



WHITE PAPER

Cut day-long operations to minutes with more reliable, secure B2B/EDI partner management

New technologies and approaches to secure
and scale your digital supply chain



Introduction

In an era when B2B/EDI is becoming more complex, companies have growing expectations for reliability, security, and automating everything possible. Companies need to manage more partners, apps, and regulations – all while guarding against more sophisticated cyberthreats.

In this changing landscape, B2B partner ecosystems are becoming less reliable, harder to control, and more vulnerable to security breaches. New solutions are needed to manage, secure, and automate the flow of sensitive business data through networks of hundreds, or even thousands of interconnected manufacturers, suppliers, distributors, and retailers.

This white paper explores the reliability, security, and automation challenges facing B2B/EDI partner ecosystems and looks at emerging technologies and strategies for addressing them.

Scalable solutions in areas like automated certificate exchange messaging (CEM), cryptography, and a new modern approach to value-added networks (VANs) are helping companies address today's B2B/EDI challenges. Many of the needed capabilities exist today in industry-standard protocols, with vendors like Axway driving implementation and adoption.

EDI has evolved, and so have the challenges

Electronic data interchange (EDI) has powered global commerce for decades. It's reliable, standardized, and foundational to countless supply chains. But while the format remains stable and well-established, the world around it hasn't stood still.

Despite its long tenure and maturity, B2B/EDI continues to be a dynamic and demanding landscape.

- **Volume and usage are increasing.** Businesses are processing more EDI documents across more diverse use cases than ever before.
- **Complexity is multiplying.** New standards, API-led workflows, and hybrid messaging patterns are becoming the norm.
- **Compliance is tightening.** Mandates like the DSCSA in the U.S. and e-invoicing regulations across Europe are making B2B flows more regulated and time-sensitive.
- **Security stakes are rising.** Credential expirations are accelerating, and cryptographic standards are evolving rapidly.
- **Geopolitical shifts.** Tariffs and global trade uncertainty are driving the need for agile, reconfigurable partner ecosystems.

Together, these forces are making it harder than ever to manage a secure, scalable B2B partner network.

Credential management has become a grind

Modern B2B integration is a security-intensive domain, and the first point of friction is often credential lifecycle management. Attackers often exploit weak credentials or misconfigured access controls. A breach in any of these areas can lead to data leaks, regulatory violations, or business disruptions.

The growing threats, along with evolving and more stringent regulations, add complexity to B2B/EDI partner management.

- Certificates that once lasted five years now expire annually or sooner
- Password policies are stricter and demand more frequent resets
- Teams are caught in a never-ending cycle: by the time you've rotated credentials for every last partner, the first are already expiring again

It's a labor-intensive process, and worse, one small oversight can take down a production connection.

Cryptography is advancing, but adoption is uneven

Keeping up with encryption standards is a moving target. We've seen TLS 1.0 and TLS 1.1 come and go. TLS 1.2 is the new norm, and TLS 1.3 is gaining ground. And no one can say with certainty how long these protocols will remain secure in the face of AI-enhanced attacks or future quantum capabilities.

Some modern frameworks like BDEW and eDelivery are starting to mandate stronger ciphers, including elliptic curve cryptography (ECC) and Brainpool curves. Leading organizations are upgrading their platforms to support these standards.

But your security is only as strong as your most outdated trading partner. One weak link running on legacy TLS or outdated key management can expose sensitive data and disrupt operations.

When it comes to managing complex partner networks, companies need to view security as more than a series of technology upgrades. Instead, they need a partner engagement strategy based on secure, modern technology for communicating with partners.

Realizing the full value of existing tools

Many of today's partner management and security challenges are addressable with capabilities that already exist in industry-standard protocols.

For example, automatic certificate exchange is supported via:

- AS2 CEM
- AS4 CEM
- OFTP CE

These tools are designed to eliminate the burden of manual credential rotation. But they're considered "optional," and few vendors implement them. Even fewer partner communities actually use them.

Companies like Axway are **working to change that**.

Axway is leading a customer initiative to pilot and validate CEM functionality. We are working with a community of large enterprises across multiple verticals globally. Starting with AS2, Axway aims to demonstrate the security and efficiency gains these features offer. Once proven, the plan is to extend the push to OFTP and **AS4 to drive broader awareness** and adoption.

Game-changing automation with AS2 CEM

The Axway AS2 CEM solution shows the game-changing improvements in B2B/EDI partner management that result from automated certificate exchange. It combines automated certificate exchange with tracking and management of digital certificates across the entire partner ecosystem.




Axway AS2 CEM provides visibility into certificate acceptance, scales as you add more partners, and automates the certificate rollover and renewal process. This gives companies what they need to meet short rollover windows, adopt strict security policies, and keep certificates up to date.

Axway AS2 CEM has earned certification by the Drummond Group, the gold standard in B2B interoperability testing. With Drummond Group certification, both you and your B2B/EDI partners are assured of interoperability and protection of sensitive data.

Enabling secure automation at scale

Scalable automation ensures that routine but critical tasks – such as credential validation, certificate renewal, and message encryption – are handled quickly and consistently, minimizing the risk of human error, reducing operational delays, and freeing up IT resources.

However, automation is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Every organization has its own systems, workflows, and risk tolerances. That's why choosing the right B2B integration platform is essential. Flexible integration software empowers companies to automate where it makes the most impact – whether that's certificate lifecycle management, message routing, or partner onboarding – while preserving manual control over processes that require it.



Axway, for example, sees its mission to help B2B leaders automate what should be automated and simplify what shouldn't require constant oversight. In addition to AS2 CEM and other B2B/EDI protocol and format-related tools, **Axway B2Bi** supports:

- A full API layer for scripting and automating credential tasks at scale
- External IDP integration for WebTrader and SFTP users – so you don't have to manage potentially redundant user credentials inside your B2Bi platform

These capabilities give teams the freedom to implement automation where it fits, and to offload identity management wherever possible.

Why is it time to reconsider the VAN?

Value-added networks have been around for decades and predate the internet – so, of course, they are sometimes seen as legacy infrastructure. That perspective itself has now become outdated.

In a world where direct connections are difficult to scale securely, a VAN can be the bridge that simplifies your ecosystem without sacrificing security or control. Today's modern VANs allow companies to enjoy the following benefits:

- **Protocol mediation.** You use the protocol that you want. Partners can use different protocols of their choosing; the VAN routes the data seamlessly.
- **Credential simplification.** You and your partners only manage one certificate and password each, to your own mailbox.
- **Self-service and APIs.** Axway's VAN has a self-service portal that supports on-demand partner setup, real-time reporting, and APIs that can enable programmatic options.

A modern VAN uses APIs to onboard partners quickly, access needed reports instantly, and leverage other self-service capabilities for secure and efficient partner management. Good news: it also follows modern commercial practices, offering very competitive pricing.

Build partner trust with Axway

At Axway, we're helping customers shift from fragile, high-effort ecosystems to modern, manageable partner networks. With the right combination of automation, shared standards, and flexible deployment, we can reduce operational friction and raise the bar for trust across the trading community.

For nearly 25 years, Axway B2B Integration has been enabling secure B2B/EDI and API integrations for large multinational corporations – \$140 billion in transactions annually for one company. Our B2Bi platform will help you build and manage a secure partner ecosystem to power your growth for the next 25 years.

Ready to transform the way you manage your B2B partner network?

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