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Electronic Data Interchange, Business-to-Business Application Service Provider
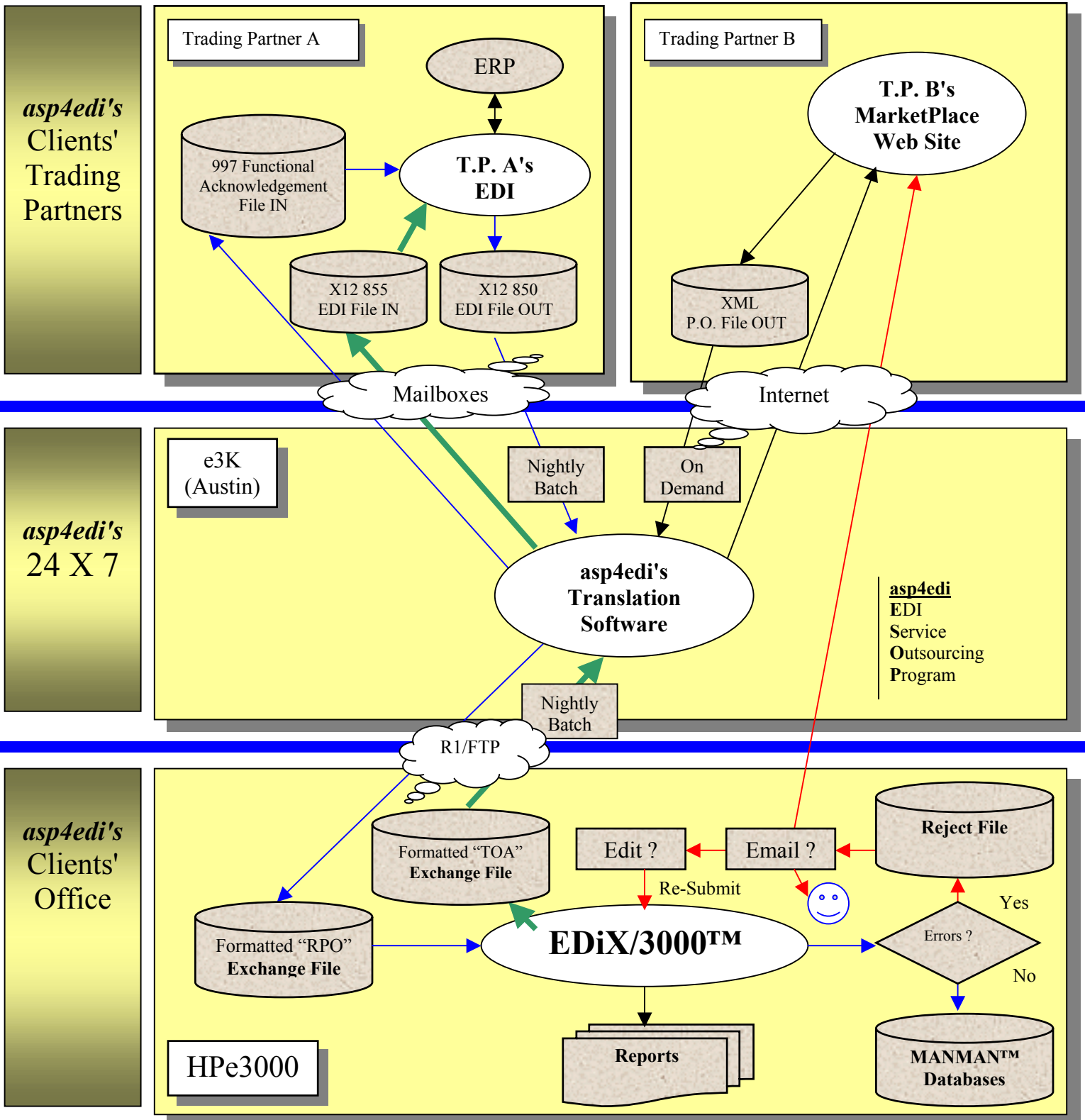
Position Paper 2000

"Interconnectivity" is the heart of the Supply Chain Software your manufacturing company needs to be competitive and innovative in today's fast-paced business environment. Advances in telecommunications and the Internet make it possible to reach out and embrace your Trading Partners (customers, suppliers, employees, and partners). However, the number of suppliers involved makes a daunting problem of managing the many relationships between sources for software, hardware, files, networks, protocols, standards, training, business process engineering, and implementation consulting. It is a lot of work to understand and program the relationships between the data in your ERP system and the information in all of your Trading Partner's systems. Horror stories with huge price tags abound among large multinationals. That's why so many small and mid-sized manufacturing companies have decided to **outsource** their EDI/eCommerce nightmares.

Every IT system is unique; even among companies using the same packaged ERP system, there are hundreds of differences in the details of implementation and utilization. These *differences* become more important as you try to interface your system to the many brands of systems and applications used by all of your Trading Partners. Just as almost anyone on earth can use a telephone, anyone in IT today can buy all the pieces of infrastructure to make EDI and eCommerce work. But as anyone who has tried to call remote parts of the world has discovered, the language barrier is often insurmountable, and the metaphor holds true for connectivity as well. True end-to-end information transfer, called **B2B** (Business-to-Business) or **A2A** (Application-to-Application), between numerous Trading Partners is as difficult as translating Chinese to English then to Swahili, requiring special skills, much effort, and of course, large denomination bills.

Our **asp4edi Outsourcing Program** is a turn-key solution for all of your EDI and eCommerce connectivity requirements. Whether you want to interface your MANMAN™ and/or OMAR™ applications to only one EDI Trading Partner or to hundreds of eCommerce users, our service can support your top management strategies and your IT and end-user efforts. If your Trading Partners use ANSI X12 or EDIFACT EDI Standards or have XML data files flowing to and from their system through their own or ther industry's marketplace web sites, asp4edi can handle all of the translation and mapping necessary to seamlessly integrate your Supply Chain with your existing ERP system.

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Electronic Data Interchange Application Service Provider
Overview Diagram
Inbound P.O. to OMAR™ S.O. with Acknowledgements

asp4edi's Clients' Trading Partners

asp4edi's 24 X 7

asp4edi's Clients' Office

Trading Partner A

ERP

997 Functional Acknowledgement File IN

T.P. A's EDI

X12 855 EDI File IN

X12 850 EDI File OUT

Trading Partner B

T.P. B's MarketPlace Web Site

XML P.O. File OUT

Mailboxes

Internet

e3K (Austin)

Nightly Batch

On Demand

asp4edi's Translation Software

asp4edi **E**DI **S**ervice **O**utsourcing **P**rogram

Nightly Batch

R1/FTP

Formatted "TOA" Exchange File

Formatted "RPO" Exchange File

Edit ?

Email ?

Reject File

Re-Submit

EDiX/3000™

Errors ?

Yes

No

Reports

MANMAN™ Databases

HPe3000

Consider the many pieces of the EDI/B2B equation:

- your unique implementation of your own ERP system
- your systems Hardware and Operating System vendors (HP and others)
- your Hardware support and Applications support vendors
- the Standards used for Data Formatting (ANSI X12, EDIFACT, XML/DTDs)
- the phone systems and/or network connections (numbers, accounts, logons, passwords, IP addresses) and on-going monthly fees
- VANs (Value Added Networks) and "file mailboxes"
- ISPs and Internet Consultants and Programmers
- modems, routers and other connectivity hardware
- file transfer software (Reflection, proprietary, Internet)
- scheduling software (batch processing, timing, performance)
- Translation software (EDI or XML to/from ASCII flat files)
- Application Software Interface/Integration (to/from MANMAN™ & OMAR™)
- the variety of industry and company-specific documents (POs, ASNs, Invoices) and their specific contents and rules
- the training/travel expenses and salaries of your dedicated IT staff
- time spent unraveling mysterious problems between finger-pointing episodes
- time spent talking to your Trading Partner's IT staff, their EDI software providers, their VANs, and their end users(!)
- tracking changes between revision levels of all of the above
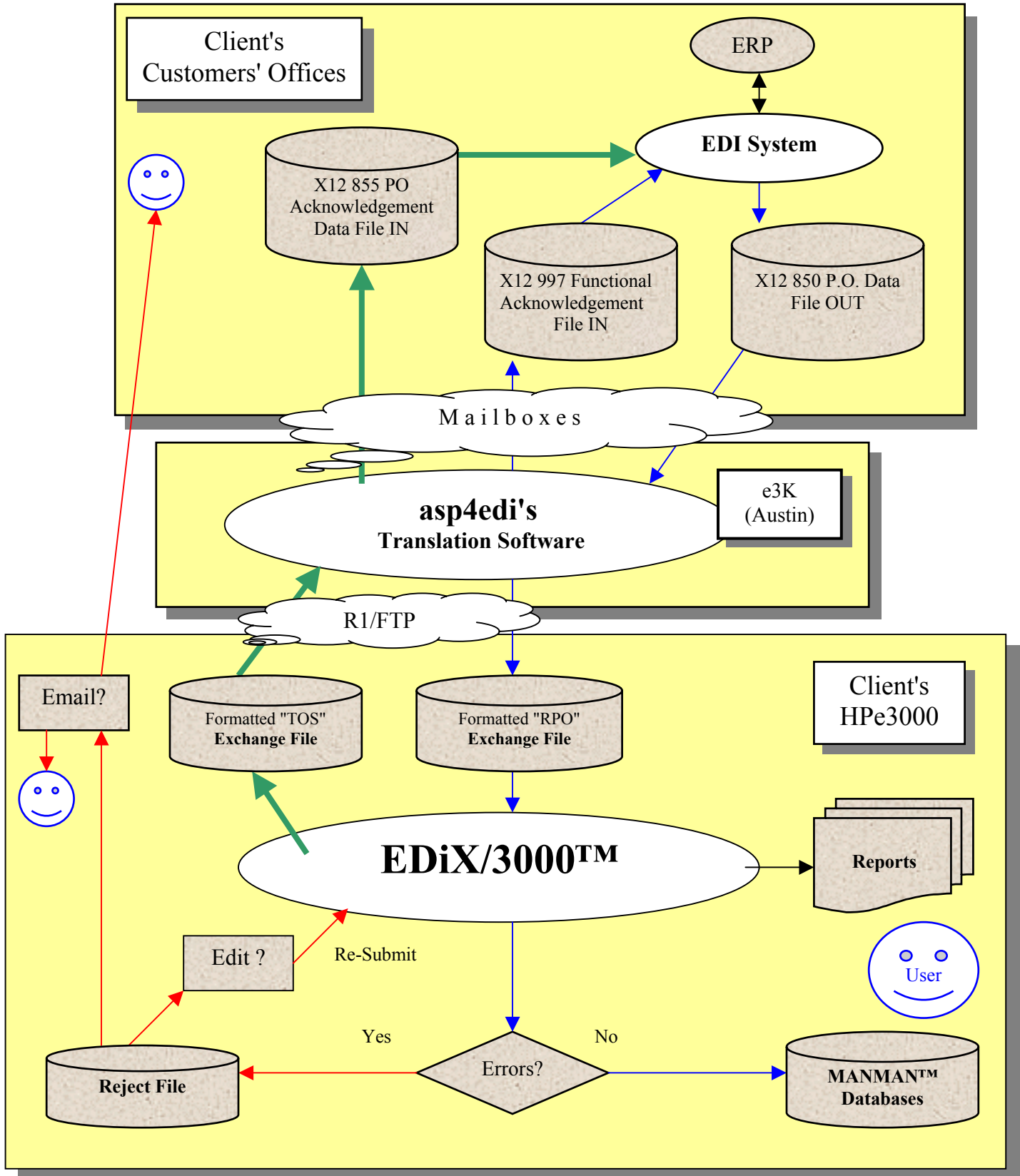- crash projects to implement or upgrade with impossible deadlines

Asp4edi can outsource all of these headaches and more. The attached diagrams of inbound Customer Purchase Order flows provide an understanding of the locations, files, standards, software, and operations outsourcing support we can provide. The **Overview Diagram** shows several locations where activities occur: at the bottom is your MANMAN™ site receiving the POs to be loaded as Sales Orders in OMAR™, in the middle is the asp4edi facility where we receive, pre-process, and transmit your data files, and at the top are your Customers.

Our primary expertise is MANMAN™ and OMAR™, and **our own EDiX/3000™ Application Interface Software** is our main competitive advantage in the interface/integration area. The bottom third of the **Overview Diagram** shows how EDiX/3000™ loads a nightly batch of incoming POs from our specially formatted "RPO" (Receive PO) exchange file into OMAR™, providing reports of the successful (and perhaps some unsuccessful) order processing results. After mapping and validation, good POs are loaded into OMAR where they are accessed and updated if necessary as usual, while bad POs which failed validation are posted to a Reject File for further handling. A nightly batch of outbound PO/SO Acknowledgements is created by EDiX/3000™ in our "TOA" (Transmit Order Acknowledgement) format.

A standard file transfer mechanism such as Reflection or FTP is used to transfer files between the diagram's bottom area and the asp4edi office located in the center of the diagram. Our HPe3000 using EDI Windows™ run the EDI scheduling, translation, and
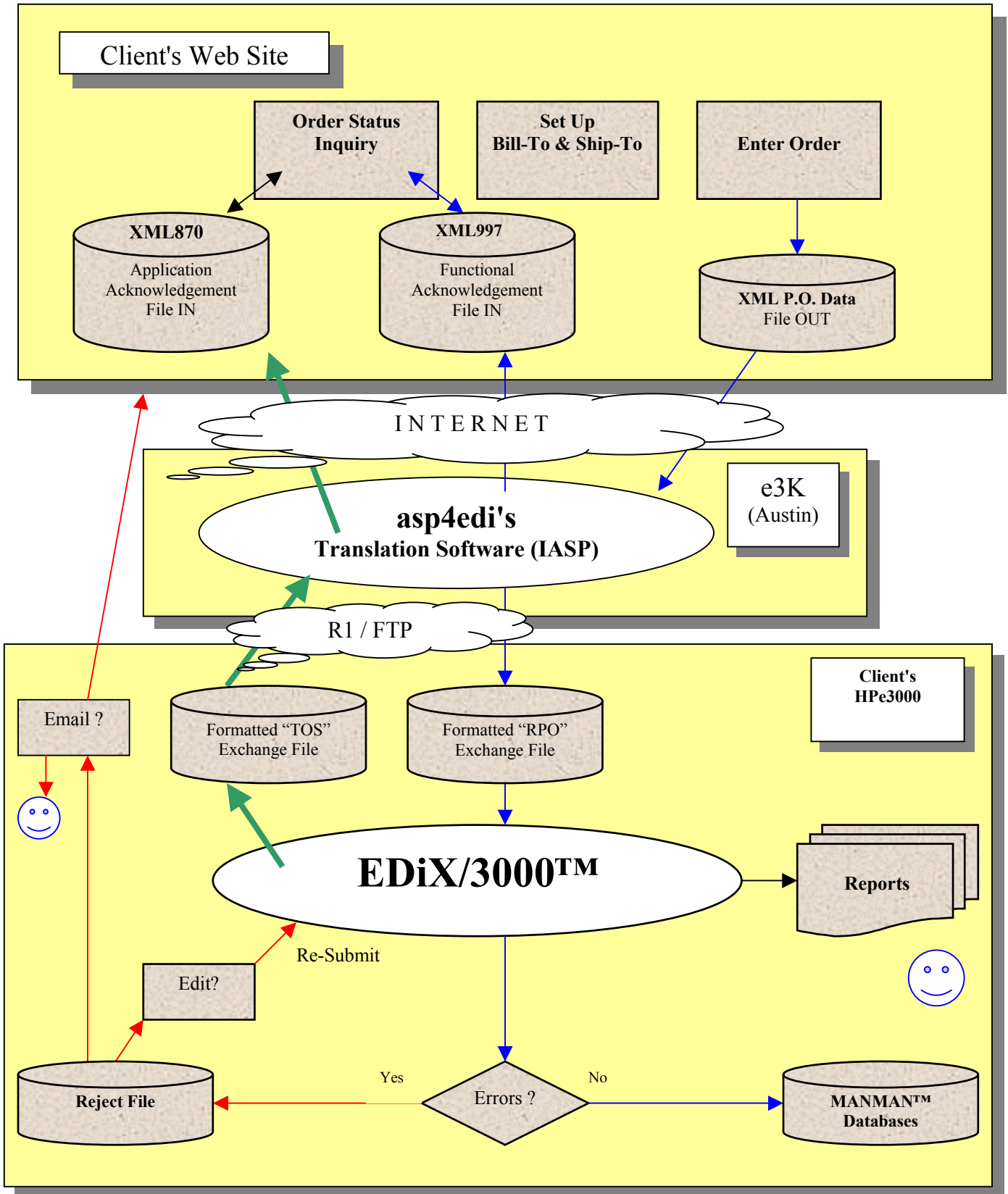
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Detail EDI Diagram
Inbound P.O. to OMAR™ S.O. with Acknowledgements

Client's Customers' Offices

ERP

EDI System

X12 855 PO Acknowledgement Data File IN

X12 997 Functional Acknowledgement File IN

X12 850 P.O. Data File OUT

M a i l b o x e s

asp4edi's Translation Software

e3K (Austin)

R1/FTP

Email?

Formatted "TOS" Exchange File

Formatted "RPO" Exchange File

Client's HPe3000

EDiX/3000™

Reports

User

Edit ?   Re-Submit

Reject File

Yes   Errors?   No

MANMAN™ Databases

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Detail B2B Diagram
Inbound P.O. to OMAR™ S.O. with Acknowledgements

Client's Web Site

Order Status Inquiry

Set Up Bill-To & Ship-To

Enter Order

XML870
Application Acknowledgement File IN

XML997
Functional Acknowledgement File IN

XML P.O. Data
File OUT

I N T E R N E T

asp4edi's
Translation Software (IASP)

e3K
(Austin)

R1 / FTP

Client's HPe3000

Email ?

Formatted "TOS" Exchange File

Formatted "RPO" Exchange File

EDiX/3000™

Reports

Re-Submit

Edit?

Reject File

Yes

Errors ?

No

MANMAN™ Databases

mapping software necessary to reformat and transform the data from asp4edi's Exchange File Format to one of the EDI standards such as ANSI X12 or EDIFACT. Ninety-five percent of the differences between your different customers' files are handled by our asp4edi software at our site in Austin.

The top of the **<u>Overview Diagram</u>** shows two of the ways your customers may act as Trading Partners: through their own EDI system or through a web site. The EDI case on the upper left is more standard and well defined because there are generally accepted methods for file definition and functional acknowledgements. There are numerous ways of handling the web site case in the upper right, but the one depicted represents a custom download and notification method.

The other two attachments, the **<u>EDI Diagram</u>** and the **<u>B2B Diagram</u>** show more details of how we offload your communications, analysis, programming, processing, and operations burdens. Besides helping with negotiations between you and your Trading Partners, we do all of the configuration, set up, mapping, scheduling, and processing for you. All your users have to know is that POs were received and loaded and that Acknowledgements were returned to your customers. If there are errors, your end users are notified and they handle the corrective actions directly, without IT/MIS involvement. We monitor your processing at all steps along the way and are aware of any problems not related to your own internal order processing department (i.e. cross-referencing problems such as bad part numbers or invalid Ship-To or Bill-To Number lookups, or pricing and delivery issues). We handle most problems before you even know they have happened.

Let asp4edi solve your EDI and eCommerce interfacing dilemma. Total outsourcing, from start to finish, is the way to keep your company on the cutting edge all the time. We do Advanced Ship Notice (ASN), Invoice, and other common EDI/B2B Interfaces as well as the P.O./S.O. processing used in these examples. As services and options change, asp4edi will remain current. Our Service Level Agreements ensure that you get the kind of quality you would pay dearly for on an in-house basis at a price you can afford. Our pricing consists of a one-time set up fee based on the size and complexity of your organization, set up fees per Transaction Module (Inbound POs is one, for instance), set up fees per Trading Partner, and ongoing monthly charges for processing and managing your business documents. Why buy all that infrastructure and spend your critical IT resources on a task as costly and complex as document interchange? We'll do all that for you at a fraction of the cost and trouble.

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