10 POINTS TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING AN EDI PROVIDER

CHOOSING AN EDI PROVIDER DOES NOT HAVE TO BE A PAINFUL PROCESS IF YOU KNOW WHAT TO LOOK FOR....

Like all business critical processes, the importance of EDI cannot be understated. When your business's ability to communicate with your customers and suppliers is on the line, there is no room for error. EDI plays an essential role in keeping the supply chains of companies of all sizes moving, and as a result businesses need to carefully consider not only their EDI solution, but also their EDI provider.

Because EDI is a complex technical tool we understand that many organisations struggle to know what to look for when profiling a potential EDI partner. To help out, we've put together an essential list of criteria that businesses need to consider before choosing an EDI provider.

1. Are existing customers willing to speak to prospective clients? Are case studies available?

Case studies substantiate the service businesses provide and offer real life justification of the solution on offer. It is important to see case studies from a breadth of organisations across all industries and sizes to see ensure an EDI solution is suitable for the nuances of your market and can scale to facilitate your growth. You need to know that your EDI service won't reach a tipping point, whereby your requirements become too complex for your chosen EDI solution and provider.

At TrueCommerce we have a range of case studies and testimonials available from clients across a diverse array of industries, sizes and technical maturity. You can hear from retailers and builders merchants such as Sainsbury's and Travis Perkins and suppliers of all sizes including Hozelock, Yeo Valley and Hovis, why they chose TrueCommerce as their EDI provider.

2. Can the solution integrate you with your trading partners irrespective of their technical capabilities, connection protocols, data formats and back-office systems?

In an increasingly interconnected world having systems that can seamlessly exchange data is essential. At TrueCommerce we have an extensive trading partner network of over 120,000 pre-configured trading partner maps, including retailers, distributors and logistics service providers, so you can quickly and easily connect to your entire supply chain.

Our trading partner catalogue includes all the EDI messages required to comply with your customers' EDI requirements and our integrations cover everything your business may require from EDI, to inventory management, to fulfilment, to digital storefronts and marketplaces, to your business system and more.

3. Is the price fixed or variable? What does it include? Are there any upfront or hidden costs?

Transparency is the cornerstone of an effective business relationship. We often hear of businesses looking to investigate alternative EDI solutions because the incumbent has become unmanageable financially. EDI should help your business win contracts and customers, you should not have to make concessions about which trading partners you can and cannot afford to trade with due to hidden costs you were not expecting before signing up.

To make sure you are getting the return on investment you deserve you need to be sure that you will not experience any unforeseen costs that are going to impact your bottom line. We offer a transparent pricing plan without any hidden or variable costs so you do not encounter any unexpected charges.

4. Is the implementation and onboarding process managed on your behalf? Will you receive a project plan, including timelines?

With over twenty years of EDI experience, our clients are in safe hands with our implementation experts. As part of our fully managed EDI service, you benefit from proven processes that have been continually refined, ensuring that the crucial trading partner onboarding process is smooth and seamless.

We hold workshops to gain a thorough understanding of each customer's objectives, business environment, operating model and trading partner network, capturing all document types and creating business rules and implementation guidelines for all to follow.

We develop end-to-end communications plans to ensure that everyone understands their role in the onboarding process and what steps are required to bring everyone on board. Where necessary we deliver bespoke training to stakeholders requiring additional assistance to maximise their involvement in the programme.

5. What levels of support are available? Is full support available 24/7?

Support is the fundamental pillar of a successful EDI solution. Because EDI typically represents a business's most valuable contracts and largest trading partners it's important that your EDI messages are handled in the right way, at the right time and by the right people. Your customers will not wait around for you to resolve recurring EDI issues and you should not have to invest time into resolving them internally.

We operate a 24×7 service desk that proactively monitors the delivery of your messages and manages any issues, enabling your IT department to work on more strategic, valued added projects.

### 6. How scalable is the solution in terms of usage/volume/functionality?

From basic web EDI through to full integration with your ERP, the TrueCommerce managed service is fully scalable to grow with your company. With integration options into all leading ERP's and business systems we can cater for all your current and future requirements.

Many of our clients have added additional trading partners to their solution, for example, adding new customers as they win new business or rolling out EDI to their entire supplier community as they recognise the benefit of removing manual processes. As a fully managed service we handle the onboarding of the additional trading partners on our clients' behalf, enabling them to continue to focus on their core business.

7. What is included in the service? Will the EDI provider look after mapping and conduct thorough testing?

We know that successful organisations need a bedrock of scalable and reliable services to help them succeed, and with customer satisfaction at the core of everything we do our teams of experts continuously work with your business throughout your EDI journey.

Our team handles all aspects of your EDI process, from implementation and onboarding through to testing and ongoing support. Even if one of your customers changes its EDI mapping specifications, you don't need to worry, or do anything to maintain EDI compliance. We automatically update trading partner maps in our network as part of our ongoing EDI managed service, ensuring you maintain complete compliance at all times.
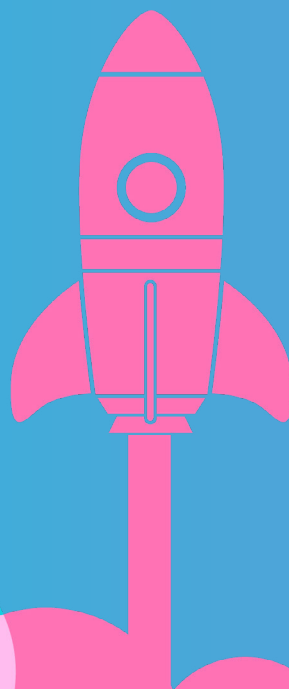
8. How stable and reliable is the solution? What SLA is guaranteed?

Because EDI is a critical to success it's essential to know what you can expect from your provider in terms of reliability.

Our leading cloud based service is underpinned by stringent Service Level Agreements, so you have the peace of mind that your business will receive the support it needs all year round. We ensure the stability and reliability of your EDI service through fully redundant hardware, software and networking components.

A combination of best of breed hardware and network components deliver industry leading service availability of 99.9%. On top of this we help to protect your business from obsolescence by delivering consistent product enhancements, with regular platform updates based on market developments that help continuously improve our service.

9. How secure is the solution? Does it meet the necessary standards?

As an EDI managed service provider we understand that our transaction security, stability and compliance is absolutely critical to our client's operational success.

With TrueCommerce you can be sure that all your transactions are handled in a stable, secure, scalable, and compliant environment. We offer a highly secure EDI platform which goes beyond normal standards to ensure complete protection throughout the process. Our web portal is protected by SSL/TLS and password encryption and all account information is encrypted using a non-retrievable hashing algorithm. With 24/7 support available you can rest assured that your business well protected, freeing up your time to focus on strategic initiatives.

10. Does the provider simply offer basic EDI or is there any additional functionality, for example, business activity monitoring (BAM) and supplier performance management?

Diligent organisations often demand safeguards to ensure business critical messages are always being correctly sent and received. Others want to highlight messages by applying set rules or criteria, such as orders from key clients or invoices over a certain value from suppliers.

The TrueCommerce system allows specific rules to be easily set up, allowing various stakeholders around the business to have full visibility and exercise management control. Some of the most common examples of alerts that our clients ask for are connection errors, new orders received and new messages sent. Through a combination of KPI reports, dashboards monitors and alerts we offer our clients real time visibility across their trading operation.

We understand how important it is that all of your customers and suppliers are moved to a new solution without disrupting their business or yours, which is why we have spent many years refining our processes to remove all of the potential risks of switching EDI providers.

We have transitioned hundreds of companies, both large and small, who wanted to switch EDI providers and move away from ageing or underperforming EDI platforms to a modern EDI managed service.

As part of our service, we manage the complete transition process for you. We replicate your trading partners' current message types, message formats, and connectivity, ensuring a smooth transition for you, your customers and your suppliers. Where appropriate, we complete a parallel run of your incumbent solution and the TrueCommerce solution, providing an automated comparison on all inbound and outbound messages, giving you the assurance that the migration will be seamless.

If any of the points covered in this checklist apply to your business then it would indicate that you would benefit investigating alternative EDI solutions.

TrueCommerce™

Do business in every direction

Call us today on 0345 643 6600 or email infouk@truecommerce.com