



Smart EDI Contract Negotiation Checklist for SMBs

The 12 Questions Every SMB Should Ask Before Signing an EDI Contract

EDI contracts can look simple on the surface. A monthly fee, a setup charge, and a few technical terms. But many SMBs later discover hidden costs tied to trading partners, document volume, testing, support, or contract renewals.

Before signing up with any EDI provider, ask these twelve questions. The answers will reveal whether the pricing is transparent or designed to increase over time.

1. What is the total cost of ownership over the first 12 months?

Many vendors only quote a base monthly fee. That number rarely reflects the true cost.

Ask for a full breakdown including:

- Implementation fees
- Trading partner setup costs
- Monthly platform fees
- Document or transaction charges
- VAN transmission fees
- Integration costs
- Support fees

Why it matters

Understanding the full first year cost helps you avoid unexpected charges after onboarding.

2. How are trading partner fees structured?

Trading partner pricing varies widely between providers.

Clarify:

- Is onboarding a one-time fee?
- Is there a monthly charge per trading partner?
- Are inactive partners still billed?

Why it matters

Trading partner pricing can multiply quickly as your network grows.

3. How does document volume pricing work?

Some providers charge per document, per transaction, or per kilo character.

Ask:

- What document volume is included in the plan?
- What are the overage costs?
- Do pricing tiers reset monthly?

Why it matters

Seasonal spikes in orders should not permanently increase your pricing tier.

4. What happens during peak season?

Some vendors automatically increase pricing tiers when volume spikes.

Clarify:

- Does pricing adjust back down after peak months?
- Are tier increases permanent?

Why it matters

Businesses with seasonal demand should not be locked into higher pricing year-round.

5. What does the setup or implementation fee actually cover?

Setup fees should reflect actual implementation work.

Ask:

- Are trading partner maps already available?
- Does the setup include testing and certification?
- Are integrations with ERP, WMS, or TMS included?

Why it matters

Some vendors charge thousands for work that has already been done for other customers.

6. Is support included in the platform price?

Support structures vary widely.

Confirm:

- Is production support included?
- Are there separate fees for priority support?
- What response times are guaranteed?

Why it matters

If your EDI system fails during business hours, support responsiveness becomes critical.

7. What service level agreements (SLAs) are guaranteed?

Your contract should define measurable service expectations.

Review:

- Support response time
- Issue resolution time
- System uptime guarantees

Why it matters

SLAs define how quickly problems must be addressed.

8. Are there minimum usage commitments?

Some contracts require a minimum document volume each month.

Ask:

- What happens if my usage is lower?
- Will I still pay the minimum fee?

Why it matters

Minimum commitments can increase costs for smaller or seasonal businesses.

9. How do pricing increases work at renewal?

Some contracts include automatic annual increases.

Clarify:

- Are renewal price increases capped?
- Are increases tied to inflation or usage?

Why it matters

Even small annual increases compound significantly over time.

10. What happens if I want to add more trading partners later?

Growth should not require renegotiating the entire contract.

Ask:

- What are the costs for adding additional partners?
- Are new partner maps included or billed separately?

Why it matters

EDI networks typically expand as businesses grow.

11. Can I export my data and EDI mappings?

Data portability is essential.

Confirm:

- Can you export your raw EDI files?
- Can you access or export your trading partner maps?
- Will the provider assist with migration if you switch platforms?

Why it matters

You should never be locked into a provider because your data cannot move.

12. What happens if I want to exit the contract?

Every contract should define a clear exit path.

Review:

- Termination notice requirements
- Early termination penalties
- Conditions allowing termination for service failures

Why it matters

If service quality declines, your business should have the flexibility to move.

Important Note:

You do not need to be an EDI expert to negotiate a fair contract.

The most successful buyers simply ask the right questions, request transparent pricing, and compare multiple vendors before signing.

A clear contract protects your business, your supply chain, and your long-term technology strategy.

**Do you want to know what a fair EDI cost should be for
your business?**

[Run the Elevate Pricing Calculator](#) →