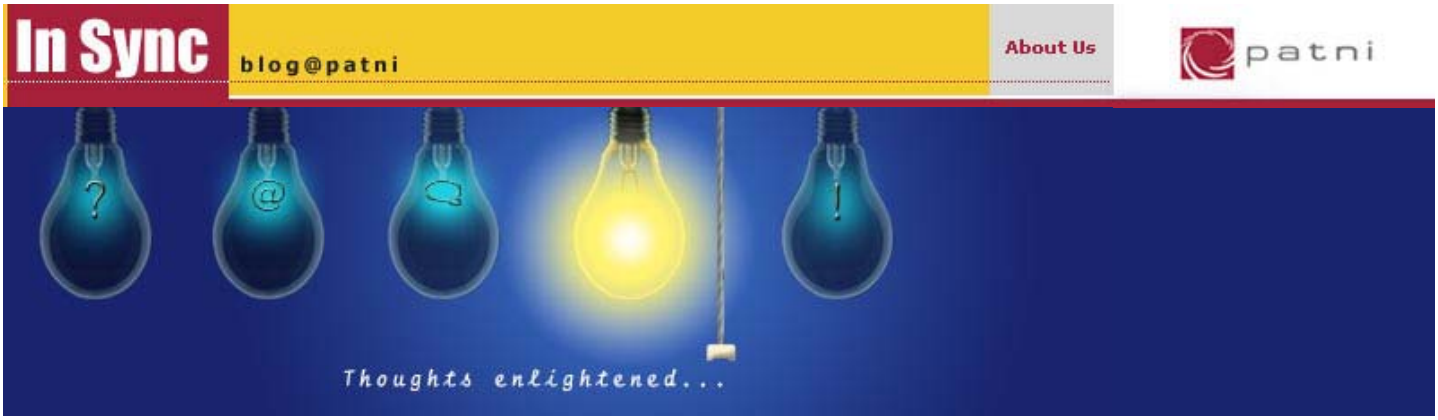

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EDI over the Internet

The revolution for EDI has been taking place since the last decade. Although the figures might tell the VAN (value added networks) have been successful to survive several odds. But now the internet technologies are coming forth to embrace the EDI protocols and methodologies.

EDI (Electronic Data Interchange) has been an ANSI X12 or an EDIFACT standard driven with VAN as the primary transport. There are 2 considerations primarily for EDI or e-Commerce - the Translation/Transformation and second the Transportation. Translation is the mechanism to convert the business data into Trading Partner understandable data, and transportation is the mechanism to publish/receive the business data. EDI cryptic files (ANSI X12 or EDIFACT) over VAN transports have been extensively the mechanisms of yester years.

Internet with XML technology has reformed the EDI. Currently XML standards are still very flexible and not evolved to the mark of 'standard EDI' standards to be adopted by organizations. However the internet protocols have advanced much faster - with AS1/AS2 - email over the web or HTTP over the web gaining acceptance. The advantages for EDI over the web are numerous with lower costs, lower TCO, faster transfers, more methods for security (digital certificates, HTTPS, etc), adaptation to new revolutionary technologies such as web services and SOA.

Yet the question remains - will the traditional EDI over VAN continue to survive, or will the next revolution of the internet data transfer with XML prove to reach a wider penetration? One way to answer this question is to look at the evolution of the XML in conjunction with the Internet technologies.

Cyclic internet: Strong breakthroughs in making up the business process cycle with internet using XML is required. A school of thought proposes to improve the end user business processes, but along with that we need an end to end solution for EDI over the internet capable to manage cyclic business processes - such as - company A sends a purchase requisition to company B - the company B's acknowledgement must be received, which would loop back the earlier sent message (i.e. the purchase requisition message itself) via the internet. A trace capability with logging and XML over XML linkage would be required to be researched.

Agile software: Although the hard wire internet technologies are immensely available, the software layers of software packages are yet to come up which would use normal internet with encapsulation of securities, real time behavior, technical and functional acknowledgement handling capability, extensibility in terms of custom built messages for specific Trading Partners and easy XML parsing - which otherwise would be the primary features of a traditional EDI capability.

SAP Process Integration Framework: Resolving all the questions about security, performance, real time and with standard driven approach for EDI, the SAP PI provides architecture to suit the needs of EDI over the Internet. With Seeburger - SAP PI pre-defined contents, EDI is possible, and with transports of Web (SOA-SOAP, HTTP, SMTP, Web Services) with XML/Rosetta net and EDI standards, the SAP PI is a good place to look for the EDI over the Internet initiation for an organization.

Open web and internet EDI are the key buzzwords for today's EDI and IT managers but unfortunately they would need to wait for the revolution in EDI over internet to pacify their anxiety about security, ease, availability, and the above mentioned doubts that they carry.

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