



B2B Integration:

Making Technology
Decisions that
Scale with
Your Business

By Ann Grackin

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Service Providers: What to Look for	How They Help the Business Scale
Industry Expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain up-to-date regulations, compliance and standards for the industry • Guidance in understanding various compliance programs, and how best to respond to them • Provide customer-friendly ways to deliver knowledge such as with blogs, newsletters, and web 'how-to' sessions • Presence at industry events and conferences so that customers can continue to meet face-to-face and build/maintain industry relationships
Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vast library of pre-existing connections to trading partners • Methods for rapidly on-boarding new trading partners
Maps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay up-to-date on your partners' maps. A map is the output format required by a particular organization. Large organizations publish their maps so that trading partners can translate their format to the recipient's format.
Translation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to integrate and translate between EDI and any other format. Formats include but are not limited to: XML, EDI X12, EDIFACT, HIPAA, NSF • Ability to translate your file or document to an EDI format • Ability to integrate to systems that include, but are not limited to: ERPs, Supply Chain, Ecommerce/Sales systems, Purchasing, Accounts Payable Automation, Connected Care Platforms in Healthcare, HR and Payroll, Logistics, Traceability and Visibility Platforms
Management and Monitoring Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some customers don't have the resources to build and manage their EDI transactions. So a managed service can take basic business information (flat files, spreadsheets, etc.) and provide the translation through transmission services. These services are provided in the cloud so that users do not have to buy software or hardware. • The solution should provide monitoring and alerting capability to keep users informed about transaction status
Customer Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain service level agreements • Provide training • Provide implementation services • Provide testing services • Various agreement options from on demand monthly, per transaction, or connection fee, to long-term service agreements

Figure 4: Service Providers' Capabilities: How They Help Their Customers Scale

Whether on premise, cloud, or a hybrid, users need ongoing service due to the dynamic nature of commerce. So your technology provider should be thought of as a business resource, not just a wall socket. Large companies often assume that only the biggest providers are right for them. However, the EDI market has changed significantly in the last few years, with many providers focusing on newer 'fresher code,' parallel processing, and new pricing and contract methods. These new methods of pricing the technology allow the business to scale without facing astronomically escalating costs.

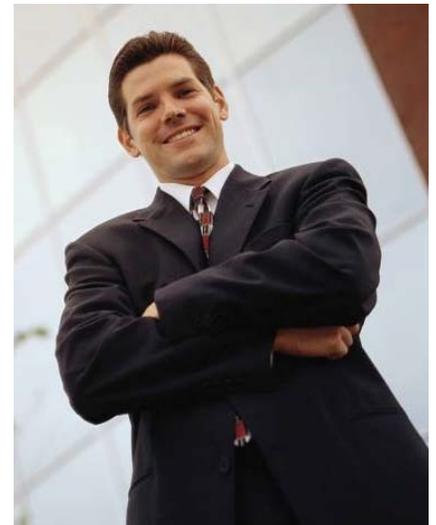
Conclusions—Partners for Growth

When companies are young, they put systems in place that will have profound consequences for their growth. It is very common to pick a system almost solely to solve an immediate need and not think enough about selecting systems that scale while avoiding disruption, and actually enable growth. Though predicting the future has always been an iffy profession, there are some scenarios that can be reliably forecasted for the future. A bit of thinking and planning up front can avoid issues later.

Though the expedient options may be most appealing, they may not allow you to handle your customers' requirements, leading to costly or complex workarounds that become too expensive to support.

There are many good systems out there. Some may be low cost and of course, those companies are eager for your business. But the fundamental questions that all business owners should ask, beyond the list of functionality, is: *What happens over time as my business changes and grows? How will this technology continue to support me? How will I continue to gain a return on the technology investment I have made?* The technology investment and the company who provides it should be seen as providing a *process of continuity and sustaining value*, not just plumbing.

And inherent in the value they should provide is the role of advisor/partner. In other words, they should be a real player in your quest for value. Thus, the questions to ask are: *Does this firm have the support infrastructure and expertise to be a partner? Can they advise us, as we grow, as to what our best options are to improve our performance in our industry?* The firm that can perform this role, and not just provide the technology, can become the partner for growth.



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719 Washington St., Suite 144

Newton, MA 02458

617-762-4040

www.ChainLinkResearch.com