

3. Each returned questionnaire was reviewed and compared to the other responses. Where necessary, clarification was requested from the VANs to ensure that all VANs had answered the questions using the same assumptions.
4. The features and functions of VAN services were then categorized according to the user needs they fulfilled.
5. The detailed VAN responses were then evaluated according to those categories.

Introduction of the VANs

While all ten VANs that were surveyed are EDI VANs, they vary greatly in their capability to help a customer implement EDI. As we introduce the VANs, readers ought to keep in mind that each VAN's overall size, capabilities and other lines of business may or may not be relevant to their particular EDI needs. Almost all the VANs originated from some other line of business. The majority started their EDI business either as a computer timesharing provider with experience in network-based applications, or as a telecommunications provider.

Here is a brief description of each Value-Added Network:

AT&T

AT&T is best known as a U.S. long distance telephone company today. AT&T's products and services include voice, data and image telecommunications services; information services; telephone products; computers and other high technology products.

General Electric Information Services

General Electric Information Services (GEIS) is a subsidiary of General Electric Company. GEIS provides a variety of computer network services, industry databases and applications, and professional system integration services.

IBM Information Network

The IBM Information Network is part of the well-known computer company. IBM's products and services include a wide range of computer hardware and software. The Information Network provides a variety of computer network services, and industry databases and applications.