

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Efficiency, responsiveness and cost-effectiveness await those companies who are willing to invest in them. Indeed, that is the real promise of electronic data interchange. When utilized in conjunction with a well chosen value-added network, EDI can deliver the greatest benefits of all. Careful study of and frequent reference to this manual, before choosing a VAN, will ensure that the widest choice is made.

It is important to underscore the advisability of adequate preparatory work at the very beginning of the VAN selection process. With that in mind, readers are reminded to pay particular attention to Chapter 4, which not only provides a shopping list for would-be subscribers, but offers practical advice on how to analyze and arrange in importance the various features offered by value-added networks.

Careful study of Chapter 5, which represents the very heart of this report and provides results of the survey of VANs known to be actively conducting business in Canada, will equip readers with the requisite information for making an informed decision. The VANs are measured against specific criteria so that readers can easily do some time and dollar-saving comparison shopping.

Finally, readers are reminded that this guide is not exhaustive, and that individual circumstances, interests and needs will dictate how companies choose a value-added network. Moreover, the menu of services offered by VANs varies and all are subject to change. Realizing that, readers are cautioned to confirm information before seeking a VAN.