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(54) **ADJUSTABLE ELECTRONIC GAME PIECE**

(52) **U.S. Cl. 273/238**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

(21) **Appl. No.: 13/204,581**

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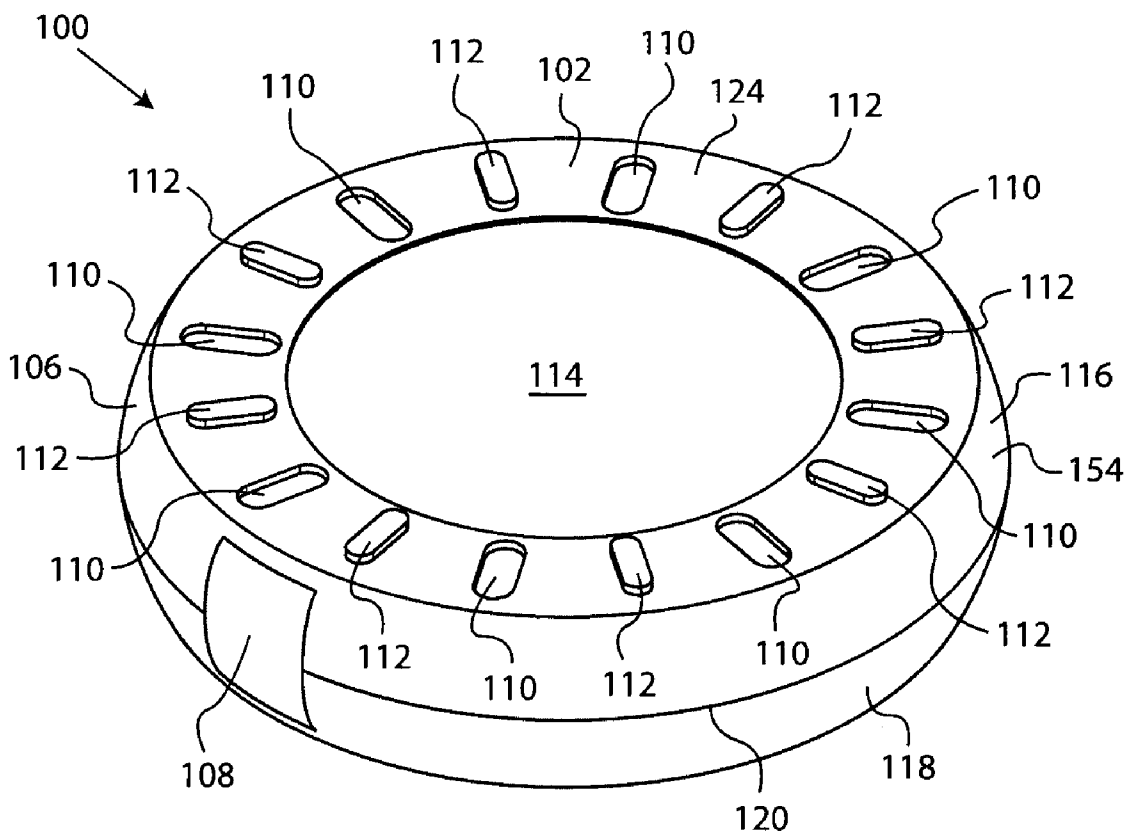
An electronic game piece is illustrated and described. The electronic game piece can include a light, a proximity sensor, and a proximity-sensor target. Activation of the proximity sensor can cause the light to illuminate. The electronic game piece can be configured to light up when arranged with other electronic game pieces. The proximity sensor, for example, can be configured to be activated by a proximity-sensor target substantially identical to the proximity-sensor target of the electronic game piece, but separate from the electronic game piece. In some versions of the electronic game piece illustrated and described, the proximity-sensor target is magnetic and the proximity sensor can be activated by a magnetic field. Separate electronic game pieces can be capable of interlocking, such as interlocking when a top major surface of one electronic game piece is adjacent to a bottom major surface of another electronic game piece.

Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation-in-part of application No. 12/851,153, filed on Aug. 5, 2010.

Publication Classification

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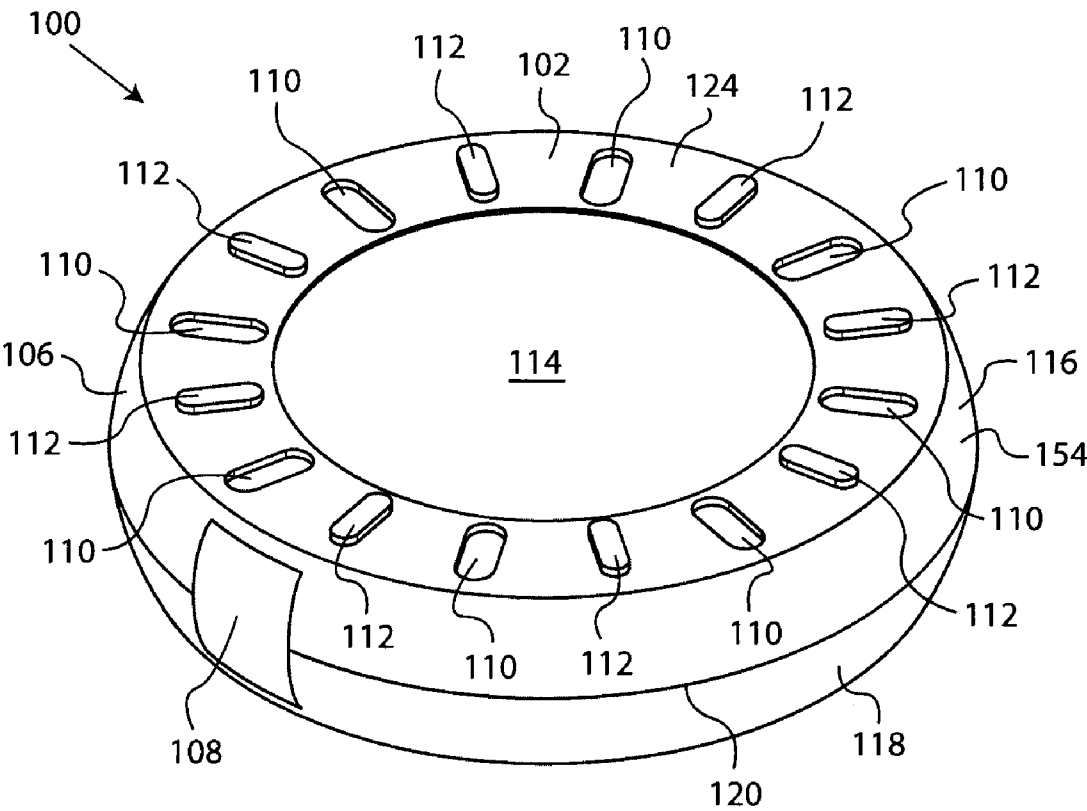


FIG. 1

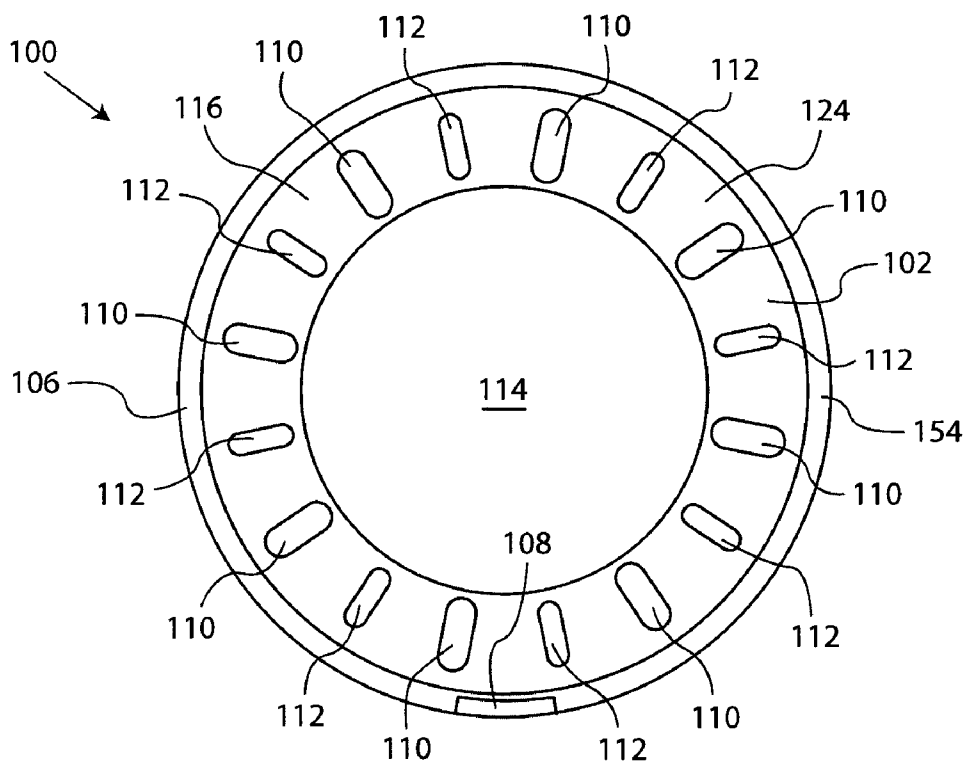


FIG. 2

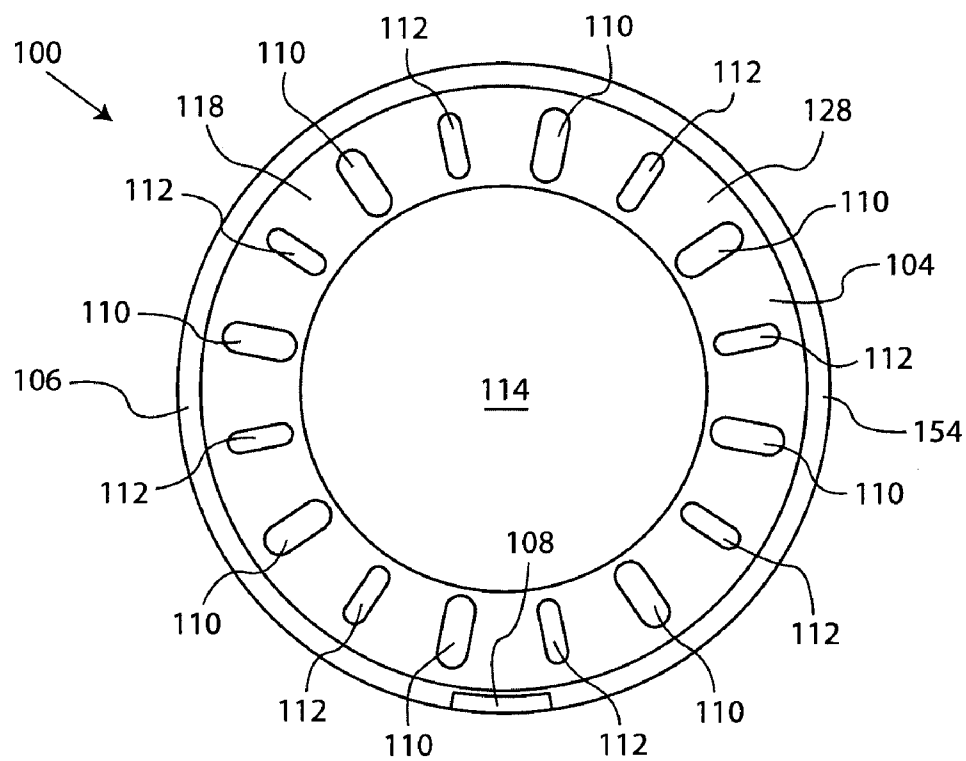


FIG. 3

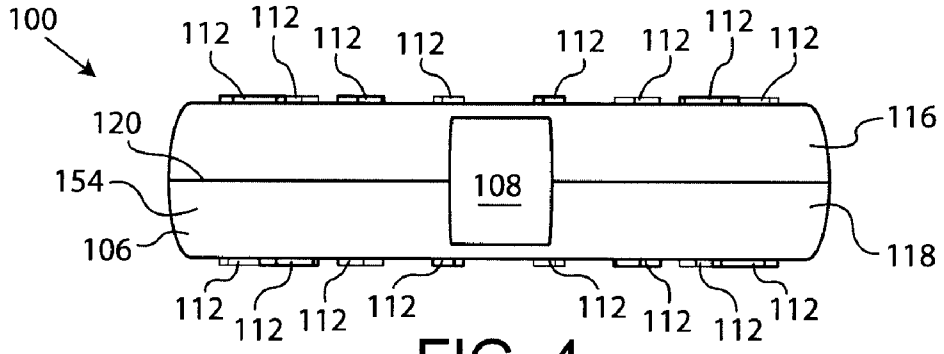


FIG. 4

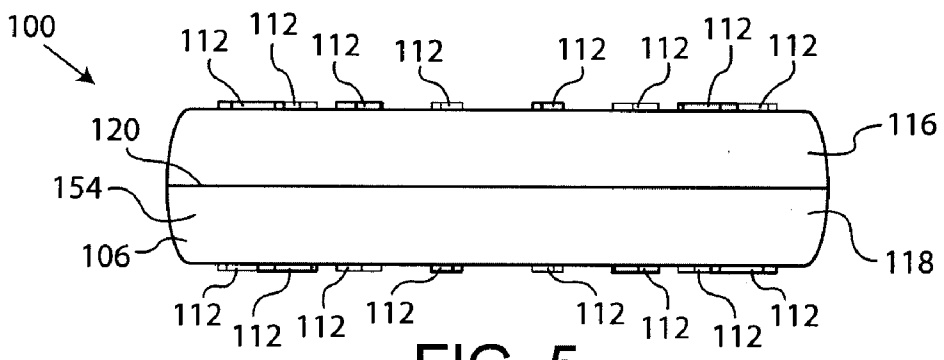


FIG. 5

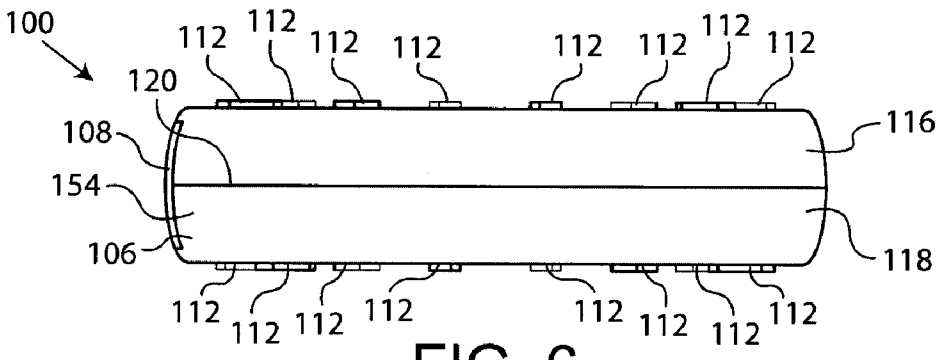


FIG. 6

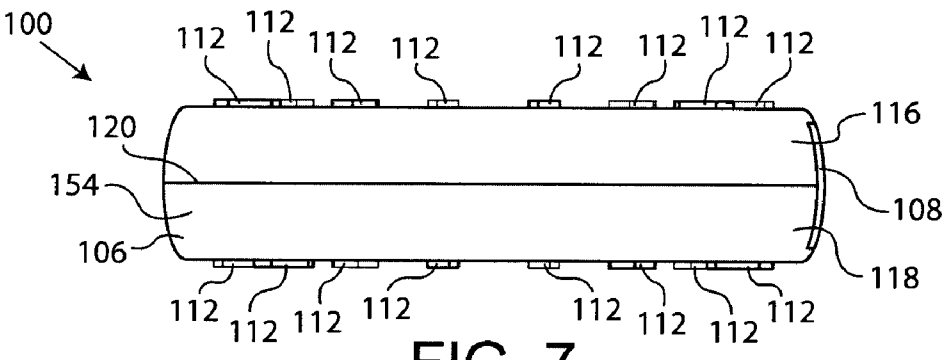


FIG. 7

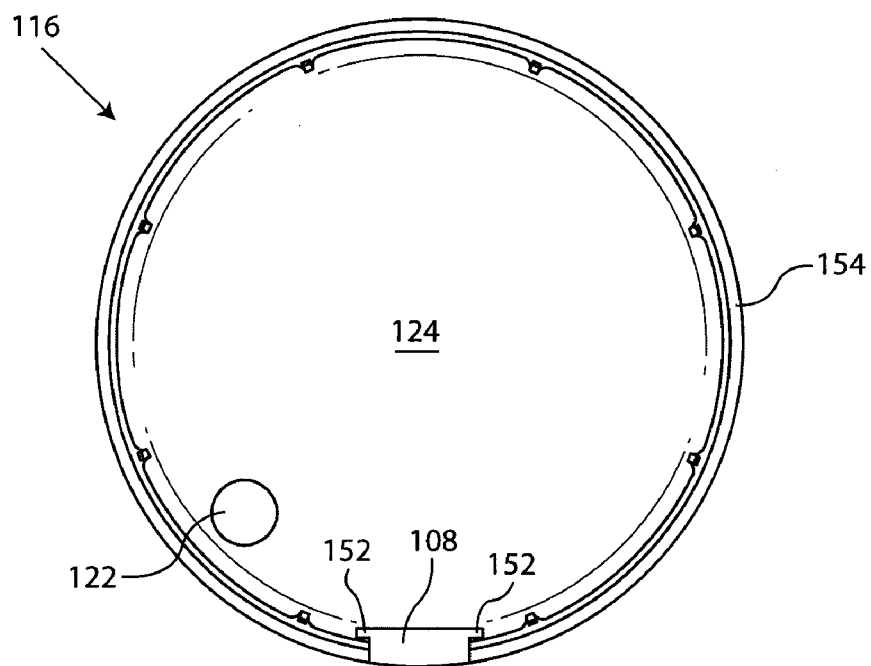


FIG. 8A

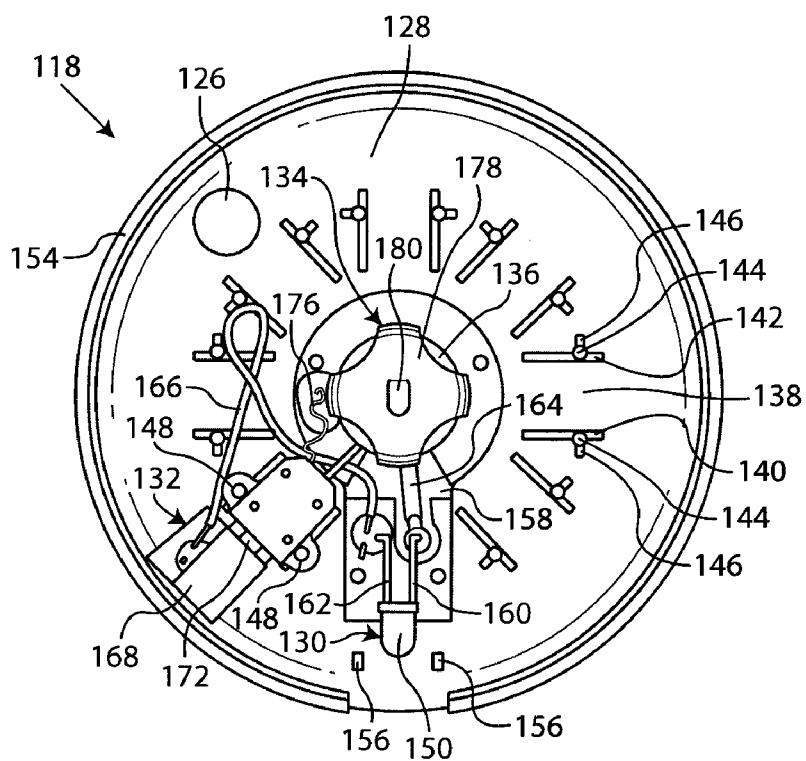


FIG. 8B

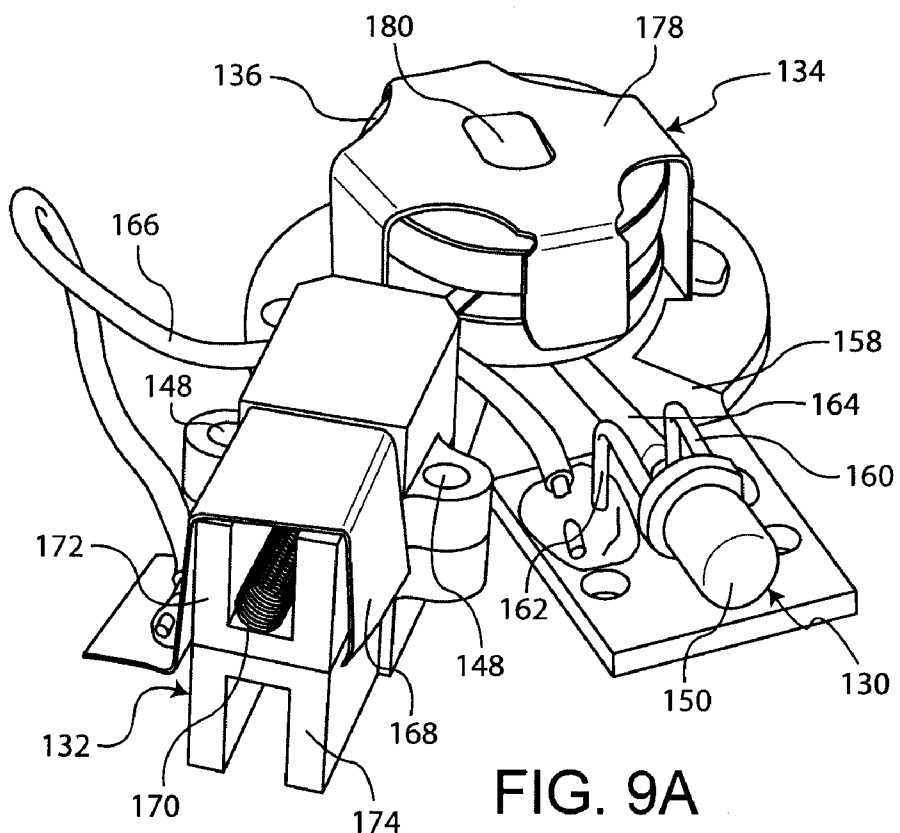


FIG. 9A

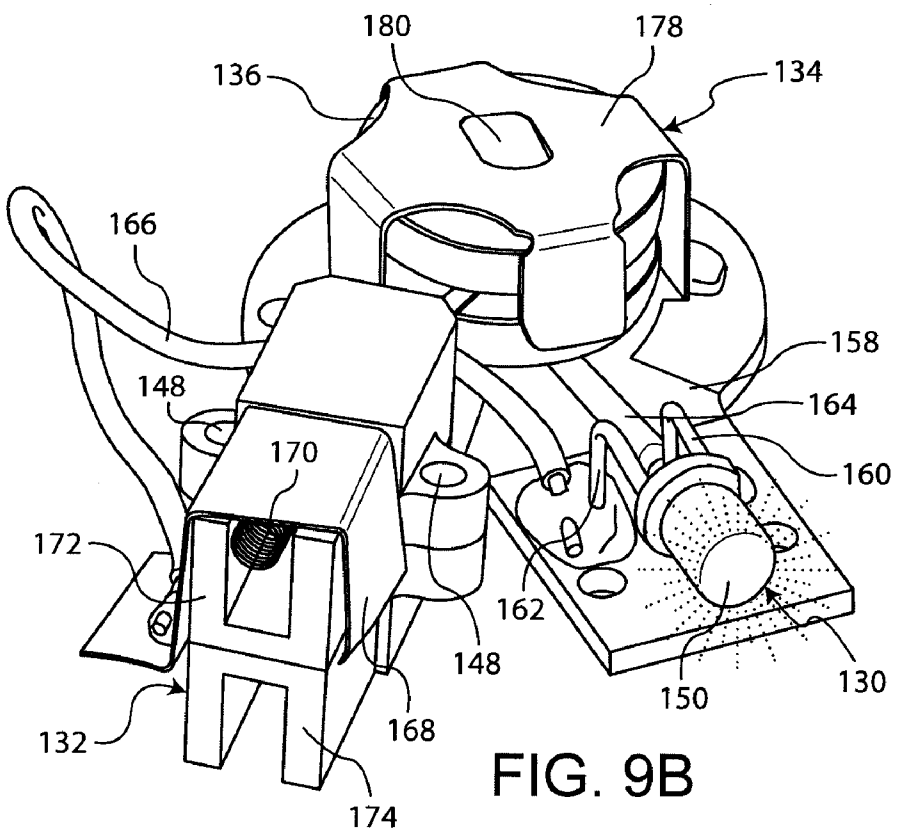


FIG. 9B

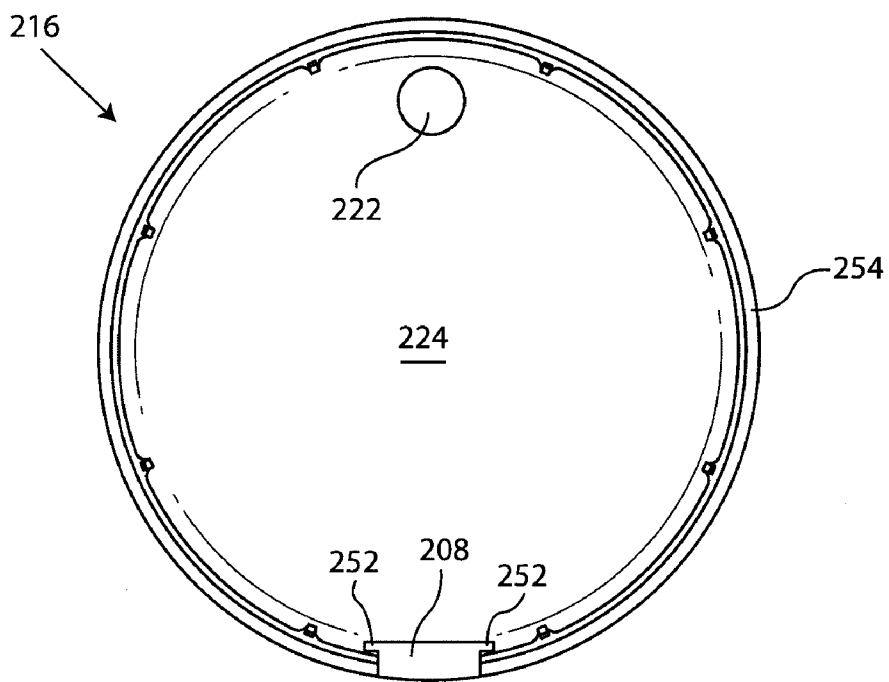


FIG. 10A

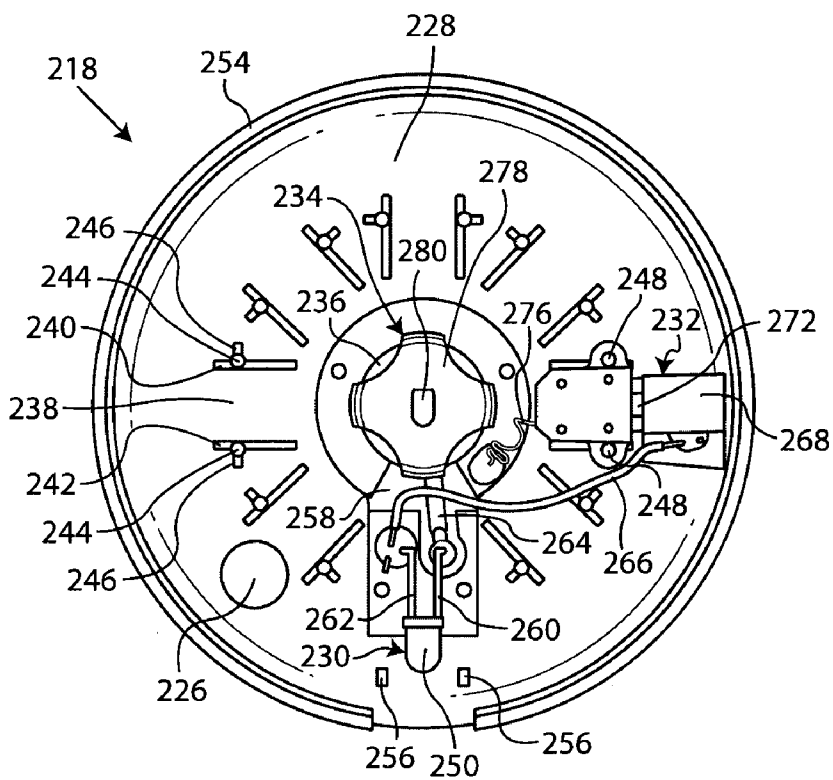


FIG. 10B

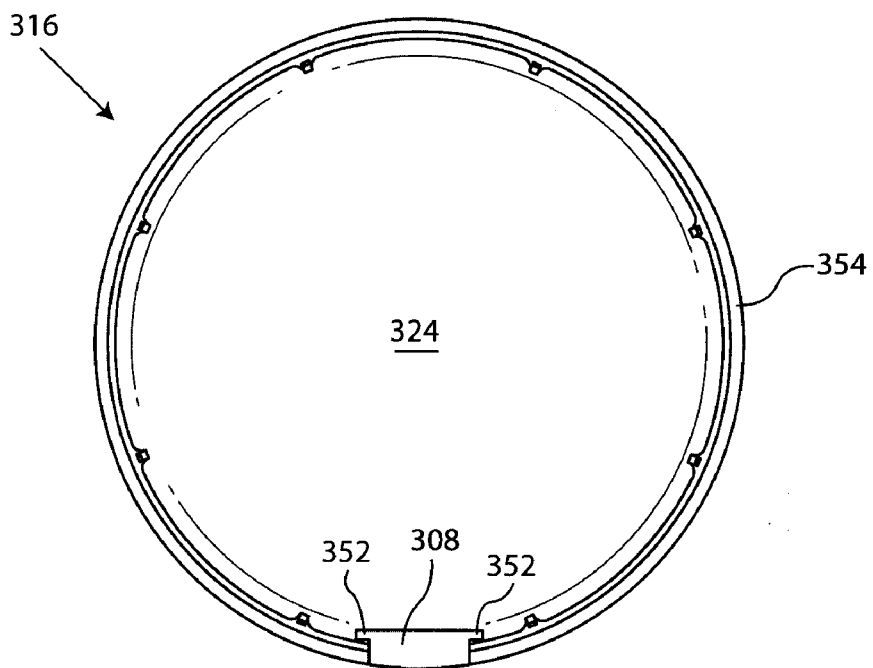


FIG. 11A

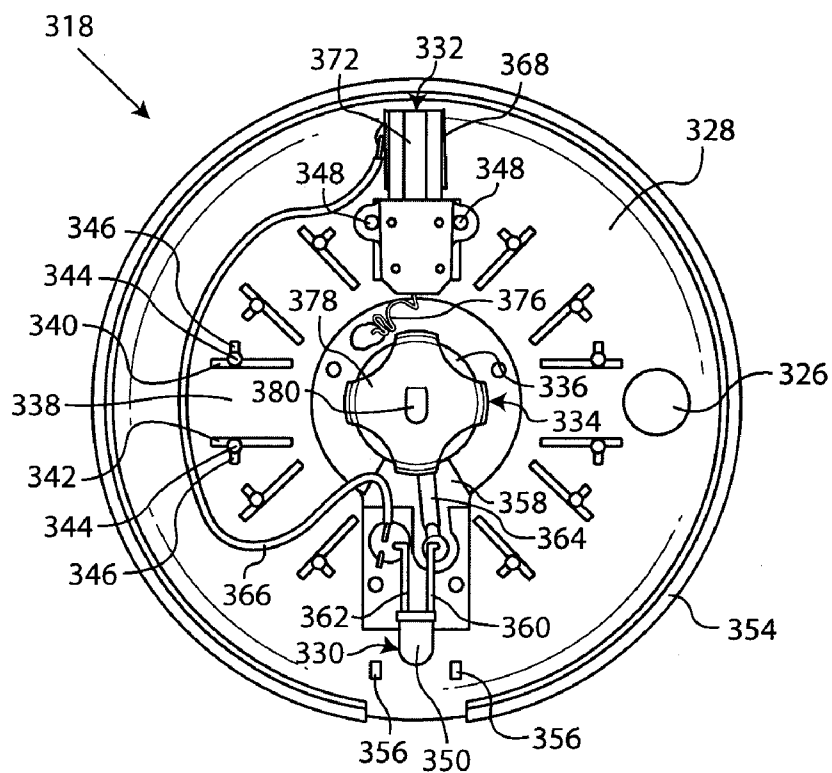


FIG. 11B

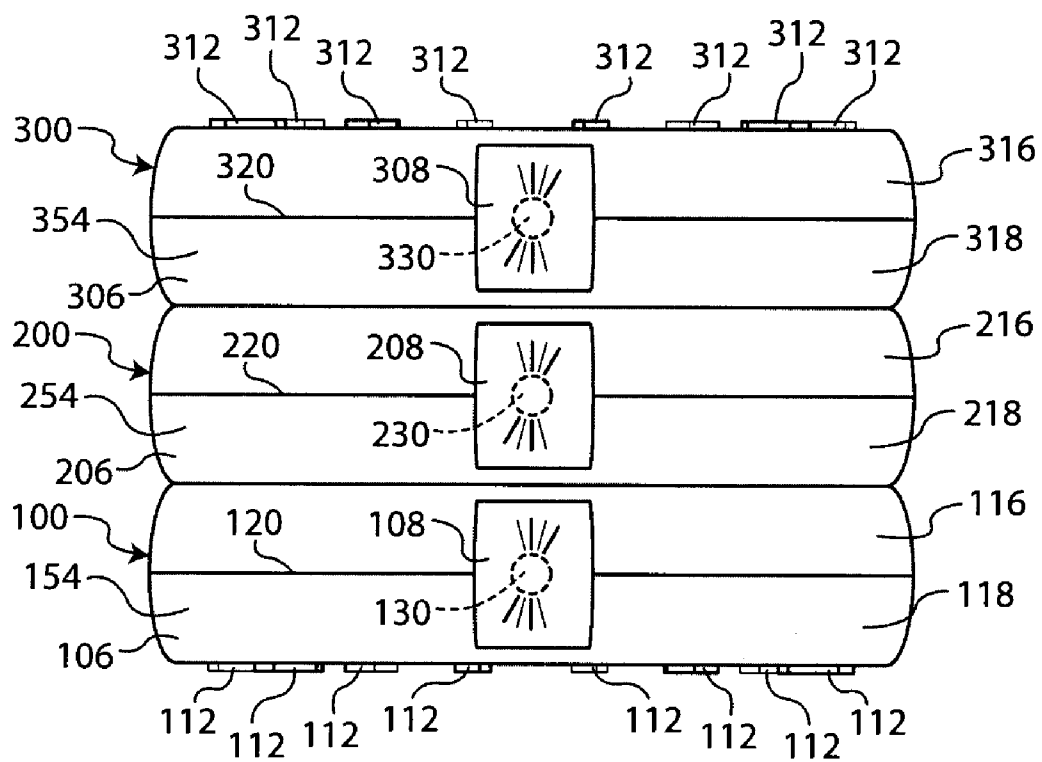


FIG. 12

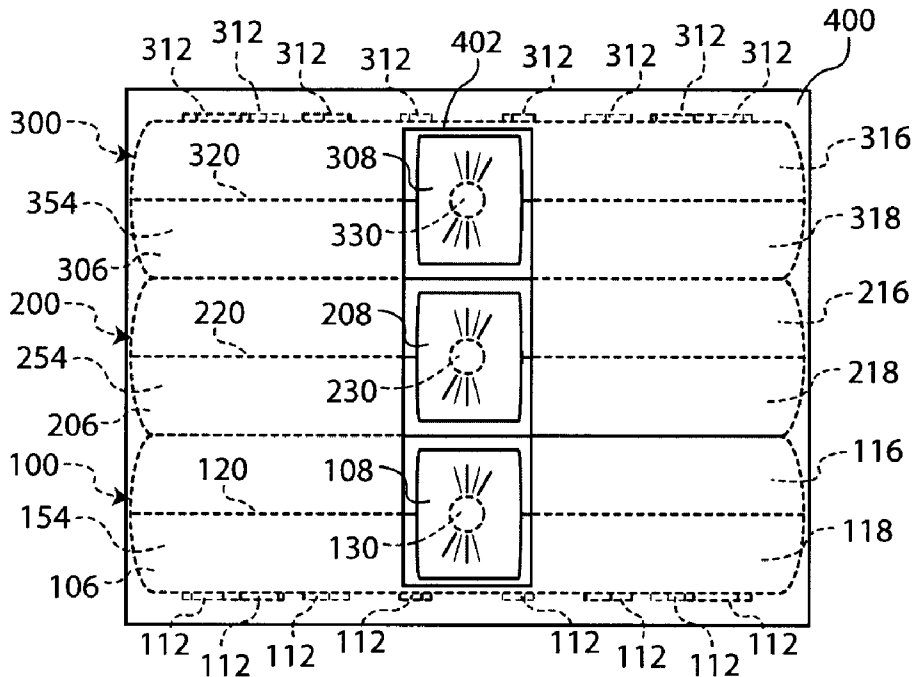


FIG. 13

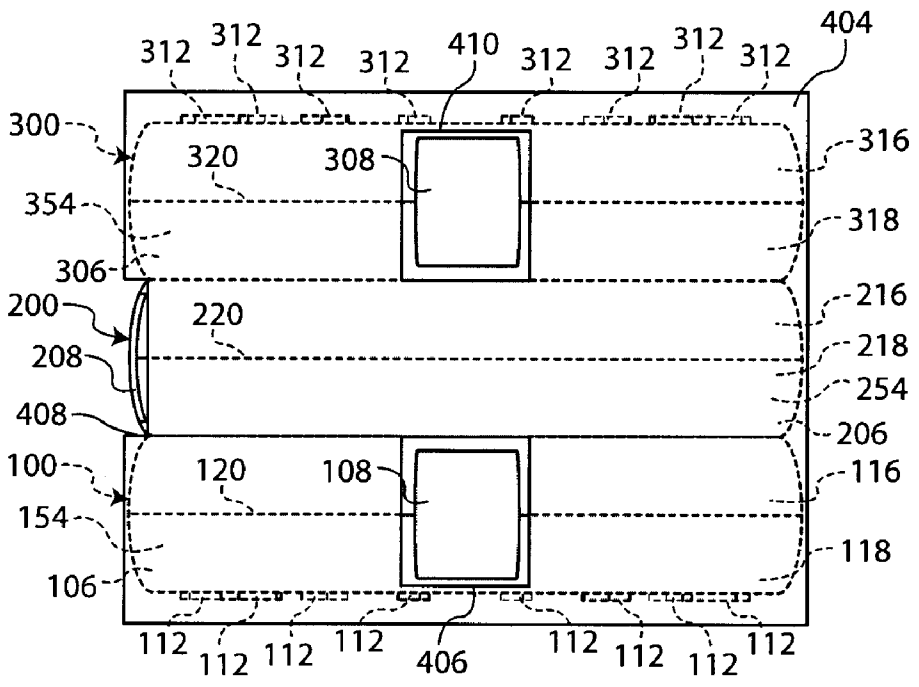


FIG. 14

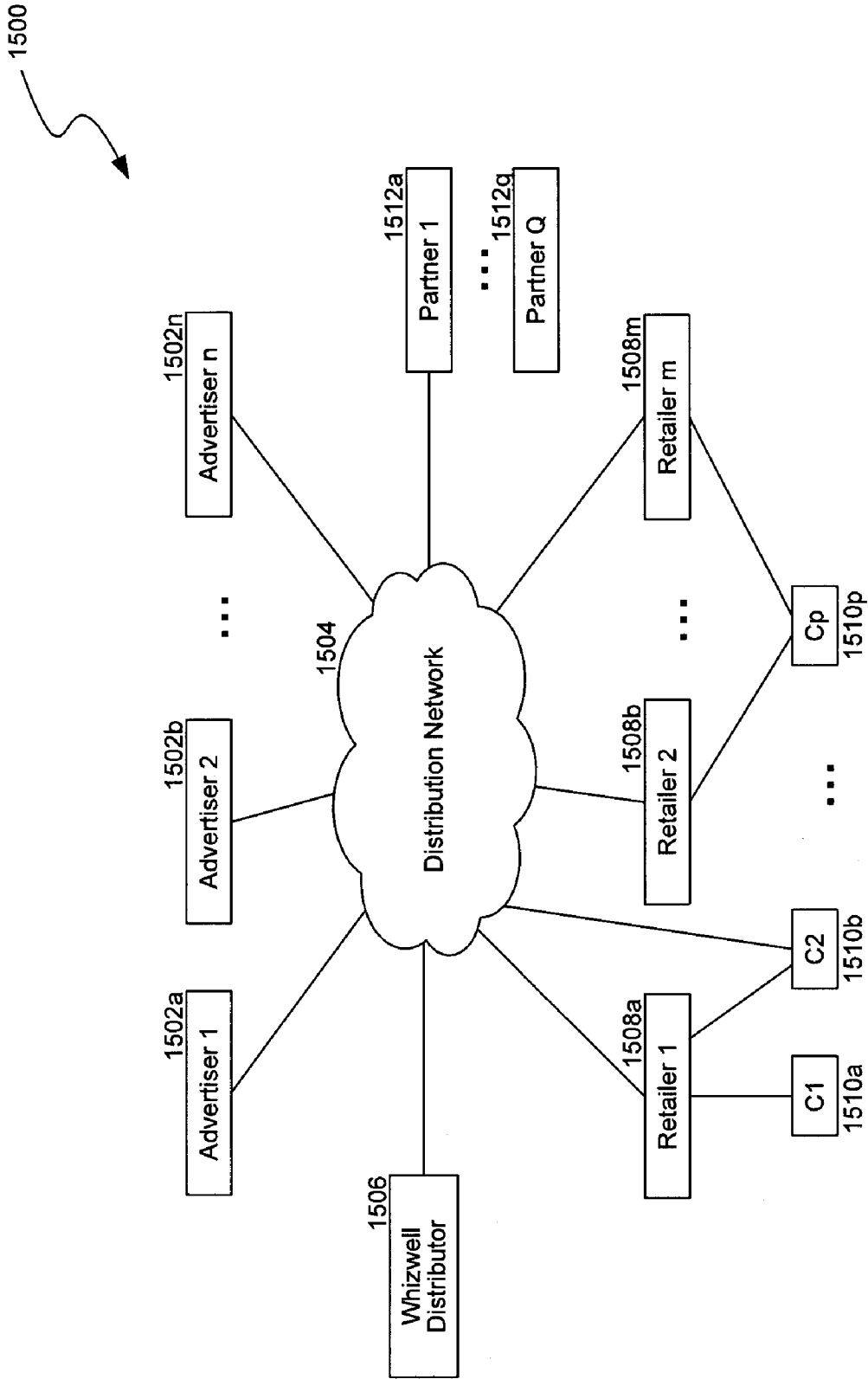


FIG. 15

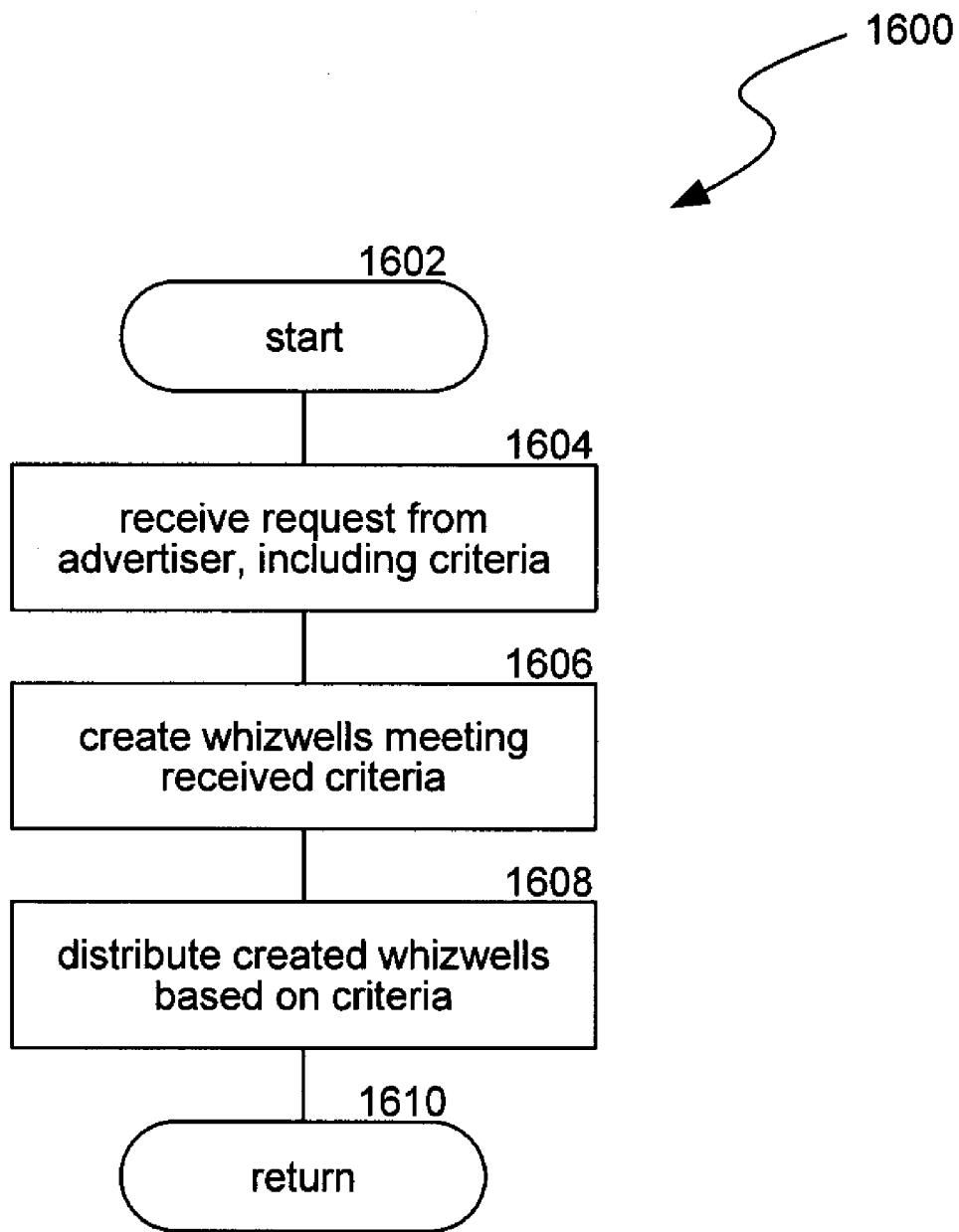


FIG. 16

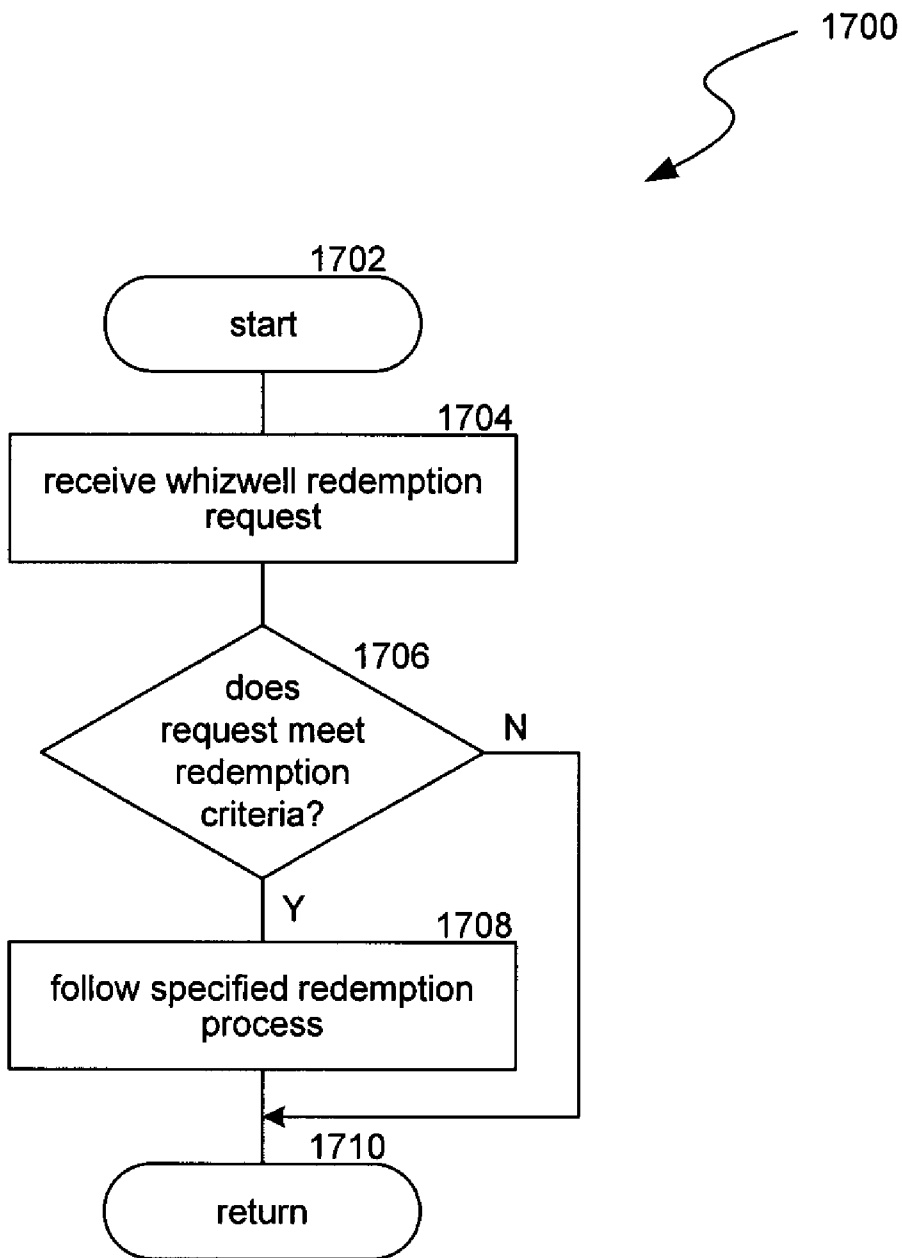


FIG. 17

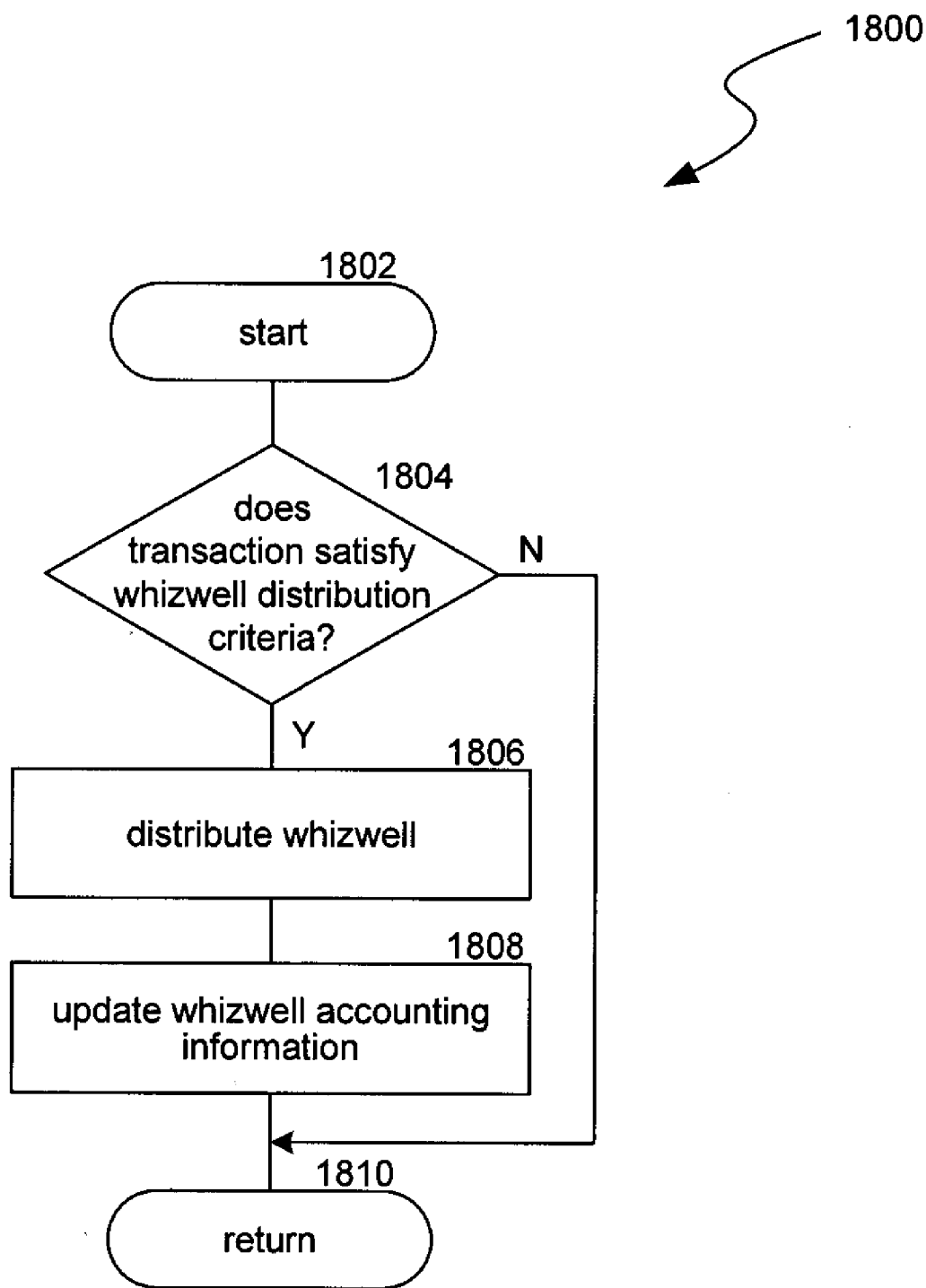


FIG. 18

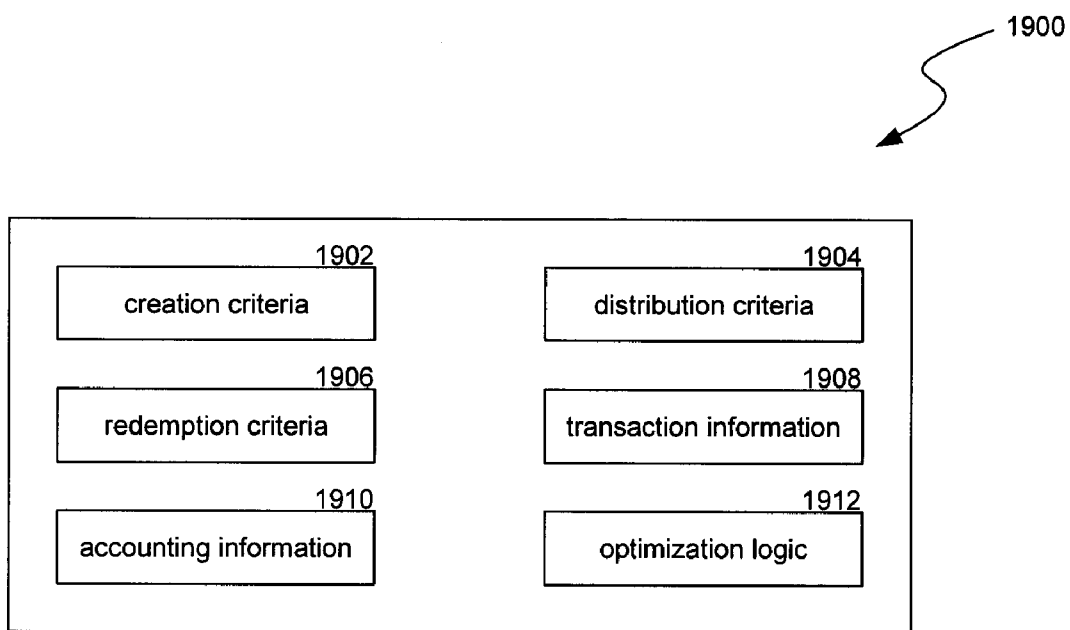


FIG. 19

ADJUSTABLE ELECTRONIC GAME PIECE

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a continuation-in-part of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 12/851,153, filed Aug. 5, 2010, titled "ELECTRONIC GAME PIECE," and a continuation of Attorney Docket No. 77824.WO00, titled "ADJUSTABLE ELECTRONIC GAME PIECE," filed Aug. 5, 2011, both of which are incorporated in their entirety by reference.

BACKGROUND

[0002] Sweepstakes, games, and puzzles often involve the use of individual, interrelated pieces. For example, in some sweepstakes, individual game pieces are distributed and used in conjunction with a game board. Participants in the sweepstakes collect the individual game pieces with the goal of forming a set, such as a set corresponding to indicia on the game board. In puzzles used primarily for amusement, individual pieces often are arranged relative to one another in order to solve the puzzle. In a simple example, solving a traditional jigsaw puzzle involves arranging differently shaped puzzle pieces until they fit together to form an image. There is a demand for new types of sweepstakes, games, and puzzles to engage increasingly sophisticated consumers. Innovative game pieces can be useful in these and other contexts.

SUMMARY

[0003] Disclosed herein are embodiments of an electronic game piece. Some embodiments of the disclosed electronic game piece include a light, a proximity sensor, and a proximity-sensor target. Activation of the proximity sensor can cause the light to illuminate. For example, the proximity sensor can be a switch positioned in a circuit between the light and a battery. The electronic game piece can be configured to light up when arranged with other electronic game pieces. The proximity sensor, for example, can be configured to be activated by a proximity-sensor target substantially identical to the proximity-sensor target of the electronic game piece, but separate from the electronic game piece. In some embodiments of the disclosed electronic game piece, the proximity-sensor target is magnetic and the proximity sensor can be activated by a magnetic field.

[0004] The light, the proximity sensor, and the proximity-sensor target can be positioned within an internal portion of the electronic game piece, such as an internal portion that cannot be accessed without breaking the electronic game piece. In some embodiments of the disclosed electronic game piece, the proximity sensor or the proximity-sensor target is positioned substantially adjacent to an internal surface of a top wall, the opposite side of which is a top major surface of the electronic game piece. In these embodiments, the other of the proximity-sensor or the proximity-sensor target can be positioned substantially adjacent to an internal surface of a bottom wall, the opposite side of which is a bottom major surface of the electronic game piece. In embodiments having top and bottom major surfaces, the top and bottom major surfaces can have perimeters of substantially the same shape (e.g., substantially circular or substantially shaped as polygons having three or more sides of substantially the same length).

[0005] When illuminated, the light in some embodiments of the disclosed electronic game piece is visible on a portion of a side surface extending between the top and bottom major surfaces of the electronic game piece. The light, the proximity sensor, and the proximity-sensor target can be positioned within the electronic game piece at three different radial positions, all of which are closer to the side surface than to a center axis substantially centered on and perpendicular to the top and bottom major surfaces of the electronic game piece. A substantially circular pattern of alternating recesses and protrusions can be included on the top and bottom major surfaces of the electronic game piece. These alternating recesses and protrusions can, for example, be used to facilitate physical interlocking between the electronic game piece and separate electronic game pieces.

[0006] Also disclosed are embodiments of a set of electronic game pieces. Embodiments of the disclosed set of electronic game pieces can include first and second electronic game pieces, such as first and second electronic game pieces having substantially the same overall shape. Each of the first and second electronic game pieces can include a light, a proximity sensor, and a proximity-sensor target. The first and second electronic game pieces can be configured so that at a certain relative position, the proximity-sensor target of the first electronic game piece activates the proximity sensor of the second electronic game piece causing the light of the second electronic game piece to illuminate. Similarly, the first and second electronic game pieces can be configured so that at a certain relative position, the proximity-sensor target of the first electronic game piece activates the proximity sensor of the second electronic game piece causing the light of the second electronic game piece to illuminate and, simultaneously, the proximity-sensor target of the second electronic game piece activates the proximity sensor of the first electronic game piece causing the light of the first electronic game piece to illuminate. In some embodiments of the disclosed set of electronic game pieces, the proximity-sensor target of the first electronic game piece only activates the proximity sensor of the second electronic game piece when the proximity-sensor target of the first electronic game piece is substantially aligned with the proximity sensor of the second electronic game piece.

[0007] When positioned such that the proximity-sensor target of the first electronic game piece activates the proximity sensor of the second electronic game piece, a top major surface of the first electronic game piece can be adjacent to and interlocking with a bottom major surface of the second electronic game piece. In a different configuration, the top major surface of the first electronic game piece can be adjacent to and not interlocking with the bottom major surface of the second electronic game piece. When positioned such that the proximity-sensor target of the first electronic game piece activates the proximity sensor of the second electronic game piece, side surfaces of the first and second electronic game pieces can be substantially aligned with each other. When stacked with the top major surface of the first electronic game piece adjacent to the bottom major surface of the second electronic game piece, the side surfaces of the first and second electronic game pieces can be exposed. The lights of the first and second electronic game pieces, when illuminated, can be visible on portions of the side surfaces.

[0008] Also disclosed are embodiments of a method of using electronic game pieces. The method can include arranging three or more electronic game pieces in a first stacked

arrangement and observing whether lights on the electronic game pieces are simultaneously illuminated when the electronic game pieces are positioned in the first stacked arrangement. Simultaneous illumination of the lights on the electronic game pieces can represent a winning arrangement. If the lights on the electronic game pieces are not simultaneously illuminated when the electronic game pieces are positioned in the first stacked arrangement, the method also can include arranging the electronic game pieces in a second stacked arrangement different than the first stacked arrangement and observing whether lights on the electronic game pieces are simultaneously illuminated when the electronic game pieces are positioned in the second stacked arrangement.

[0009] Arranging the electronic game pieces in the first stacked arrangement can include positioning the electronic game pieces such that a top major surface of a first of the electronic game pieces is adjacent to a bottom major surface of a second of the electronic game pieces and a top major surface of the second electronic game piece is adjacent to a bottom major surface of a third of the electronic game pieces. Side surfaces of the electronic game pieces can be exposed in the first stacked arrangement. In addition, the lights on the electronic game pieces can be substantially aligned on portions of the side surfaces of the electronic game pieces in the first stacked arrangement. Arranging the electronic game pieces in the first stacked arrangement also can include physically interlocking a top major surface of a first of the electronic game pieces with a bottom major surface of a second of the electronic game pieces and a top major surface of the second electronic game piece with a bottom major surface of a third of the electronic game pieces.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0010] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a first embodiment of the disclosed electronic game piece, as viewed from the top and one side.

[0011] FIG. 2 is a top plan view of the electronic game piece embodiment shown in FIG. 1.

[0012] FIG. 3 is a bottom plan view of the electronic game piece embodiment shown in FIG. 1.

[0013] FIG. 4 is a front profile view of the electronic game piece embodiment shown in FIG. 1.

[0014] FIG. 5 is a back profile view of the electronic game piece embodiment shown in FIG. 1.

[0015] FIG. 6 is a first side profile view of the electronic game piece embodiment shown in FIG. 1.

[0016] FIG. 7 is a second side profile view of the electronic game piece embodiment shown in FIG. 1.

[0017] FIG. 8A is a top plan view of the inside of the top portion of the electronic game piece embodiment shown in FIG. 1.

[0018] FIG. 8B is a top plan view of the inside of the bottom portion of the electronic game piece embodiment shown in FIG. 1.

[0019] FIG. 9A is a perspective view of a light, a proximity sensor, batteries, and associated electrical connections of the electronic game piece embodiment shown in FIG. 1 with the proximity sensor not activated and the light off, as viewed from the top and one side.

[0020] FIG. 9B is a perspective view of a light, a proximity sensor, batteries, and associated electrical connections of the

electronic game piece embodiment shown in FIG. 1 with the proximity sensor activated and the light on, as viewed from the top and one side.

[0021] FIG. 10A is a top plan view of the inside of the top portion of a second embodiment of the disclosed electronic game piece.

[0022] FIG. 10B is a top plan view of the inside of the bottom portion of the electronic game piece embodiment shown in FIG. 10A.

[0023] FIG. 11A is a top plan view of the inside of the top portion of a third embodiment of the disclosed electronic game piece.

[0024] FIG. 11B is a top plan view of the inside of the bottom portion of the electronic game piece embodiment shown in FIG. 11A.

[0025] FIG. 12 is a front profile view of the electronic game piece embodiment shown in FIG. 1-9B, the electronic game piece embodiment shown in FIGS. 10A-10B, and the electronic game piece embodiment shown in FIGS. 11A-11B stacked such that the lights of all three electronic game piece embodiments are aligned and illuminated.

[0026] FIG. 13 is a front profile view of the electronic game piece embodiment shown in FIG. 1-9B, the electronic game piece embodiment shown in FIGS. 10A-10B, and the electronic game piece embodiment shown in FIGS. 11A-11B positioned in a first electronic game piece holder embodiment and stacked such that the lights of all three electronic game piece embodiments are aligned, illuminated, and visible through a single vertical opening in the first electronic game piece holder embodiment.

[0027] FIG. 14 is a front profile view of the electronic game piece embodiment shown in FIG. 1-9B, the electronic game piece embodiment shown in FIGS. 10A-10B, and the electronic game piece embodiment shown in FIGS. 11A-11B positioned in a second electronic game piece holder embodiment and stacked such that the lights of the three electronic game piece embodiments are not aligned, not illuminated, and positioned behind separate openings in the second electronic game piece holder embodiment.

[0028] FIG. 15 is a block diagram illustrating an environment in which the disclosed technology may operate in various embodiments.

[0029] FIG. 16 is a flow diagram illustrating a routine invoked by the technology in various embodiments to create and distribute whizwells.

[0030] FIG. 17 is a flow diagram illustrating a routine invoked by the technology in various embodiments when a consumer redeems whizwells.

[0031] FIG. 18 is a flow diagram illustrating a routine invoked by the technology in various embodiments to distribute whizwells.

[0032] FIG. 19 is a block diagram illustrating components employed by the technology in various embodiments.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0033] Throughout this disclosure, the singular terms “a,” “an,” and “the” include plural referents unless the context clearly indicates otherwise. Similarly, the word “or” is intended to include “and” unless the context clearly indicates otherwise. Directional terms, such as “upper,” “lower,” “front,” “back,” “vertical,” and “horizontal,” are used herein to express and clarify the relationship between various elements. It should be understood that such terms do not denote

absolute orientation (e.g., a “vertical” component can become horizontal by rotating the device).

[0034] Described herein are embodiments of an electronic game piece, a set of electronic game pieces, and a method of using electronic game pieces. Some embodiments of the disclosed electronic game piece are well suited for use in promotional games, such as sweepstakes, in which the electronic game piece is given away for promotional purposes. Multiple electronic game pieces can be collected and grouped to create sets, which can be intrinsically desirable or exchangeable for a prize. For example, the electronic game pieces can be given away to the first customers at a new retail location, to customers who purchase certain items, to trade show attendees, or to individuals in any other scenario in which the prospect of receiving an electronic game piece serves a promotional purpose. The electronic game pieces also can be purchased or traded.

[0035] Separate electronic game pieces can differ from one another in the quantity and/or arrangement of internal proximity sensors and proximity-sensor targets. The proximity-sensor target of one electronic game piece can activate the proximity sensor of a separate electronic game piece when the two are aligned. Activating a proximity sensor can cause a light to illuminate on the electronic game piece including the proximity sensor. Aligning multiple proximity sensors and proximity-sensor targets can cause lights on multiple electronic game pieces to illuminate. In this way, multiple electronic game pieces can be arranged and rearranged as a puzzle to determine an arrangement in which all of the lights are illuminated. In some disclosed embodiments, a winning arrangement of electronic game pieces is one in which a certain number of electronic game pieces (e.g., three, four, five, or a greater number) are stacked with the lights aligned and simultaneously illuminated. This occurs, for example, when each of the electronic game pieces in the stack includes a proximity sensor activated by a proximity-sensor target of an adjacent electronic game piece in the stack. In various embodiments, the lights of the game pieces may illuminate only when the lights are in a particular arrangement. As an example, the lights may illuminate only when the lights of two or more stacked game pieces are vertically aligned.

[0036] Embodiments of the disclosed electronic game piece can be made to include no visible indication of their internal configuration. The primary way to determine their internal configuration can be to test how the electronic game piece interacts with other electronic game pieces. Some electronic game piece configurations can be less common than others. Controlling the availability of certain critical electronic game piece configurations can allow for control over the probability of obtaining a set of electronic game pieces capable of arrangement into a stack in which a winning number of lights are aligned and illuminated. This control is particularly useful when the electronic game pieces are used in a sweepstakes and a stack in which a winning number of lights are aligned and illuminated is exchangeable for a prize. Embodiments of the disclosed electronic game piece also can be sold in sets as puzzles for amusement, in which case at least one of each electronic game piece configuration required to complete the puzzle can be included.

[0037] When used in a sweepstakes, embodiments of the disclosed electronic game piece can be designed to prevent tampering. For example, the electronic game piece can be sealed such that accessing an internal portion of the electronic game piece is only possible by breaking the electronic game

piece. Some embodiments of the disclosed electronic game piece are encased in a hard-plastic, tamper-evident shell. Tampering also can be prevented with the use of an identifier on the electronic game piece, such as a serial number and/or a Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tag. The internal configuration corresponding to each identifier can be recorded prior to distribution of the electronic game pieces for reference when a winning set of electronic game pieces is redeemed.

[0038] FIGS. 1-7 illustrate the external appearance of one embodiment of the disclosed electronic game piece. As shown in FIG. 1, the electronic game piece **100** is shaped substantially as a short cylinder. Other embodiments of the disclosed electronic game piece can have different shapes. For example, some disclosed embodiments are shaped as triangular prisms, cuboids, pentagonal prisms, hexagonal prisms, or octagonal prisms. In the illustrated electronic game piece **100**, the top major surface **102** (as shown, for example, in FIGS. 1 and 2) and the bottom major surface **104** (as shown, for example, in FIG. 3) are generally flat, round, and parallel with one another. A side surface **106** joins the perimeter of the top major surface **102** and the perimeter of the bottom major surface **104**. A window **108** is positioned in a portion of the side surface **106**. The window **108** is made of clear plastic. Other embodiments can have windows made of glass or another substantially optically transmissive material. Opaque portions of the electronic game piece **100** are also made of plastic. In other embodiments, the opaque portions can be made of metal, resin composite, or another material with suitable strength characteristics.

[0039] As shown in FIGS. 1-3, recesses **110** and protrusions **112** are radially distributed around center portions **114** of the top major surface **102** and the bottom major surface **104**. For each recess **110** on the top major surface **102**, there is a corresponding protrusion **112** on the bottom major surface **104** at the same radial position around the center portion **114**. Similarly, for each protrusion **112** on the top major surface **102**, there is a corresponding recess **110** on the bottom major surface **104** at the same radial position around the center portion **114**. The recesses **110** and protrusions **112** allow for an interlocking relationship between the top and bottom major surfaces of separate electronic game pieces having the same external configuration. For example two electronic game pieces identical to the electronic game piece **100** can be stacked such that a bottom major surface of one of the electronic game pieces interlocks with a top major surface of the other electronic game piece. When interlocking, each protrusion and recess on the bottom major surface of one of the electronic game pieces fits within or around a recess or protrusion, respectively, on the top major surface of the other electronic game piece. Based on the pattern of recesses and protrusions of the electronic game piece **100**, two identical electronic game pieces can be rotated relative to one another and interlocked in one of eight rotational configurations. The number of possible interlocking rotational configurations can be increased or decreased by increasing or decreasing, respectively, the number of alternating recesses and protrusions.

[0040] The center portions **114** of the top and bottom major surfaces **102**, **104** of the electronic game piece **100** are flat and slightly recessed. In some embodiments of the disclosed electronic game piece, text and/or images are affixed (e.g., printed or attached with a sticker) to one or both of the center portions of the top and bottom major surfaces. The text and/or images

can be promotional or decorative. Text and/or images also can be affixed to other portions of the electronic game piece, such as around the side surface. In one example, a corporate logo is affixed to the center portions of the top and bottom major surfaces and a text trademark is affixed around the side surface of the electronic game piece.

[0041] FIGS. 8A and 8B illustrate the configuration of internal components within the electronic game piece 100 shown in FIGS. 1-7. FIG. 8A shows the inside of a top portion 116 of the electronic game piece 100. FIG. 8B shows the inside of a bottom portion 118 of the electronic game piece 100. As shown in FIGS. 1-7, a seam 120 separates the top portion 116 and the bottom portion 118 of the electronic game piece 100. In other embodiments, the top portion and the bottom portion can be sealed together so that no visible seam remains (e.g., the top portion and the bottom portion can be fused with heat). As shown in FIG. 8A, a top magnet 122 is attached to the underside of a top wall 124. The side of the top wall 124 opposite to the underside is the top major surface 102 of the electronic game piece 100. As shown in FIG. 8B, a bottom magnet 126 is attached to the topside of a bottom wall 128. The side of the bottom wall 128 opposite to the topside is the bottom major surface 104 of the electronic game piece 100. In addition to the bottom magnet 126, the topside of the bottom wall 128 includes a light 130, a proximity sensor 132, and a battery compartment 134 housing a battery stack 136. The battery stack 136 includes two button-cell batteries arranged in series. Other embodiments can include different power supply configurations. Embodiments powered by batteries can include any number, type, and arrangement of batteries, such as one button-cell battery, one AAA battery, or two AAA batteries arranged in parallel or in series.

[0042] As shown in FIG. 8B, the topside of the bottom wall includes seven proximity-sensor bays 138 radially distributed around the battery compartment 134. A first support wall 140 and a second support wall 142 create the sides of each of the proximity-sensor bays 138. Pegs 144 extend vertically from the first and second support walls 140, 142. Struts 146 provide additional rigidity to the first and second support walls 140, 142 and the pegs 144. For clarity in FIG. 8B, only the rightmost of the seven proximity-sensor bays 138 and its corresponding first and second support walls 140, 142, pegs 144, and struts 146 are labeled with reference numbers. As shown in FIG. 8B, the proximity sensor 132 is positioned in the proximity-sensor bay 138 closest to the light 130 in a clockwise radial direction when viewed from above. The pegs 144 of the first and second support walls 140, 142 of this proximity-sensor bay 138 fit within peg holes 148 on either side of the proximity sensor 132 to hold the proximity sensor in place. Other embodiments can include different structures to hold the proximity sensors in certain radial positions or no such structures. Embodiments including structures to hold the proximity sensors in certain radial positions can include different numbers of such structures. For example, some embodiments include three, four, five, six, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, or a different number of proximity-sensor bays.

[0043] In the illustrated electronic game piece 100, the light 130 is a light emitting diode (LED) 150. Other embodiments can include a different type of light, such as an incandescent, fluorescent, halogen, xenon, neon, or another commercially-available type of light. LEDs are particularly well suited for use in embodiments of the disclosed electronic game piece due to their compact size, low power demand, low heat out-

put, long life, and high durability. The LED 150 of the electronic game piece 100 is blue. Instead of a blue LED, other embodiments can include a LED of another color, such as white, red, orange, yellow, or green. The LED 150 is positioned behind the window 108. The window 108 is frosted such that light from the LED 150 is visible through the window when the LED is illuminated, but the structure of the LED is not visible through the window when the LED is not illuminated. As shown in FIG. 8A, the window 108 includes support flanges 152 on each side. The support flanges 152 hold the window 108 in place between the surrounding side wall 154 and two window support tabs 156 attached to the topside of the bottom wall 128. In various embodiments, game pieces may have multicolored lights. As an example, the lights on a game piece may change colors depending on which other game pieces or other objects are proximate to the game piece. In various embodiments, game pieces may have lights of varying colors.

[0044] The light 130, proximity sensor 132, battery stack 136, and associated electrical connections are shown in greater detail in FIGS. 9A-9B. The light 130 and the battery compartment 134 are supported on a plate 158 made of insulating plastic. The LED 150 includes a first terminal 160 and a second terminal 162. The first terminal 160 of the LED 150 is connected to a first terminal (not shown) of the battery stack 136 via a contact strip 164 electrically isolated on the plate 158. The second terminal 162 of the LED 150 is soldered to one end of a first wire 166. The other end of the first wire 166 is connected to a contact plate 168 of the proximity sensor 132. The proximity sensor 132 also includes a spring 170, an upper spring compartment 172, and a lower spring compartment 174. The spring 170 is positioned in the upper spring compartment 172. As shown in FIG. 8B, a second wire 176 extends from the back of the proximity sensor 132. One end of the second wire 176 is connected to a back end of the spring 170. The other end of the second wire 176 is connected to a main housing 178 of the battery compartment 134. The main housing 178 of the battery compartment 134 is electrically connected to a second terminal (not shown) of the battery stack 136 with a contact tab 180.

[0045] FIGS. 9A and 9B illustrate operation of the proximity sensor 132. In FIG. 9A, the spring 170 is in its resting position separated from the contact plate 168. When a magnet of a separate electronic game piece is positioned in close proximity and above the proximity sensor 132, the magnetic field of the magnet moves the spring 170 into the position shown in FIG. 9B. In this way, the magnet serves as a proximity-sensor target. In FIG. 9B, the front end of the spring 170 is stretched upward into contact with the contact plate 168. This completes the circuit between the light 130 and the battery stack 136, thereby causing the light to illuminate. When the magnet of the separate electronic game piece is moved away from the proximity sensor 132, the spring 170 is no longer affected by the magnetic field of the magnet and resiliently returns to its resting position separated from the contact plate 168, thereby causing the circuit to be broken and the light 130 to turn off. The U-shape of the upper spring compartment 172 restricts movement of the spring 170 so that the spring only moves into contact with the contact plate 168 if a magnet is in substantial alignment with the proximity sensor 132. This increases the selectivity of the proximity sensor 132 according to the specific position of the separate electronic game piece.

[0046] FIGS. 10A-10B illustrate the internal components of a second embodiment of the disclosed electronic game piece. The first digit of each reference number shown in FIGS. 10A-10B is "2." The final two digits of the reference numbers shown in FIGS. 10A-10B are identical to the final two digits of the reference numbers shown in FIGS. 1-9B for similar or identical elements. For clarity in FIG. 10B, only the leftmost of the seven proximity-sensor bays 238 and its corresponding first and second support walls 240, 242, pegs 244, and struts 246 are labeled with reference numbers. The external portions of the electronic game piece 200 shown in FIGS. 10A-10B are the same as the external portions of the electronic game piece 100 shown in FIGS. 1-9B. As shown in FIG. 10A-10B, the electronic game piece 200 includes a top magnet 222, a bottom magnet 226, and a proximity sensor 232 similar to the top magnet 122, the bottom magnet 126, and the proximity sensor 132 of the electronic game piece 100, but at different radial positions.

[0047] FIGS. 11A-11B illustrate the internal components of a third embodiment of the disclosed electronic game piece. The first digit of each reference number shown in FIGS. 11A-11B is "3." The final two digits of the reference numbers shown in FIGS. 11A-11B are identical to the final two digits of the reference numbers shown in FIGS. 1-9B for similar or identical elements. For clarity in FIG. 11B, only the leftmost of the seven proximity-sensor bays 338 and its corresponding first and second support walls 340, 342, pegs 344, and struts 346 are labeled with reference numbers. The external portions of the electronic game piece 300 shown in FIGS. 11A-11B are the same as the external portions of the electronic game piece 100 shown in FIGS. 1-9B. Unlike the electronic game piece 100, the electronic game piece 300 includes no top magnet attached to the underside of the top wall 324. As shown in FIG. 11B, the electronic game piece 300 includes a bottom magnet 326 and a proximity sensor 332 similar to the bottom magnet 126 and the proximity sensor 132 of the electronic game piece 100, but at different radial positions.

[0048] The proximity sensor 332 of the electronic game piece 300 also has a different configuration than the proximity sensor 132 of the electronic game piece 100. As discussed above, the proximity sensor 132 is activated by a proximity-sensor target positioned above the proximity sensor. In contrast, the proximity sensor 332 is activated by a proximity-sensor target positioned below the proximity sensor. In this alternative configuration, the spring (not shown) is positioned in the lower spring compartment (not shown) and the contact plate 368 wraps around the bottom of the lower spring compartment. Similar to the configuration shown in FIGS. 9A-9B, the spring in the alternative configuration is separated from the contact plate 368 when at rest and moves into contact with the contact plate when influenced by the magnetic field of a magnet of a separate electronic game piece positioned in close proximity and below the proximity sensor 332.

[0049] The proximity sensors and proximity-sensor targets shown and described are exemplary only. Other embodiments can include different components to detect and trigger each other based on physical proximity. In embodiments that include magnets, a variety of types of magnets can be used. The top magnets 122, 222, 322 and bottom magnets 126, 226, 326 of the electronic game pieces 100, 200, 300 are all cylindrical, neodymium magnets. Other embodiments can include, for example, another type of permanent magnet (e.g., ceramic or another type of rare-earth magnet) having the same or a different shape (e.g., cuboid). Other embodiments

also can include temporary magnets. For example, these embodiments can include an electromagnet activated when a switch is triggered, such as by physical interaction with a separate electronic game piece.

[0050] The radial positions of the top magnets 122, 222, 322, bottom magnets 126, 226, 326, and proximity sensors 132, 232, 332 of the electronic game pieces 100, 200, 300 determine how the electronic game pieces interact with each other. As shown in FIG. 12, when stacked with the electronic game piece 100 on the bottom, the electronic game piece 200 in the middle, the electronic game piece 300 on the top, and the lights 130, 230, 330 aligned, the lights are all simultaneously illuminated. In this configuration, the bottom magnet 226 of the electronic game piece 200 activates the proximity sensor 132 of the electronic game piece 100, the bottom magnet 326 of the electronic game piece 300 activates the proximity sensor 232 of the electronic game piece 200, and the top magnet 222 of the electronic game piece 200 activates the proximity sensor 332 of the electronic game piece 300. The interactivity of the electronic game pieces 100, 200, 300 is exemplary only of the possible interactivity of disclosed embodiments of sets of electronic game pieces. Depending primarily on the number of electronic game pieces in a set, the number of proximity sensor and proximity-sensor target positions within each electronic game piece, and the number of proximity sensors and proximity-sensor targets within each electronic game piece, dozens, hundreds, thousands, or millions of different sets can be created.

[0051] Embodiments of the disclosed electronic game piece can include no proximity sensors, one proximity sensor (e.g., the electronic game pieces 100, 200, 300), two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, or a greater number of proximity sensors. Similarly, embodiments of the disclosed electronic game piece can include no proximity-sensor targets, one proximity-sensor target (e.g., the electronic game piece 300), two proximity-sensor targets (e.g., the electronic game pieces 100, 200), three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, or a greater number of proximity-sensor targets. Multiple proximity sensors can be electrically connected in parallel, such that activation of any one of the proximity sensors activates the light of the electronic game piece, or in series, such that activation of all of the proximity sensors is required to activate the light of the electronic game piece.

[0052] As discussed above, disclosed embodiments of sets of electronic game pieces can be configured such that some or all of the electronic game pieces in the set can be positioned in a winning arrangement. Different electronic game pieces also can be distributed for amusement with no predetermined winning arrangement. A winning arrangement of electronic game pieces can be one in which a certain number of electronic game pieces (e.g., three, four, five, or a greater number) are stacked with the lights aligned (or not aligned) and simultaneously illuminated. An electronic game piece holder can be included to hold the stacks of electronic game pieces such that the lights are visible. If the winning arrangement of electronic game pieces is one in which a certain number of electronic game pieces are stacked with the lights aligned and simultaneously illuminated, the electronic game piece holder can include aligned windows or openings through which the lights of electronic game pieces within the electronic game piece holder are visible. If the winning arrangement of electronic game pieces is one in which a certain number of electronic game pieces are stacked with the lights not aligned and simultaneously illuminated, the electronic game piece holder

can include openings at different radial positions with each opening corresponding to the radial position of an illuminated light in a winning arrangement of electronic game pieces. Holders with different patterns of openings can be provided in conjunction with sets of electronic game pieces. When used in a sweepstakes, the different holders can be exchangeable for different prizes when completed.

[0053] FIGS. 13 and 14 illustrate the electronic game pieces 100, 200, 300 within two different types of electronic game piece holders. In FIG. 13, the electronic game pieces 100, 200, 300 are positioned within a first electronic game piece holder 400 having a vertical opening 402 through which the windows 108, 208, 308 of the electronic game pieces 100, 200, 300 are visible when the windows are aligned. The lights 130, 230, 330 are shown illuminated in FIG. 13 because the electronic game pieces 100, 200, 300 are configured such that the lights are illuminated when positioned as shown in FIG. 13. In FIG. 14, the electronic game pieces 100, 200, 300 are positioned within a second electronic game piece holder 404 having a first opening 406, a second opening 408, and a third opening 410 through which the windows 108, 208, 308 of the electronic game pieces 100, 200, 300 are visible, respectively, when positioned as shown in FIG. 14. The lights 130, 230, 330 are shown not illuminated in FIG. 14 because the electronic game pieces 100, 200, 300 are configured such that the lights are not illuminated when positioned as shown in FIG. 14.

[0054] In various embodiments, game tokens (e.g., “whizwells”) can be either physical devices, virtual tokens, or both. As an example of virtual embodiments, whizwells can be distributed electronically. In these embodiments, one or more network devices may track various aspects of whizwells. As an example, these network devices may track who has whizwells, their worth, distribution and redemption criteria, etc. Whizwells may be associated with one or more advertisers. As an example, a first whizwell may be associated with one advertiser, a second whizwell may be associated with two advertisers, and a third whizwell may be associated with three advertisers. In various embodiments, the whizwells may indicate with which advertiser(s) they are associated, e.g., by placement of the advertiser’s logo or other marketing information. Distribution criteria may indicate when whizwells are to be distributed. As an example, an advertiser may specify that whizwells are to be distributed when a product is purchased during a particular promotion, by a customer fitting a particular profile, or indeed matching any other criteria.

[0055] Various “games” and other events can specify redemption criteria for whizwells. A consumer who collects sufficient whizwells meeting the redemption criteria may redeem a prize or other item of value by presenting the collected whizwells meeting the criteria. The redemption criteria may specify which whizwells are redeemable. As an example, a manufacturer and a credit card company may collaborate to create whizwells with their logos. A consumer who purchases items associated with the manufacturer using the credit card may receive some number of whizwells at the time of purchase. By collecting a specified number of whizwells and redeeming them, the consumer may be eligible to receive a prize. Thus, by specifying prizes and limiting access to whizwells, various values can be set for different whizwells.

[0056] Consumers can receive physical or virtual tokens representing the whizwells. As examples, a consumer may

receive physical whizwells when purchasing a product. Alternatively, a consumer may receive virtual tokens via electronic mail, text messaging, wireless communications between the customer’s cellular telephone or mobile computing device and equipment at a vendor’s premises, etc. In various embodiments, a whizwell distributor or other entity may act as a clearinghouse for whizwells. Clearinghouse functions are well known. As examples, clearinghouses can clear trades (e.g., between customers) of whizwells, clear and/or settle whizwell distribution and redemption activity, regulate delivery of whizwells, and report on whizwell ownership/trade data. Thus, a clearinghouse can aggregate and validate whizwell-related transactions. In various embodiments, clearinghouses can perform some or all of these functions, and indeed other functions not described herein.

[0057] Consumers may use whizwells in one or more games or events. As an example, the credit card company may enable redemption of whizwells no matter which manufacturer is associated with the whizwell, e.g., perhaps for different prizes.

[0058] Moreover, the game may change over time. As an example, a consumer who is unable to collect a sufficient number of whizwells for one game or event may nevertheless be able to use the collected whizwells for a different game or event (e.g., because the original game or event has ended.) Consequently, whizwells may expire or their value may change over time, e.g., depending on what games they can be used in or how they can be redeemed. An advertiser may identify an expiry date for whizwells and all entities participating in the whizwell network may honor such expiry dates.

[0059] Thus, entities may use whizwells as part of a marketing campaign. Thereafter, transactions relating to whizwells, including distribution and redemption, can be analyzed for marketing purposes.

[0060] In various embodiments, a customer can accept or refuse whizwells, e.g., based on criteria the customer specifies. As an example, whizwells may be transmitted to the customer on a regular basis, e.g., based on the customer’s present geographical location (e.g., as detected by a GPS device associated with the customer’s mobile phone). The customer may be participating in a particular set of games and may specify that only whizwells of a particular value or from a particular source are to be accepted. The filters can also be based on which games they are useful in, their expiry dates, where they are redeemable, for which prizes they are redeemable, and so forth. Thus, a customer can specify various criteria for accepting or rejecting whizwells. These filtration may occur at the user’s computing device (e.g., mobile computing device), at a whizwell distributor, or elsewhere. In various embodiments, a learning algorithm may learn the customer’s preferences over time, e.g., by observing the customer’s use of whizwells.

[0061] Referring to FIG. 15, the disclosed technology may operate in an environment 1500 including one or more advertisers, e.g., advertiser 1502a, advertiser 1502b, and so forth. The advertisers may communicate via a network 1504 with a whizwell distributor 1506. As an example, the advertisers may place requests for whizwells, indicate values, indicate collaborating advertisers, specify criteria for distribution and redemption, and so forth. The network 1504 can be a data communications network, e.g., the Internet, an intranet, and so forth. The whizwell distributor 1506 may create whizwells and store information about the created whizwells (e.g., to

whom they are distributed, transaction information, redemption criteria, redemption prizes, etc.).

[0062] Advertisers may be manufacturers, service providers, or indeed any person or entity that is interested in advertising their offerings or otherwise creating whizwells. The advertisers may need to pay a fee, e.g., to a distributor of whizwells, to create, distribute, and/or manage the redemption of whizwells.

[0063] One or more retailers, e.g., retailer **1508a**, retailer **1508b**, and so forth may also connect via the network **1504**. As an example, whizwell distributor **1506** may distribute whizwells to the retailers, receive transaction and redemption information from the retailers, and so forth. Consumers may also trade whizwells or participate in an exchange of whizwells. Thus, whizwells can be distributed to consumers using various distribution mechanisms, and the distribution of whizwells can be limitless.

[0064] Consumers may receive and redeem whizwells from the retailers, from the advertisers, or from others, e.g., a partner **1512a**. The consumers may connect via one or more retailers to the network **1504**, or may connect directly. As an example, a consumer **1510a** connects via retailer **1508a**; consumer **1510b** connects via both retailer **1508a** and directly; and consumer **1510p** connects via retailers **1508b** and **1508m**. The consumers may connect to receive whizwells, redeem whizwells, change whizwell ownership information (e.g. trade whizwells with others), etc. The partners can be entities that participate in the whizwell ecosphere, e.g., by providing redemption opportunities. As examples, partners can be service providers, advertisers, or other entities. As a more specific example, an advertiser may specify as redemption criteria that once a customer collects a particular set of whizwells, the consumer can redeem the whizwells at a hotel chain partner.

[0065] FIG. **16** is a flow diagram illustrating a routine invoked by the technology in various embodiments to create and distribute whizwells. The routine **1600** begins at block **1602**. At block **1604**, the routine receives a request from an advertiser. The request can include various criteria. As examples, the request may include criteria for creating whizwells, redeeming whizwells, distributing whizwells, and so forth. At block **1606**, the routine causes the creation of whizwells meeting the received criteria. As examples, the routine may add entries to a database of virtual whizwells or may place an order for the creation of physical devices. At block **1608**, the routine distributes the created whizwells, e.g., based on the indicated criteria. As an example, the created whizwells may be distributed during a consumer's purchasing activity.

[0066] In various embodiments, a whizwell distributor may approach an advertiser with marketing opportunities. As examples, the whizwell distributor may observe trends in the market, e.g., based on how advertisers or customers are using or responding to other whizwells, market analysis techniques, etc.

[0067] FIG. **17** is a flow diagram illustrating a routine invoked by the technology in various embodiments when a consumer redeems whizwells. The routine **1700** begins at block **1702**. At block **1704**, the routine receives a request to redeem one or more whizwells. As an example, a consumer may request to redeem a prize. At decision block **1706**, the routine determines whether the received request meets the redemption criteria previously specified by the advertiser. Alternatively, the routine may determine whether the

received request meets the current redemption criteria for the whizwells. If the redemption criteria are satisfied, the routine continues at block **1708**. Otherwise, the routine returns at block **1710**. At block **1708**, the routine follows a specified redemption process. As an example, the routine may receive from a consumer an indication of a desired prize, order the desired prize, and caused the ordered prize to be shipped to the consumer. The routine then returns at block **1710**.

[0068] In various embodiments, a whizwell distributor or other entity may provide a customer with assistance in selecting whizwells for redemption, e.g., by suggesting redemption. The suggestions can be based on the customer's preferences, an optimal redemption, or other criteria. As an example, the logic may determine that some whizwells are about to expire and may suggest that some prizes are available to be redeemed. Alternatively, the logic may determine that some prizes the customer may be interested in (and has sufficient whizwells to redeem for) are about to become unavailable and may suggest redemption.

[0069] FIG. **18** is a flow diagram illustrating a routine invoked by the technology in various embodiments to distribute whizwells. The routine **1800** begins at block **1802**. At decision block **1804**, the routine determines whether a transaction, e.g., a sales transaction, satisfies distribution criteria for whizwells. If the criteria are satisfied, the routine continues at block **1806**. Otherwise, the routine continues at block **1810**. At block **1806**, the routine distributes whizwells. At block **1808**, the routine updates accounting information for whizwells. As an example, the routine may identify that a particular number of whizwells have been distributed, to whom the whizwells have been distributed, etc. The routine then returns at block **1810**. In various embodiments, whizwells distribution criteria may be unrelated to sales transactions. As examples, whizwells may be distributed during an advertising campaign, e.g., based on a customer's profile. Alternatively, whizwells may be distributed based on where the customer happens to be at a particular time (e.g., as derived from a customer's geographical coordinates), etc.

[0070] FIG. **19** is a block diagram illustrating components **1900** employed by the technology in various embodiments. The components **1900** can include creation criteria **1902**, distribution criteria **1904**, redemption criteria **1906**, transaction information **1908**, and accounting information **1910**.

[0071] In various embodiments, the described technology may provide optimization logic to customers for collection and/or redemption of whizwells. As an example, when a customer is purchasing an item, the optimization logic may recommend using a particular credit card or shopping at an alternate retailer to maximize the value of collected whizwells. As another example, the optimization logic may provide the customer with a list of prizes that can be selected based on the customer's collection of whizwells. The optimization logic may send an alert to the customer's mobile device or cellular telephone, may send an alert via electronic mail, may be available via a Web site, etc. Because redemption criteria can change in real time, the optimization logic may have some value and so an entity may charge the customer for use of the optimization logic. In various embodiments, the optimization logic may be software that the customer accesses.

[0072] In various embodiments, the described technology may provide optimization logic to advertisers. As an example, the optimization logic may compute an advertiser's exposure to whizwell redemption. A particular advertiser may have

allocated an amount of money for marketing via an advertising campaign. If whizwells are distributed but not redeemed, the advertiser's exposure to redemption decreases and so the advertiser becomes able to distribute additional whizwells, thereby increasing the amount of available advertising for no (or little) additional marketing expenditure. The optimization logic may compute the redemption exposure and provide this information to advertisers so that they can optimize their marketing expenditure.

[0073] As would be recognizable by one skilled in the art, the described technology enables analysis of advertising campaigns. As an example, a whizwell distributor or advertiser may be able to determine whether a particular advertising campaign is successful. "Impressions" identify the number of times a particular advertisement is viewed or received, e.g., by potential customers. In various embodiments, distribution of whizwells can be a function of impressions. As an example, the more people who see an advertisement, the more likely it is that more people will request and/or receive whizwells. A whizwell may be distributed by a retailer to a first consumer who then distributes it to a second consumer. Thus the whizwell can be said to cause two "impressions." Moreover, some whizwells may be accepted by more people than other whizwells, e.g., based on the relative perceived values of the whizwells. An advertising campaign may be deemed successful based on distribution and redemption of whizwells. As an example, an advertiser may desire to distribute a much larger number of whizwells than are redeemed, and in that case, the advertising campaign may be deemed successful when a small percentage of distributed whizwells are redeemed. Alternatively, a different advertiser may desire a large number of distributed whizwells to be redeemed. Because an entity (e.g., the whizwell distributor or other clearinghouse) can collect data on how many whizwells are requested, received, traded, and/or redeemed, the entity is able to help advertisers and others compute whether or not a particular advertising campaign has been successful. In some embodiments, the described technology may measure whether an advertising campaign is successful by computing a ratio of a number of distributed virtual game tokens versus a number of redeemed virtual game tokens. In various embodiments, measuring the success of advertising campaigns may involve these and/or other factors.

[0074] The computing devices on which the described technology may be implemented may include one or more central processing units, memory, input devices (e.g., keyboard and pointing devices), output devices (e.g., display devices), storage devices (e.g., disk drives), and network devices (e.g., network interfaces). The memory and storage devices are computer-readable media that may store instructions that implement the importance system. In addition, the data structures and message structures may be stored or transmitted via a data transmission medium, such as a signal on a communications link. Various communications links may be used, such as the Internet, a local area network, a wide area network, or a point-to-point dial-up connection.

[0075] In view of the many possible embodiments to which the principles of the disclosed invention may be applied, it should be recognized that the illustrated embodiments are only preferred examples of the invention and should not be taken as limiting the scope of the invention. Rather, the scope of the invention is defined by the following claims. I therefore claim as my invention all that comes within the scope and spirit of these claims.

I/we claim:

1. An electronic game piece, comprising:

a light;

a proximity sensor; and

a proximity-sensor target, wherein activation of the proximity sensor causes the light to illuminate.

2. The electronic game piece according to claim 1 wherein the proximity-sensor target is magnetic and the proximity sensor can be activated by a magnetic field.

3. The electronic game piece according to claim 1 wherein the proximity sensor can be activated by a proximity-sensor target substantially identical to the proximity-sensor target of the electronic game piece, but separate from the electronic game piece.

4. The electronic game piece according to claim 1 wherein the light, the proximity sensor, and the proximity-sensor target are positioned within an internal portion of the electronic game piece and the internal portion of the electronic game piece cannot be accessed without breaking the electronic game piece.

5. The electronic game piece according to claim 1 wherein the electronic game piece has a top major surface and a bottom major surface, and the top and bottom major surfaces each include a substantially circular pattern of alternating recesses and protrusions.

6. The electronic game piece according to claim 1 wherein the electronic game piece has a top major surface and a bottom major surface, the proximity sensor or the proximity-sensor target is positioned substantially adjacent to an internal surface of a top wall of the electronic game piece, the opposite side of the top wall being the top major surface, and the other of the proximity-sensor or the proximity-sensor target is positioned substantially adjacent to an internal surface of a bottom wall of the electronic game piece, the opposite side of the bottom wall being the bottom major surface.

7. The electronic game piece according to claim 1, further comprising a battery.

8. The electronic game piece according to claim 7 wherein the proximity sensor is a switch positioned in a circuit between the light and the battery.

9. The electronic game piece according to claim 1 wherein the electronic game piece has a top major surface and a bottom major surface, the top and bottom major surfaces have perimeters of substantially the same shape, and the perimeters of the top and bottom major surfaces are substantially circular or substantially shaped as polygons having three or more sides of substantially the same length.

10. The electronic game piece according to claim 9 wherein the electronic game piece has a side surface between the top and bottom major surfaces, the light, when illuminated, is visible on a portion of the side surface, the light is positioned within the electronic game piece at a first radial position closer to the side surface than to a center axis substantially centered on and perpendicular to the top and bottom major surfaces, the proximity sensor is positioned within the electronic game piece at a second radial position closer to the side surface than to the center axis, the proximity-sensor target is positioned within the electronic game piece at a third radial position closer to the side surface than to the center axis, and the first, second, and third radial positions are different.

- 11.** A set of electronic game pieces, comprising:
 a first game piece including a proximity-sensor target; and
 a second game piece including a light, a proximity sensor,
 and a proximity-sensor target, wherein the first and second
 game pieces can be positioned such that the proximity-
 sensor target of the first game piece activates the prox-
 imity sensor of the second game piece, and activa-
 tion of the proximity sensor of the second game piece
 causes the light of the second game piece to illuminate.
- 12.** The set of game pieces according to claim **11** wherein
 the proximity-sensor target of the first game piece only acti-
 vates the proximity sensor of the second game piece when the
 proximity-sensor target of the first game piece is substantially
 aligned with the proximity sensor of the second game piece.
- 13.** The set of game pieces according to claim **11** wherein
 the first and second game pieces have substantially the same
 overall shape.
- 14.** The set of game pieces according to claim **11** wherein
 the first and second game pieces can be positioned such that
 simultaneously the proximity-sensor target of the first game
 piece activates the proximity sensor of the second game piece
 and the proximity-sensor target of the second game piece
 activates the proximity sensor of the first game piece, and
 activation of the proximity sensor of the first game piece
 causes the light of the first game piece to illuminate.
- 15.** The set of game pieces according to claim **11** wherein
 the first and second game pieces are in a first configuration
 when positioned such that the proximity-sensor target of the
 first game piece activates the proximity sensor of the second
 game piece, the first game piece has a top major surface and
 a bottom major surface, the second game piece has a top
 major surface and a bottom major surface, the top major
 surface of the first game piece is adjacent to and interlocking
 with the bottom major surface of the second game piece when
 the first and second game pieces are in the first configuration,
 and the first and second game pieces can be positioned in a
 second configuration in which the top major surface of the
 first game piece is adjacent to and not interlocking with the
 bottom major surface of the second game piece.
- 16.** The set of game pieces according to claim **11** wherein
 the first game piece has a top major surface, a bottom major
 surface, and a side surface between the top major surface and
 the bottom major surface, the second game piece has a top
 major surface, a bottom major surface, and a side surface
 between the top major surface and the bottom major surface,
 the first and second game pieces can be stacked such that the
 top major surface of the first game piece is adjacent to the
 bottom major surface of the second game piece and the side
 surfaces of the first and second game pieces are exposed, the
 light of the first game piece, when illuminated, is visible on a
 portion of the side surface of the first game piece, and the light
 of the second game piece, when illuminated, is visible on a
 portion of the side surface of the second game piece.
- 17.** The set of game pieces according to claim **16** wherein
 the side surface of the first game piece is substantially aligned
 with the side surface of the second electronic game piece
 when the first and second electronic game pieces are posi-
 tioned such that the proximity-sensor target of the first elec-
 tronic game piece activates the proximity sensor of the second
 electronic game piece.
- 18.** A method, comprising:
 arranging a first electronic game piece, a second electronic
 game, and a third electronic game piece in a first stacked
 arrangement; and

observing whether lights on the first, second, and third
 electronic game pieces are simultaneously illuminated
 when the first, second, and third electronic game pieces
 are positioned in the first stacked arrangement, wherein
 simultaneous illumination of the lights on the first, sec-
 ond, and third electronic game pieces represents a win-
 ning arrangement.

19. The method according to claim **18**, wherein the lights
 on the first, second, and third electronic game pieces are not
 simultaneously illuminated when the first, second, and third
 electronic game pieces are positioned in the first stacked
 arrangement, and the method further comprises:

arranging the first, second, and third electronic game
 pieces in a second stacked arrangement different than
 the first stacked arrangement; and

observing whether lights on the first, second, and third
 electronic game pieces are simultaneously illuminated
 when the first, second, and third electronic game pieces
 are positioned in the second stacked arrangement.

20. The method according to claim **18** wherein the first
 electronic game piece has a top major surface, a bottom major
 surface, and a side surface between the top and bottom major
 surfaces, the second electronic game piece has a top major
 surface, a bottom major surface, and a side surface between
 the top and bottom major surfaces, the third electronic game
 piece has a top major surface, a bottom major surface, and a
 side surface between the top and bottom major surfaces, and
 arranging the first, second, and third electronic game pieces
 in the first stacked arrangement includes positioning the first,
 second, and third electronic game pieces such that the top
 major surface of the first electronic game piece is adjacent to
 the bottom major surface of the second electronic game piece,
 the top major surface of the second electronic game piece is
 adjacent to the bottom major surface of the third electronic
 game piece, the side surfaces of the first, second, and third
 electronic game pieces are exposed, and the lights on the first,
 second, and third electronic game pieces are substantially
 aligned on portions of the side surfaces of the first, second,
 and third electronic game pieces.

21. The method according to claim **20** wherein arranging
 the first, second, and third electronic game pieces in the first
 stacked arrangement includes physically interlocking the top
 major surface of the first electronic game piece with the
 bottom major surface of the second electronic game piece and
 the top major surface of the second electronic game piece
 with the bottom major surface of the third electronic game
 piece.

22. A method performed by a computing device having a
 processor and memory, comprising:

receiving a request to generate virtual game tokens, the
 request specifying criteria for distributing the virtual
 game tokens;

creating the requested virtual game tokens; and

distributing the created virtual game tokens based on the
 received criteria for distributing the virtual game tokens.

23. The method of claim **22**, further comprising receiving
 redemption criteria for the virtual game tokens.

24. The method of claim **23**, further comprising:

receiving a redemption request;

determining whether virtual game tokens identified by the
 received redemption request satisfy the received
 redemption criteria; and

if the virtual game tokens identified by the received redemption request satisfy the received redemption criteria, approving the requested redemption.

25. The method of claim **24**, further comprising receiving an identification of an item to satisfy the redemption request and providing the identified item if the virtual game tokens identified by the received redemption request satisfy the received redemption criteria.

26. A system, comprising:

a component configured to receive creation criteria for creating game tokens;

a component configured to receive redemption criteria for redemption of the created game tokens; and

a component configured to receive distribution criteria for distributing the created game tokens.

27. The system of claim **26** wherein at least one game token is physical.

28. The system of claim **26** wherein at least one game token is virtual.

29. The system of claim **26**, further comprising accounting information configured to store ownership information relating to the created game tokens.

30. The system of claim **26**, further comprising optimization logic.

31. The system of claim **30** wherein the optimization logic is configured to optimize distribution of game tokens.

32. The system of claim **30** wherein the optimization logic is configured to optimize redemption of game tokens.

33. A computer-readable storage device storing computer-executable instructions, the instructions comprising:

receiving a request to generate virtual game tokens, the request specifying criteria for distributing the virtual game tokens;

creating the requested virtual game tokens;

distributing the created virtual game tokens based on the received criteria for distributing the virtual game tokens; and

storing identities of people to whom the virtual game tokens are distributed.

34. The computer-readable medium of claim **33**, further comprising receiving a redemption request for a virtual game token.

35. The computer-readable medium of claim **33**, further comprising determining whether an advertising campaign is successful by computing a ratio of a number of distributed virtual game tokens versus a number of redeemed virtual game tokens.

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