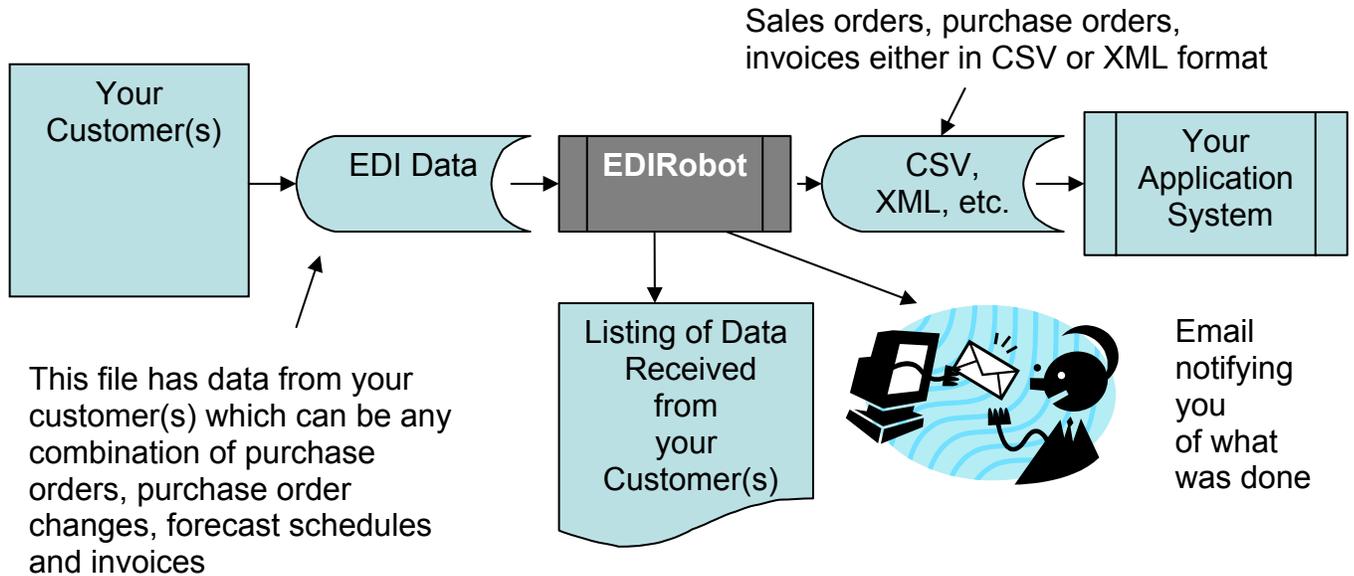


EDIRobot

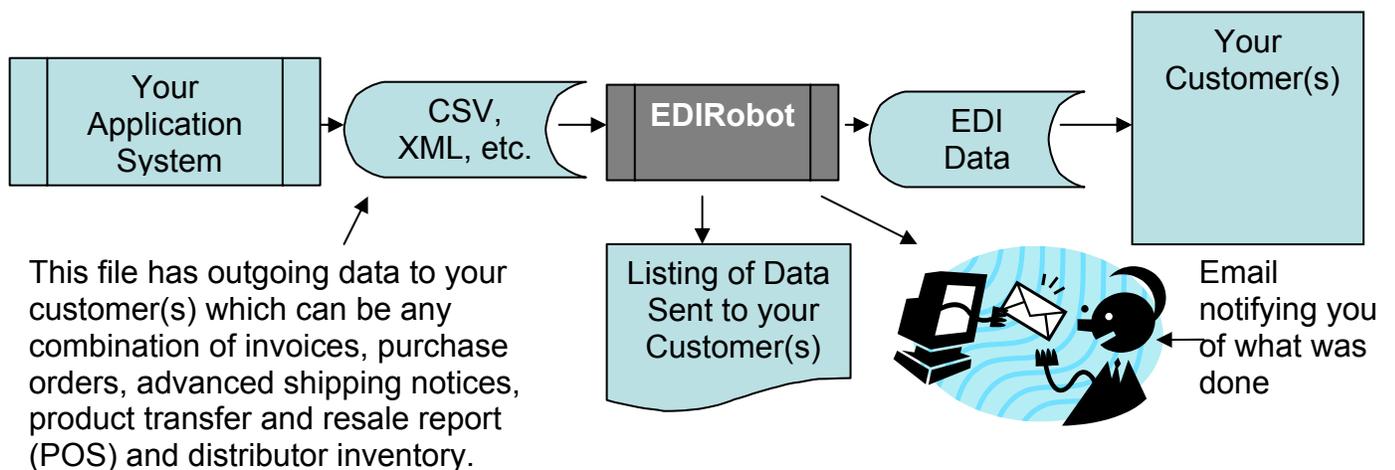
EDIRobot is for suppliers to the major retailers that need an automatic and seamless flow of data between their application system and their EDI customers.

EDIRobot does the following:

1. Turns an inbound EDI file into either a CSVⁱ file or an XMLⁱⁱ file that is input to your application systemⁱⁱⁱ.



2. Turns either a CSV file or an XML file coming from your application system into an outbound EDI file to your customers.



The outbound EDI data file can be for any of your EDI customers (trading partners) and can contain one or more documents like invoices, advance shipping notices (ASN), etc.

Because the EDI file can differ from customer to customer, EDIRobot has to know what each customer's EDI requirements are. For this it has what we call "trading partner modules" or TP for short, which are like tiny programs or maps that EDIRobot calls as needed. There is a TP module for Home Depot, for instance, another one for Wal-Mart, etc. These TP modules are used to interpret the incoming EDI file and to know how to structure an outgoing EDI file for that particular customer.

Note, however, that the record layout of a CSV or XML file (both inbound and outbound) is independent of the trading partner. The record layout of a purchase order CSV file is different from the record layout of an invoice CSV file but all the purchase order CSV files have the same record layout, same for the invoice CSV's, the ASN CSV's, etc. This is important because it means that the application system doesn't have to worry about individual customer's EDI mapping requirements which, by the way, can change at any time. When there is a new customer, the layout of the CSV file remains the same.

EDIRobot also processes incoming functional acknowledgments and sends back one after receiving an EDI document from your customer.

EDIRobot can move data between your computer and your customer's FTP site but it cannot move data between a VAN^{iv} (Value Added Network) and your computer. Therefore, if all your customers can use FTP, you don't need a VAN.

If your customer prefers to use a VAN for EDI, you need a separate communication program to move the data between the VAN and your computer. This also means that you need to have an EDI mailbox at a VAN, which doesn't have to be the same as your customer's. This separate communication program would move the data between your computer and your EDI mailbox at your VAN and then your VAN will look after moving the data between your mailbox and your customer's mailbox.

EDIRobot can work with the following VANs:

1. GXS
2. G International
3. IBM
4. Sterling Commerce
5. Commport Communications of Aurora, Ontario

If you are using any of the first 3 VANs above, you can use the Expedite Base communication program that they provide free of charge to their customers.

If you use Sterling Commerce, you need to have Gentran:Director. If you use Commport Communications, you need their RASFTP communication program.

EDIRobot can be set to run from the Windows scheduler or from Gentran:Director scheduler (Process Control) as frequently as you want. It can run automatically, without human intervention.

EDIRobot is a modular system consisting of a core, or basic module, and one or more TP modules. It grows with your business because you add TP modules as you need them. For example: you need to go on EDI with Sears, you get EDIRobot with the Sears module. Later on, when you start selling to Target and Home Depot, you add the Target and the Home Depot TP modules.

A TP module comes with the purchase order (from your customer to you) and then you can add EDI documents as required. E.g. you can get the Federated Department Stores TP module with the purchase order and later on add the invoices and the advanced shipping notices.

As you noticed from the diagrams on the first page, EDIRobot sends you e-mail notification every time it processes either incoming or outgoing EDI documents. You can, of course, turn this e-mail notification on or off whenever you want from the Preferences screen.

Introduction to EDI

Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) is the computer-to-computer exchange of business data in standard formats using networks, such as VANs or the Internet. In EDI, information is organized according to a specified format set by both parties, allowing a "hands-off" computer transaction that requires no human intervention or re-keying on either end. All information contained in an EDI transaction set is, for the most part, the same as on a conventionally printed document.

EDI replaces the faxing and mailing of paper documents. Most business documents that one company would exchange with another company can be sent via EDI.

Some business partners do not use a VAN and use the internet for transmission of EDI documents via AS/2.

EDIRobot supports the ANSI X12 standard, which is sanctioned by the American National Standards Institute and is the predominant standard in North America.

In the most common EDI scenario, the EDI cycle begins when the purchaser (your customer) sends the supplier (you) an EDI purchase order. At shipping time, the supplier sends the purchaser an EDI advance shipping notice. An EDI invoice follows and, finally, the purchaser sends payment information to his bank and the funds are transferred electronically to the supplier's bank account through electronic fund transfer (EFT) or financial EDI. The EDI cycle is now complete.

EDI was first introduced in North America in the 1970s. It was implemented first in the transportation sector, followed by the food and drug distribution, the automotive, and the banking and financial sectors. Electronic processing and transfer of information was significantly faster, more efficient and more accurate than the manual exchange of paper. This translated into increased productivity, faster order fulfillment and less margin for errors, and thus provided a competitive advantage. Industry estimates indicate that processing a paper purchase order costs about \$70, whereas an EDI purchase order costs about \$1.

What EDI is not

In EDI, the emphasis is on the automation of business transactions. Therefore, EDI is neither electronic mail nor fax because in these, a human-to-machine interface is involved, at least at one end. With EDI there is no need to interpret and re-key the exchanged information.

July 30, 2007

End of document

ⁱ CSV file: a common text file format that contains comma-delimited values.

ⁱⁱ XML: Extensible Markup Language

ⁱⁱⁱ Application system. This can be a legacy system (an existing system that is deployed in an organization), an MRP system (Material Requirements Planning), a warehouse management system or an accounting system.

^{iv} A (VAN) Value Added Network is a third party who offers its clients (trading partners) mailboxes in which EDI transmissions are stored and forwarded to the recipients. It serves as a middle person, so neither party can access the other's private network.