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## Things to Consider when Choosing an EDI Solution

- Main Objective
- Project Scope
- Infrastructure
- Cost
- Customer Support
- Scalability
- Training
- Implementation Time

Choosing an Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) system is often a daunting task for many businesses, especially those who have little or no experience with EDI. Many companies become familiar with the technology only after being informed by a major trading partner of the need to be EDI compliant. Here are a few key points to consider when choosing an EDI solution:

1. **What is my main objective?** Understanding your primary goal is vital to beginning to implement a new EDI system. Are you concerned only with being compliant with the EDI requirements of a new customer? Are you looking to save time and money by stopping paper documents and doing invoicing electronically? There's no wrong answer, but make sure you have one.

2. **Project Scope:** Before you begin searching for an EDI solution you need to be able to answer the following questions:

- Who am I doing EDI with?
- What transaction sets (documents) will they require?
- What sort of volume will I be doing?
- Will I be integrating into an existing system?

Knowing the answers to these questions will help you define exactly what the project entails and will give you a better idea of what type of solution is most appropriate. If you are starting with fairly low transaction volume (less than 100 documents each month) then you probably aren't going to need to capability of EDI software; a web-based solution, such as DataTrans WebEDI, will be more appropriate.

3. **Reliability of Infrastructure:** Your business depends on your EDI Provider's system reliability. You don't want to be in a situation where you are trying to send out time sensitive EDI transactions such as ASN's (Advance Ship Notices) when your EDI provider's site is down due to a system crash. Find out about their infrastructure redundancy and disaster recovery plans. Make sure you are comfortable with their responses. DataTrans runs from a cloud-based, fully redundant, infrastructure and maintains regular offsite backups.

4. **Cost:** The overall cost of a system is usually one of the first things on anyone's mind. Initial costs can include fees for trading partner connections, software costs and the cost of implementation. Ongoing fees include costs per transaction (for web-based and hosted setups) and VAN fees and upgrade costs (for EDI software).

Keep in mind hidden costs like additional charges for GS1-128 barcode shipping labels, charges for 997 Functional Acknowledgment documents or costly third-party testing requirements. DataTrans offers a free cost-benefit analysis calculator on our website for those interested in calculating their savings or who are trying to decide between a Hosted solution and EDI Software.

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5. **Support:** By its very nature, EDI is a time-sensitive practice. Shipment notices must be sent on time to avoid costly chargebacks and a delay in invoicing can result in a delay in payment. Look for an EDI provider that will provide timely assistance if needed. DataTrans offers live support over the phone from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm Monday through Friday as well as an email support option that logs each request and is available 24 hours a day. During your EDI implementation you work with a named EDI analyst who is personally responsible for that setup and who can serve as a point of contact for any issues in the future.

6. **Scalability:** Choose an EDI Solution Provider that will not only satisfy your immediate EDI ecommerce requirements but will also be able to grow as your ecommerce needs do. Can the web-based solution can later integrate with your ERP system and outsourced setups can eventually be brought in house?

7. **Availability of Training:** EDI providers such as DataTrans make it easier than ever to be compliant with your trading partners' requirements. However, this doesn't mean that you should not consider the resources made available to help you. Look for providers who offer training classes, live phone support and documented resources for their systems. When implementing an in-house solution, on-site EDI training can be a huge bonus as well. Training can cover everything from how to use the software to its fullest to specific questions regarding mapping and translation.

8. **Implementation Time Frame:** Know how quickly you need to get a system up and running. Web-based solutions can have companies EDI capable within one business day. This is a great option for suppliers who need to become EDI capable with a new customer very quickly. Be aware that the larger the implementation, the more time will be required for setup and testing.

Do you have questions about what solution is right for you?  
Contact the DataTrans team at (800) 469-0877 for a free EDI analysis.

