

Interconnection between VANs in North America has improved significantly, but only after years of customer demands. VANs offering interconnect provide a greater range of services but apply a surcharge when interconnect is used. Nevertheless, interconnect may be useful if a company does not want to bother with using multiple networks. There are several hundred companies in Canada using interconnect facilities provided by the VANs surveyed in this report.

There are four main methods that VANs use to interconnect and the method used is important to customers. Each is described:

### **No Logon**

The earliest and most common method of interconnect is also the least desirable. Lacking proper audit and controls, the No Logon method all too frequently results in lost EDI messages between VANs. Interconnect via this method should be avoided.

### **X.400**

This is an international communications standard for interconnecting electronic mail networks. Few interconnects have been implemented using X.400 due to its cost, complexity and the extremely slow development of the X.400 standard. Common carriers, such as Bell Canada and foreign post, telegraph and telephone administrations (PTTs) are the developers of the standard and its major proponents. For most EDI purposes, it is still too early to make widespread use of X.400.

### **X12 Mailbag**

The newest method is an X12 standard that was completed in 1991 for VAN-to-VAN interconnection called the X12 Mailbag. It provides for the controlled exchange of EDI messages between VANs and has many of the basic and advanced audit and control concepts of X.400. It is simple and, compared to X.400, inexpensive for VANs to implement. It is expected to be the most popular method of interconnect in North America by the end of 1992.