

The major advantage of EDI mailboxing is that EDI-specific processing can be performed by the VAN.

Key features are as follows:

1. EDI messages can be exchanged directly between the VAN and its customers' EDI translation software without special vendor-envelope processing.
2. Validation and integrity checking of the EDI envelopes is always performed by the mailbox.
3. Additional (optional) EDI-specific services are available, such as conversion of EDI delimiters between async (asynchronous transmission of a relatively low volume of messages over phone lines) and bisync (bisynchronous transmission of a relatively high volume of electronically-generated messages) preferred characters, EDI envelope conversion and EDI transaction-type sensitive services.

GEIS, Kleinschmidt, Sterling and TDNI are classified as EDI-specific mailboxes.

iii) **Generic Mailboxing with Network EDI Processing**

This kind of mailbox is, essentially, a generic mailbox with the VAN providing an optional vendor-specific enveloping/de-enveloping service within the network.

This mailbox architecture has the advantage of supporting any type of messages, when vendor enveloping/de-enveloping is performed by the customer, or not requiring special vendor enveloping software, when vendor enveloping/de-enveloping is performed by the VAN.

The VANs discourage the use of enveloping within the network; AT&T surcharges for the service, and IBM promotes the use of its own enveloping/communications software.

AT&T, IBM and SITA are classified as this type of mailbox.

Network Facilities and Access Options

All of the VANs use a variety of good and sound methods to provide dial-up access to their network. Three main protocols, Async, Bisync and SNA, are supported at an appropriate range of line speeds that ensure most users' needs and preferences are be accommodated.