

Proprietary

Some networks have attempted to provide interconnection using their own methods. As most of these suffer from poor reliability, it is expected that most will be converted to X12 Mailbag.

iv) EDI Implementation Assistance

There are four ways VANs typically provide assistance to companies implementing EDI:

- a) They have EDI-knowledgeable sales staff who can assist in the initial decision-making process.
- b) They may provide telephone assistance during network installation.
- c) They may offer assistance in attracting large numbers of trading partners for a customer by soliciting potential trading partners to do EDI.
- d) They may provide on-site or off-site education and training for customer personnel.

v) Out-Dial Capability

This refers to the VAN's ability to dial out to private mailbox systems to deliver EDI messages on a subscriber's behalf. This is useful when one trading partner does not use a VAN and the other uses VANs exclusively and does not direct connect. Since the trading partner who does not subscribe to a VAN dictates that his partners must dial into his private mailbox system to send messages, the VAN will undertake to do this for its subscribers.

vi) In-Network Translation

Some VANs offer a translation service within their network, which is performed by the VAN on their own computer, thus obviating the need for subscribers to acquire their own translation software. Unfortunately, this is not often as attractive as it sounds.

In the vast majority of situations, in-network translation should be avoided. Commercially available EDI translation software affords greater flexibility which will, inevitably, be needed. It also provides much better control and ability to respond to new EDI opportunities. It is, in most cases, inexpensive when compared to processing and customization fees for In-Network Translation. In