

III Reporting

It is essential to keep careful track of all EDI traffic between trading partners. From time-to-time, queries arise regarding certain messages that were sent or received, or that someone *thinks* were sent or received. It may be of critical importance to know exactly what messages were exchanged, and when. Subscribers should expect this to happen quite often, especially when they first start communicating through EDI, and later when the volume of transactions increases and the number of trading partners grows. There may even be the issue of liability to consider.

Therefore, an excellent, accurate and timely reporting system is extremely important. The information is kept by most VANs and made available to their clients. The key is that this data should be readily available, both on a regular and on an ad hoc basis. On-line, real-time accessibility of reports may also be very desirable.

An added reporting feature that may be of interest is the availability of the reporting data in *machine-readable* form. This means data can be brought into a subscriber's system from the network and processed by its own information system automatically for its own purposes. As subscribers become more sophisticated EDI users they may want to be able to do this.

IV Service and Support

There are many aspects to good service that must be considered, and they include:

(a) *Locality*: Does the VAN offer enough points of service for subscribers to access from where they do business? If, for example, a company's Head Office and EDI staff is in Edmonton, what is the nearest site of support for EDI? The most important part of this question is *EDI support*. Many large VANs may offer local support in most major cities throughout the country, but these local support people may know little or nothing about EDI. They will be of little use in solving problems or providing subscribers with assistance in setting up and running their networks. While some subscribers may not need much help, it is reassuring to know that it is not far away when the time comes. Failing proximity, will the VAN provide on-site support when it is really needed, and at what charge?

Subscribers need to make certain that in the initial stages they can either obtain local support easily or go to a convenient support centre for