

E-Commerce Definitions

Business Application: Software supporting a specific business function. Major EC-type applications include: systems for one-time data capture and retrieval; extensive collaboration systems like groupware; data warehousing and associated systems; intelligent business transaction systems often running from web sites to client PC users.

Business Requirements: An organization's framework for proceeding with automation or networking to achieve better costs and efficiencies.

Data Element Dictionary: A publication listing all elements used with EDI and many EC structures.

Data Element: The smallest, meaningful piece of information in a business transaction; sometimes a method of condensing longer information into short code.

Data Mapping & Modeling: The process by which data is diagrammed and structured for use in business applications.

Data Mart: A compilation of data organized around a specific business function and presented in formats that conform to specific business practices and applications.

Data Warehouse: A compilation of databases and resources in a structure by which PC users can gain access to strategic business-and historical/archival information.

Database: A system for maintaining raw data in reliable, flexible form. A utility from which business applications often draw.

Digital Signature: A code or signal that equates to a hand-written signature; often required to complete or authenticate an electronic transaction.

Electronic Commerce (EC): The paperless exchange of business information using the Internet, browsers, transactional applications, purchase cards, EDI, e-mail, bulletin boards, electronic funds transfer and/or other network-based business tools. EC is the overarching strategy by which the government, private sector and citizen groups are changing the way federal agencies conduct business and present themselves in a service environment.

Electronic Data Interchange (EDI): The computer-to-computer exchange of business data in standardized format between Trading Partners. EDI also refers to a broad set of standards for system interoperation in a business environment.

Electronic Funds Transfer: The exchange of payment and remittance information electronically.

Encryption: The transformation of confidential plain text into cipher text to ensure a secure transaction over a network.

Extranet: Generally a reference to a network or segment of a network offered as a business support service through which outside organizations can conduct specific transactions, such as acquisitions. For instance, in many agencies the GSA Advantage! system is used as an "extranet" for supporting or conducting IT procurement.

Integration: The process of ensuring that data can be communicated from one application to another.

Interface: A recognizable and definable crossover point between two systems. The most commonly used inter-face is the Internet Protocol, allowing the World Wide Web to operate as a single resource across multiple operating systems and applications.

Interoperability: The extent to which two or more business systems can communicate in a fully open environment without prior agreement.

Intranet: The use of the public Internet and resources such as browsers, HTML, links, Java and JavaScript with-in an organization to establish an internal network resource.

Java: The programming language often used to generate Internet-based transactional applications, sometimes called applets.

Legacy System: Generally a host/mainframe system and all the databases and applications it runs. Any system that was implemented to meet older business requirements

Markup Languages:

Extensible Markup Language (XML): An evolving standard for streamlined web use in which documents and data are described as well as displayed.

Hyper Text Markup Language (HTML): An SGML based standard used for creating web pages that incorporate hypertext links, text, graphics, and multimedia.

Standardized Generalized Markup Language (SGML): A standard enabling the electronic exchange of documents between dissimilar systems.

Middleware: A set of services that allows an application to access a resource (e.g., another application, a database, etc.) over a network, making sure the use of that network is transparent to the application.

Public Key Infrastructure (PKI): A set of tools and services including Digital Signature that allows entities working in an open environment without prior agreement to complete secure transactions in which users are authenticated and transactions are fully validated. In the government and industry, PKI has taken the form of evolving standards sometimes in conflict with each other.

Security: The desired level of integrity, exclusiveness, availability and/or effectiveness to protect data from loss, corruption, destruction and/or unauthorized use.

Service-to-Citizens Systems: Agency systems such as web sites and kiosks that provide open information, resource data, electronic forms, public records and other access to publicly held government resources. Also, transactional platforms for conducting business between citizens and agencies, such as automated drivers license renewal, construction licenses, grant or loan applications and renewals, etc.

Transaction Partners: Organizations that do business with each other using EDI. In the federal arena, "trading partners" usually refers to contractors and vendors.

Transparency: The perception within different systems, networks and/or applications that they can interact as if they are all part of the same IT or communications platform. Transparency is usually created by the use of an intermediary resource such as middleware or an interface with a special algorithm.

Value-Added Network (VAN): Generally commercial entities that transmit, receive and store EDI transactions on behalf of customers; VANs are sometimes called third-party networks.

Virtual Private Network (VPN): The use of public Internet pipes and resources as the foundation for a secure, closely monitored network available only to authorized users. A public backbone network that replicates all aspects of a private or business-specific utility.

Definitions provided by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Electronic Commerce Resource Center, the National Institutes of Health, and Government Computer News.