

Beyond these basic services EDI VANs may provide the following additional services:

i) **Reporting/Controls**

Reporting and control mechanisms provided by EDI VANs are important in managing the use of EDI. These reports help users monitor EDI traffic, highlight problems and assist in their resolution. The quality, timeliness and ease of using VAN control information in an automated fashion is essential.

ii) **Integrated Translation and Communications Software**

Some VANs offer EDI translation and communications software that is ready to use with their network.

**Translation Software**

For a company intending to use personal computer-based EDI translation software, networks offer inexpensive translation/communications products to be used with their network. Acquiring this software from the VAN supplying the network service is a reasonable approach. However, because it may be necessary to use more than one VAN at some point in the future, one should make certain that the translation software can be used with other networks as well and is not exclusive in its application. For mid-range and mainframe computers there is no actual value in selecting a software/VAN solution versus making separate software and VAN decisions. (See reference at In-network Translation, page 18)

**Communications Software**

Typically, inexpensive or even free software is available from a VAN which can only be used to communicate with that VAN. If the only communications being done is with this VAN, it is the best way to go. Bear in mind, however, that if multiple networks or direct connects are required, additional software will have to be acquired and installed.

iii) **VAN Interconnection**

This important service allows EDI messages to be exchanged between trading partners who subscribe to different VANs (see **Figure 4**). Interconnection expands the number of potential EDI trading partnerships without requiring all partners to be on the same VAN, or having to subscribe to a multitude of VANs.