

iii) Service and Support

All of the VANs, with the exception of **Kleinschmidt** and **SITA**, have EDI service and support in Canada. While all of the VANs claim to have knowledgeable EDI support, we believe there are some differences. Accordingly, we provide some recommendations for additional investigation for companies that are new to EDI and are in the process of selecting their initial VAN.

In general, VANs have two tiers of support:

- a) implementation support provided in Canada that is available during business hours, and
- b) network operational support provided from their processing centre that is available 24 hours a day.

Where service and support is located is not as important as the *kind* of support available. Since the majority of service and support is performed over the telephone, location is not an issue. However, the specific knowledge of EDI available over the telephone can significantly affect the ease of implementation and ongoing operations. Having Canadian-based implementation support can be a very helpful and time-saving consideration. The source of network operational support is not critical and is available 24 hours a day from all VANs.

Within the survey, we did not seek testimonials from customers. We recommend, therefore, that the investigation and pre-selection stage includes at least three telephone calls to subscribers of a company's short list of potential VANs.

iv) Interconnects

All of the VANs, except **Immedia** and **SITA**, actively interconnect with other VANs. However, only **GEIS** and **Sterling Ordernet** reported activity levels. Based on the information provided, it is estimated that 20% of Canadian EDI customers use interconnect to reach one or more networks other than the one they subscribe to. **Table 3** lists current VAN interconnections: