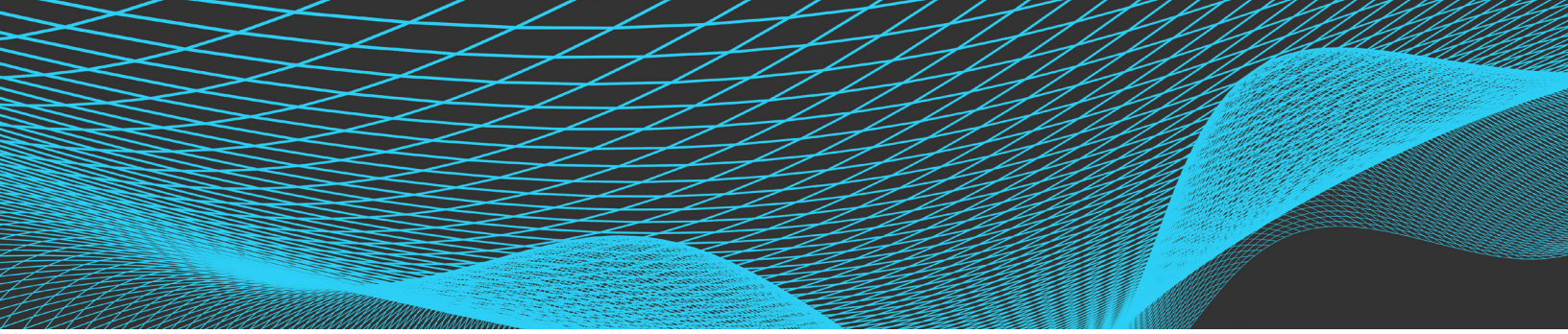


WHITE PAPER

# B2B 2034: What the future holds

Q&A guide to the future of B2B integration



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## Introduction

EDI has long been the backbone of electronic business communication without much change, but today's fast-moving digital economy is pushing companies to adopt new practices, new operational processes, and new technologies.

While electronic data interchange (EDI) still works well for structured, batch-oriented transactions like purchase orders and invoices, modern B2B integration demands much more. Businesses now require real-time connectivity, flexible data models, and the ability to exchange richer and more complex information across diverse systems and partners. As a result, many organizations are finding that EDI alone cannot keep pace with the expectations of agility, transparency, and speed that define today's business environment.

In 2024, Axway began a thought-leadership project to explore where the B2B world is headed and what technologies and strategies are shaping its future. We named it "B2B 2034" and started with our own **analysis and white paper** based on it. We then conducted a survey with basic questions addressing large enterprises about how the technology landscape will change over the next 10 years and what customers need to do to thrive.

Based on what we learned, we've now started a more detailed investigation of customer goals and needs. Read further to see how the world's leading supply organizations are thinking about the B2B future, along with the actions they're taking to prepare for it. We invite you to share your own perspectives — and gain insights that can inspire you to modernize your own B2B operations.

Q1

### How will the market change over the next 10 years?

The first two questions come from our initial "B2B 2034" analysis, starting with how customers expected the market to change in the years ahead. At Axway, we defined four pillars of this transformation:

**Hyperconnectivity.** Modern enterprises now operate in expansive partner ecosystems that involve suppliers, logistics providers, financial institutions, marketplaces, and service platforms. All will require real-time, secure, and flexible data flows among an expanding number of partners, IT environments, and shared applications.

**Artificial intelligence (AI).** As networks become larger and more complex, AI-assisted automation has become essential. These tools improve the efficiency of partner onboarding, credentials management, and compliance monitoring, removing friction from what were once manual, error-prone tasks.

**Next-gen IT.** In addition to AI, a new generation of B2B integration technologies is meeting the need for greater flexibility, reliability, and security.

- Application programming interfaces (APIs) will increasingly augment EDI with dynamic, event-driven connectivity.
- Containerized integration platforms will help organizations build highly reliable, scalable, and secure data pipelines that can adapt to changing regulatory, business, and cyberthreat landscapes.
- Cloud-based and managed services solutions will help organizations scale up their businesses, optimize efficiency, and gain access to specialized talent and expertise.

**Sustainability first.** Organizations will look for opportunities to advance their sustainability goals through energy-efficient B2B integration practices, including greater supply chain visibility and efficiency.

## Q2

### What should you do to thrive in the next 10 years?

Based on what we learned and observed from leading enterprises, we prepared our recommendations on how to keep pace with change.

**Take a platform approach.** There is no other choice than moving off siloed and legacy systems to integrated B2B integration platforms providing centralized visibility, governance, and automation across all transactions.

**Move beyond EDI.** It's also imperative for companies to unify traditional EDI processes and protocols with modern API-driven connectivity, enabling collaboration with diverse partners, applications, and ecosystems.

**Embrace the new era.** Companies know that it's time to act and embrace technologies like cloud, AI, and containers.

**Mirror the success.** Customers see the need to follow the path blazed by early adopters of new and emerging technologies, learning from their case studies and best practices.

## Q3

### What will be the main driver of dramatic change in B2B integration over the next 10 years?

We began to drill down for more specific information by initiating a survey to name the single-most important factor driving B2B change.

TOP ANSWERS	WHY AXWAY AGREES
AI (67%)	AI helps companies move beyond static, rules-based processes to more adaptive, intelligent operations. In short, AI makes B2B integration more agile, efficient, and responsive to the demands of complex partner networks.
Cloud (19%)	Our findings run counter to the idea that cloud is "already yesterday." Rather, the drive is to explore it further. Companies continue to pursue efficiency and scalability with cloud and hybrid solutions.
Security (14%)	We know that security concerns are already influencing B2B integration, but customers tell us that growing complexity and more sophisticated cyberthreats make it more important than ever.

Learn how to meet the security challenges of managing B2B partner networks in this new [Axway white paper](#).

Q4

### What are the main challenges of moving to the cloud?

Customer and market feedback on cloud migration showed that many companies see major obstacles in the costs and complexity of the migration process.

TOP ANSWERS	WHY AXWAY AGREES
High costs and overruns	Re-architecting and upgrading applications can prove prohibitively expensive; new licensing and pay-as-you-go models may be hard to manage
Vendor lock-in	Organizations are wary of losing flexibility and freedom of choice
Lack of expertise	Enterprises may underestimate the training, hiring, and process redesign required to operate in the cloud
Security and compliance risks	Risks of data loss and breaches cause companies to keep systems in-house

Q5

### Do you expect a shift in the balance between cloud and on-premises B2B in the coming 5-10 years?

B2B experts emphasized the importance of hybrid models (on-premises + cloud) and deployment flexibility in their cloud strategies.

TOP ANSWERS	WHY AXWAY AGREES
Hybrid models will continue to thrive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balance of predictable workloads on-premises and variable on cloud</li> <li>• More options for scalability and expansion</li> <li>• Compliance may require on-premises</li> <li>• Meet system and partner compatibility requirements</li> <li>• Maximize resilience</li> <li>• Maintain vendor independence</li> </ul>
Deployment flexibility and reversibility are key strategic advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate strategy and regulations evolving faster</li> <li>• Need low-cost way to change directions</li> </ul>

## Q6

### How do you anticipate the role of AI will evolve in B2B software solutions?

At our recent Axway Summit, we discussed how AI can simplify and improve B2B partner management. The main use cases cited by customers are in the table below.

COMMON USE CASES	WHY AXWAY AGREES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AI-based data mapping</li> <li>• AI agents for multiple tasks</li> <li>• Forecasting</li> </ul>	<p>AI enhances partner onboarding and management by automating tasks such as mapping, translation, and certificate validation</p> <p>AI agents can act as always-on digital assistants that offer guidance for partner onboarding and other interactions</p> <p>AI can analyze massive volumes of transaction data in real time to detect trends and anomalies, predict disruptions, and create forecasts</p>
<p>Other use cases for consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AI-driven pricing negotiation</li> <li>• Self-healing EDI transactions</li> <li>• Predictive shipping</li> <li>• Invoice reconciliation</li> </ul>	<p>AI-driven pricing negotiation uses machine learning to analyze market conditions, partner history, and demand trends to automatically suggest or negotiate optimal pricing</p> <p>Self-healing EDI transactions use AI to detect and correct errors in transaction flows</p> <p>Predictive shipping leverages AI forecasting on inventory, demand, and logistics data to recommend best shipping routes, carriers, or schedules</p> <p>Invoice reconciliation automates matching of invoices with purchase orders and receipts, using AI to detect and resolve mismatches</p>

## Q7

### What B2B industries are leading in AI adoption?

Our analysis showed that companies in these industries are the first real adopters of AI.

Technology, Media and Telecom	The first pioneers in implementing AI in operations
Financial Services	The highest shares of AI leaders are in this industry
Manufacturing	AI is gaining momentum for predictive maintenance, supply chain optimization
Retailing	AI-driven dynamic pricing now in use by many leading e-commerce companies
Agriculture	AI used in industry-specific use cases like precision crop yields, automated machinery
Marketing	AI tools assist with content management, search engine optimization across industries

Q8

## What are the challenges of adopting AI?

Large companies name integration and customization challenges as obstacles to more rapid AI adoption.

TOP ANSWERS	WHY AXWAY AGREES
Integration Challenges	Data silos, inconsistent formats, and security restrictions often make integration difficult and time-consuming  Without clean, unified data flows, AI models cannot deliver accurate insights or scale effectively
Customization Challenges	Out-of-the-box models rarely fit unique workflows, compliance requirements, or industry regulations

Access the [2025 Guide to Digital Trends](#) by Axway technology, business, and industry thought leaders.

Q9

## What are the top drivers affecting your B2B integration in 2024?

We looked into what leading companies in manufacturing, logistics, healthcare, financial services, automotive, energy, and retail consider to be the top drivers impacting their B2B transformation today, including key initiatives and results.

### Driver: Higher scalability, availability, reliability

**Leading global manufacturer of heavy equipment.** Moved to cloud-based predictive analytics powered by IoT and APIs. New capabilities for real-time health monitoring and failure prediction on equipment resulted in 30% reduction in unexpected breakdowns.

**Global logistics leader.** Moved from mainframe to cloud-based, AI-driven platform. Overcame scalability challenges during peak season, resulting in nearly zero downtime.

### Driver: API-driven automation

**Multinational auto giant.** Launched API supplier portal for secure access to internal applications, contracts, and orders with real-time data exchange and faster onboarding of new suppliers.

**Credit card and financial services leader.** Moved to open banking APIs from EDI automated clearinghouse system. Reduced fraud with new use cases for account and payment verification.

**International healthcare standards group.** Upgraded from X12 EDI standard to API connectivity with more flexible FHIR (Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resource). Enabled faster insurance approvals and better customer service.

Axway explores these topics in more detail in our white paper, "How AI and disruptive technologies are changing the next generation of B2B middleware."

[Download it Now](#) →

## Q10 Do you use multiple B2B solutions, and if yes – why?

Last year, Shari Lava, Senior Director, AI and Automation at IDC published a [blog](#) sharing their findings on the primary reason customers use more than one solution for B2B middleware:

TOP ANSWERS
Different solutions preferred by different buyers (23%)
Can't retire legacy tech (21%)
Need multiple tools to meet technology requirements (13%)

Based on Axway's analysis, most of our B2B customers still use value-added network (VAN) or several VANs in addition to our B2Bi solution. This underscores their need for coexistence with legacy tech.

## Q11 What is your greatest cause of dissatisfaction with B2B vendors?

Customers tell us that many vendors lose focus on their investments in B2B/EDI technology and strategy. They seek out vendors they can trust with their billion-dollar EDI operations.

TOP ANSWERS
Lack of service
Lack of support
Lack of performance



## Key takeaways for the next 10 years

1. AI adoption holds the potential to yield huge value.
2. The starting point is IT modernization to enable AI-driven use cases.
3. Security concerns will drive the rapid adoption of disruptive IT.
4. Hybrid models will dominate instead of pure cloud.
5. You need higher scalability, availability, and reliability to fuel growth.
6. The “API-fication” of EDI is here.
7. The platform approach is essential to managing multiple B2B networks.
8. Some B2B integration vendors lose commitment to customer success.

## Move into the B2B future with Axway

For nearly 25 years, Axway has been building deep expertise in B2B integration, helping enterprises of all kinds and sizes streamline critical operations — enabling efficiencies that now power more than \$140 billion in annual transactions for one customer.

Now we invite you to innovate and capture the new opportunities of the next ten years — platform modernization, AI-driven automation, API connectivity, and more. Our experts will work with you to reinforce and expand your core EDI business as you move ahead.

Ready to make the next 10 years of B2B your best decade yet?

[Talk to Us](#)