

**TRADE/CEFACT/1998/CRP.17**  
**13 March 1998**

**EDIFACT WORKING GROUP  
(EWG)**

**MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

**SOURCE:** Australian delegation  
**STATUS:** National Contribution  
**ACTION:** For discussion, March 1998, 3<sup>rd</sup> CEFACT session, agenda item 3

## **EDIFACT WORKING GROUP (EWG)**

### **MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

#### **Background**

1. There are two facets to the UN/EDIFACT process. They are the twice yearly Joint Rapporteur Team (JRT) Meetings (now to be known as EDIFACT Working Group meetings) and the out of session activity undertaken by nationally managed/coordinated management teams previously appointed under a mandate approved by CEFACT's predecessor, The Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures, (WP.4).

#### **JRT Meetings**

2. Whilst these meetings attract a large number of participants their interest and expertise is largely directed to specific areas of message development and technical issues relating to the messages either previously developed or currently under development.

3. The JRT meetings bring together EDI users and technical experts drawn from a wide range of business and sectorial interests. Their principal objective and focus being to ensure that the relevant messages are speedily developed and published in the UN/EDIFACT Directories.

#### **Out of Session Activity**

4. This activity is undertaken under the auspices of a regional or national management team and encompasses a much wider range of issues and activity which can be best summarised as follows:

- ~~(suggest moving this point to the end of this section – see below)\*~~ encouragement of the user community to participate not only in the EDIFACT message development process but also the implementation of EDI using the UN/EDIFACT standard (In most cases this involves increasing local/regional promotion and awareness)

- provision of the support services (TAGs & Secretariats) to process and organise the distribution of DMRs and other documents without which JRT meetings would not be able to function
- provision of resources and support services for the standing and ad-hoc working groups which function on a continuing basis outside of the JRT meetings.
- liaison with Government Departments on UN/EDIFACT policy and issues which impact on the overall CEFACT mission
- liaison with local industry associations and committees on UN/EDIFACT policy and issues which impact on the overall CEFACT mission

5. National participation has been developed with a much wider focus, and in particular on issues such as regional trade agreements, cross industry participation in regional and/or domestic implementations and the broader trade facilitation issues associated with the use of EDI and UN/EDIFACT. It is in this latter context that global participation was first encouraged and which ultimately resulted in the establishment of CEFACT.

6. It also needs to be recognised that many of the participants in this National activity are not directly involved in message development or in the technical aspects of the work and therefore have no interest or purpose in attending a JRT meeting. However, they often play key roles at the National level by ensuring that the required local support infrastructures are in place and/or in promoting UN/EDIFACT as a global standard in which National and, as appropriate, Regional interests may be addressed.

### **Issues for Consideration**

7. With the establishment of the empowered EDIFACT Working Group, (EWG), it is essential for there to be a continuing close working relationship between the “**Out of Session Activity**” and the regular “**JRT Meetings**” and the need for this to be clearly recognised and understood by the EWG membership. Previously this has been the primary responsibility of the UN/EDIFACT Rapporteurs. However, with abolition of these positions it is critical that the EWG not only recognises the importance and significance of current National activities and their ongoing responsibilities in the process, but also ensures that those responsible for these activities have representation in the new management structure.

8. At the Anaheim JRT it was proposed that the EWG management team be appointed from within the existing JRT meeting process. This not only ignores the existence and importance of the existing National organisations and the importance of their contribution to the process, but also the impact that this could have on their continued participation.

Further, it diminishes the very important perspective of direct global participation in the continued development in, and the acceptance and implementation of the UN/EDIFACT standard.

9. In addition, without National input at the management level on issues such as how DMRs are to be processed, what if any new messages can or will be accepted into the process or the implications of a sectorial decision which has trade implications for sectors not involved in the process, the current credibility of UN/EDIFACT will come into question. The result is likely to be that participating countries or regions will withdraw from the process or only implement those aspects of the standard that suits their purpose. Others are likely to perceive little value in becoming involved. The risk is that UN/EDIFACT will become marginalised and lose its global impetus.

10. The core focus of the CEFACT mission is to **“facilitate international trade transactions through the simplification and harmonisation of procedures and information flows, and so contribute to the growth of global commerce”**. This principle has been embodied in the mission of each CEFACT Working Group. Accordingly it is essential that the EWG Management Team not only focuses on the user and technical issues associated with the JRT process but allows for National/Regional perspectives to be taken into account. There are a number of ways in which this might be achieved. One possibility would be through representation on the EWG Executive Management Committee. However there are other mechanisms which could and should be considered.

The critical issue which needs to be addressed is that the principles of inclusiveness, transparency and balance are incorporated in the procedures and processes of the EWG. It is only through the acceptance of this philosophy that UN/EDIFACT can claim to be a truly global standard that has both global involvement and support.

---