



Getting Started with EDI

An Action Plan for Vendors



Identify Internal Champions

EDI is a business process that uses an IT based solution. It is NOT an IT solution. A successful EDI initiative relies on champions from both IT and the business.

IT champions will need to ensure any needed IT resources, including hardware, software and people, are ready and available when needed during your EDI project. They will also need to ensure that these resources continue to be available to support the on-going operations.

Business champions will need to understand current business processes, and be able to identify and impact change needed to support the EDI project and on-going operations.

Identify business processes to be moved to EDI

If you are responding to a customer mandate, they will most likely identify which processes (transaction types) they would like to see implemented.

If you are engaging with an EDI initiative to support your own business objectives, identify what those processes and objectives are and then move on to how EDI can help.

Select an EDI Solution

There are 3 main types of EDI solutions:

EDI web forms (such as Commport's Internet EDI) – these solutions are hosted on the internet and are ideal for users that have a low volume of transactions or trading partners.

Managed EDI (such as Commport's Integrated EDI) – these solutions enable transaction integration. They rely on the solution provider to manage the EDI standards which allows the user to focus on their business and system requirements.

Software and Services – These solutions rely on “edi translation software” which is often purchased and maintained on premise. They rely on the user to be able to perform their own application and data mapping between the EDI translation software and their business system. Users that pursue an on premise EDI translation software approach will also still require an EDI Services provider (Value Added Network or VAN) for the purpose of communications otherwise they will also need to adopt some communications infrastructure to manage their relationships with their trading partners.

Select an EDI Solution Provider

Once you have an idea of what kind of solution you are looking for, you can begin to evaluate potential solution providers. Each solution provider has their own approach, software and tools and you want to ensure that you are finding the right fit for your company and its objectives.



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Price is often a determining factor, however make sure that you are comparing “apples to apples”. EDI services are often priced based on usage, so make sure you understand how each solution is priced with some consideration put towards how you will be using the service. (How many transactions you will process through the service.)

Customer Service and support should be a vital factor in your selection

Since EDI will be used to support critical business functions such as receiving a purchase order from your customer, it is good advice to ensure that the EDI Solution Provider you are selecting provides high quality customer support and is there to help if things aren't working as expected.

Implement

Once you have selected a solution and a provider, work with that provider to implement the solution. The actual implementation steps will depend on the nature of the solution and the approach of your solution provider.

If you are concerned about how the implementation will affect you, ask the provider for details about their implementation approach, timeline and requirements during the selection process.