permanently). Software gets installed, uninstalled, and reinstalled more often than technology coordinators would like. Keeping track of these changes is almost impossible—especially if all your records are tied only to a specific computer. When it is replaced or moved, you

have to reassign your software (unless you're lucky enough to have the same image for all of your machines), you have to update your users and your IP addresses, your data jacks and your location information. When that computer is put back into service, it might not serve the same type of user—this can cause problems on your state and district reports.

None of this is true when you base your inventory information on stations. If you move a computer, update what station it is placed in and all the other data is unaffected. All your technicians have to do is update one piece of information—something TEC-BASE helps them do without compromising data integrity. At any time, they can look up a specific station record and determine what IP address it should get, what software titles need to be installed, and which user needs to have access.

Planning tool

TEC-BASE is more than just an asset management tool; it is also a planning and reporting tool. The information you enter about the stations can help you get a better picture of your district's technology needs. You can plan out stations in advance and determine which stations need better equipment next year.

TEC-BASE helps you create reports for budget planning, for annual state reporting, and for organizing your support staff. You can print reports based on building, room, station, or user. If you want to know how many B-rated inkjet printers you have in elementary offices that use a specific ink cartridge, TEC-BASE can help you.

Work orders

Supporting technology in a school environment gets more difficult every year. When your backlog of requests gets longer, communication with your users becomes a burden and a source of new problems. TEC-BASE includes a Web-based work order system that helps your support staff and your users communicate more effectively. It is tied to your inventory data, so you can track the history of any single hardware item (or even a user). The work order can also tell your technician whether the item is under warranty and, in some cases, connect the tech directly to the vendors support Web site for drivers and manuals.

Work orders can be automatically assigned to your technicians based on room, individual station, or even specific hardware item. Your staff can transfer tasks to other techs, and other technology leaders in the schools (e.g. computer teachers and principals) can chime in with updates and priority information of their own.

All of this information is accessible and updateable from the Web-based interface. There are two basic homepages for TEC-BASE: one for users and another password-protected page for leaders and technicians.

Customization

TEC-BASE 2 was designed to be useful and adaptable to almost any district or business. Some customization occurs within the FileMaker Pro database files and some through HTML files. All customizable HTML files are found in the “Custom” folder. However, someone with decent HTML skills should make changes.

TEC-BASE 2 doesn’t work by itself. It requires a thorough understanding of how the information is stored and clear plan of how it will be used. If your district does not yet track much of this information, then implementing TEC-BASE is likely to significantly change how your department operates. This process is complicated and time-consuming but rewarding and will lead to improvements in efficiency and effectiveness.

Two Interfaces

Tec-Base has two interfaces: one for you and your administrative staff directly with FileMaker Pro and another for your users, your support staff, and your technology leaders through the Web.

In FileMaker Pro, you can directly manipulate all the data. You can run reports, do searches, and make sweeping changes. You can do just about anything you want to the files except change field definitions (for that you need the master password from me). Obviously, you want very few people to have this type of access.

Through the Web, your users can submit work orders, your staff can track and update those work orders, your staff can update inventory data as they make changes in the schools, and your leaders can search for just about any of this information on-demand.

Manual

Writing a manual for TEC-BASE will be difficult. I use TEC-BASE to help me run my department. How I have decided to use it has been influenced by my particular situation. Please refer to the Hansen Solutions Website (<http://www.hansensolutions.com>) for additional help.

I hope TEC-BASE is helpful to you and your department. Your feedback will be helpful to me as I continue to make improvements.