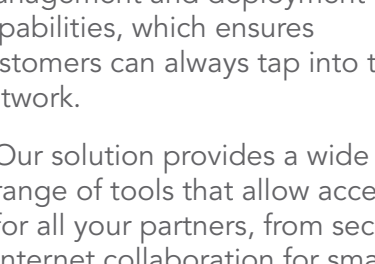




D2C Dare to Compare Sterling Commerce to the Competition: A B2B Comparison Guide

See how Sterling Commerce clearly beats the competition on 26 different B2B criteria. The details are insightful.



Trading Partner Management

Explore the Sterling Commerce Advantage

Then Consider the Alternative

Does the vendor have the experience and resources to provide necessary support?

Vendors need extensive experience and resources to provide sufficient trading-partner management. Our solutions have enabled enterprises to build and manage communities for more than 30 years, and we realize the importance of having dedicated support staff for each community program. This experience and breadth of knowledge gives you the security of knowing you're tapping into a legacy of best practices.

Many vendors have just recently entered the trading-partner management arena, and they don't even offer such key services as community-integration assistance. Typically, these vendors limit their support of partner communities to "self-service," leaving you without the full resources you need to handle problems. Watch out for:

- Vendors without a long history of successfully building and managing communities
- Vendors who don't provide dedicated support staff

[return to menu](#)

Does the solution enable end-to-end management of multiple trade-partner communities?

Extending your business processes to your trading partners successfully and cost-effectively requires the robust trading-partner management adapt architecture of B2B Edge. Our solution provides the full range of functionality that business partners need, from wizard-based trading-partner setup to remote management capability. Our 30 years of experience in building communities provides a foundation of best practices that assure reliable performance.

Some vendors claim to enable community management, but all they really offer is on-boarding capabilities to their value-added network. Watch out for:

- Vendors who provide no community development
- Vendors who don't support guaranteed message delivery between partners

[return to menu](#)

Does the solution provide sufficient flexibility by allowing for multiple entry points into the trading-partner network?

Partners and customers shouldn't have to fight to gain access to your network because of limited entry points. Our B2B gateway supports tens of thousands of endpoints, providing remote management and deployment capabilities, which ensures customers can always tap into the network.

- Our solution provides a wide range of tools that allow access for all your partners, from secure Internet collaboration for smaller companies to point-to-point connections for your largest partners.

Some vendors' idea of access begins and ends with Internet gateways. Beware of:

- Vendors who don't support traditional B2B connectivity
- Vendors who provide limited support of file-transport protocols
- Vendors who lack value-added network (VAN) interconnects

[return to menu](#)

Managed File Transfer

Explore the Sterling Commerce Advantage

Then Consider the Alternative

Does the solution permit centralized, agent-free monitoring and the control of data throughout the file-transfer process?

B2B depends on being able to send files to customers and partners, through private channels or the Internet, knowing that data will not be intercepted or altered in transit. Our solution provides agent-free monitoring capabilities that are easy to implement, allowing partners to share information in an efficient and cost-effective way.

Many vendors can only provide monitoring and management by having you install agent software on each server and operating system, increasing your cost and workload. Watch out for:

- Vendors who install "special agent software" on each server

[return to menu](#)

Can data be intelligently moved, managed, and transformed during transit with sufficient visibility?

Impassible file transfer and management depends on having support for any size file, from small messages to multi-gigabyte files across a vast array of protocols. Our solution can move any protocol or massive amounts of data based on predefined rules and handles exceptions automatically. Activity is monitored 24/7 with full archiving, proactive error notification, and automatic backup, recovery and temporary restart, ensuring that data is protected and available when you need it.

Many vendors have difficulty just moving data effectively, let alone providing deep visibility into the data and business processes. Some vendors, for instance, have trouble with legacy protocols while their services today that you don't need transfer protocols, which can keep partners from receiving crucial information in a timely fashion. Watch out for:

- Solutions that lack a visibility/operations protocol to display data and processes moving through the integration space
- Solutions that are unable to handle both small messages and large files

[return to menu](#)

Can the solution scale to meet your needs?

B2B can be unpredictable, and companies must be prepared to handle rapid growth quickly, cost-effectively, and safely. Our system allows you to add functionality as you need it. The modular platform leverages open standards and supports multiple protocols, standards and technologies, providing the flexibility to handle steady or explosive growth.

Many systems can't move large amounts of data, or they're limited to certain protocols or movements within the enterprise. Solutions based on message-oriented architectures, for instance, often interfere with other MQ traffic when used for translation and value-added network (VAN) transmission. Be wary of:

- Vendors who provide limited support of file-transfer protocols
- Vendors who can't move large volumes of data over the Internet

[return to menu](#)

Does the solution provide the necessary level of security and reliability?

FTP transfers inherently bring high security risks, because even when users encrypt data prior to transfer, security information such as user IDs and passwords is often stored by the transmitter and receiver. That's why you need advanced security options for perimeter authentication, data privacy, and integrity when transferring files. Our solution provides seamless connections that eliminate the need to store data in the DMZ, protecting you from destructive programs or invasive or intrusive data.

Many vendors offer no generalized perimeter security services, leaving companies vulnerable to hackers and identity theft. Watch out for:

- Vendors who lack secure file-staging capabilities
- Vendors who require you to buy new products for additional security

[return to menu](#)

Application Integration

Explore the Sterling Commerce Advantage

Then Consider the Alternative

Are the solutions built on a Service Oriented Architecture (SOA) that is open, modular, and scalable?

The next level of B2B depends on having a fully integrated platform that lets you work with business customers and partners scattered around the globe — but without the cost and complexity of sewing together solutions from a variety of vendors, especially as your business grows and changes. Openness, modularity, and scalability are the underpinnings of our solution. Companies can move forward on focused projects by adding functionality to the modular architecture, boosting the ROI of their integration strategy. Our open, unified platform is transparent to your customers, partners, vendors, and other stakeholders. All this allows you to take advantage of the business opportunities of today, while being poised to quickly ramp up for the opportunities that come along tomorrow.

Many vendors' products don't have the ability to grow with you — they either force you to buy capabilities today that you don't need or they can't scale up during a critical growth period. This brings added cost, complexity, and overhead to your already overloaded IT department, requiring many to manage proprietary platforms, custom-coding, custom-built interfaces, and limited adapter support. There are many pitfalls with some vendors; here are a few to watch for:

- Disparate platforms that don't integrate without a great deal of consulting dollars
- Disparate platforms with no unified application and GUI set
- Solutions that target enterprise customers but are not scalable
- Proprietary architecture

"Best suited for integration of its own applications"

[return to menu](#)

Does the solution handle all types of enterprise and B2B integration, as well as diverse B2B connectivity protocols and standards?

The Sterling Commerce Multi-Enterprise Services Architecture (MESA) provides a single platform for all types of enterprise and B2B transaction and offers supporting numerous protocols, operating systems, business applications, platforms, and adapters. This eliminates the need for a multi-protocol, multi-vendor messaging backbone, and provides the kind of deep data visibility that is essential for multi-enterprise collaboration.

Our platform lets you communicate with partners and customers however they choose, using legacy EDI or new varieties of XML and RosettaNet, meaning that your integration architecture will never be a stumbling block to meeting your business goals.

Many vendors provide a limited integration offering, forcing you to accept lesser capabilities outside your core services competency or use a third party. B2B vendors, for instance, may have a solution that connects external trading partners to you — but doesn't let those trading partners connect to each other. This forces you to manage complexities involved with partners that can leave you and your partners dissatisfied.

- Vendors who focus on one element such as transfer or database management, but don't offer a full range of capabilities
- Vendors who try to address missing capabilities through partners

[return to menu](#)

Is comprehensive adapter support provided?

Optimizing applications and supply-chain efficiencies requires a complete and consistent adapter architecture. We offer a full complement of more than 250 technology and application adapters, which helps the most complex enterprises automate information flow in a way that's fast, non-intrusive, and easy to modify.

Many vendors offer limited adapter support, which also limits your efficiencies while boosting costs. Be on guard against:

- Vendors who don't provide adapters for competing technology
- Vendors who refer you to partners for adapter support

[return to menu](#)

Is there a single sign-on?

In wake of regulations like Sarbanes-Oxley, access control has become a paramount issue at most companies. Single sign-on is a key element of an effective — and cost-efficient — identity management system. Our system has a single sign-on to authenticate the user of the dashboard, the operator UI, and Web extensions. At the same time, our system allows you to use an external LDAP store to authenticate users.

Security shouldn't mean burdensome housekeeping, yet many vendors require you to expend resources managing and maintaining sign-ons. Watch out for:

- Vendors without identity-management capabilities

[return to menu](#)

Hosted Integration Services

Explore the Sterling Commerce Advantage

Then Consider the Alternative

Is the solution a proven, dependable and highly available network that supports Internet, legacy, and international standards while providing for movement of bulk data and message-oriented integration?

For the past 30 years, thousands of customers across a wide range of industries have relied on our solutions to provide secure and reliable infrastructure for B2B Edge. That's why 86 percent of all B2B traffic touches our hosted solutions with 99.9 percent uptime.

No one else offers 6,000 EDI standard templates and support for all B2B protocols and standards, as well as emerging standards. In addition, our value-added network (VAN) service safeguards billions of transactions between business partners, more than any other service of its kind, assisting companies whose B2B requirements have outgrown their infrastructure. Our network is the first to offer all the advantages of a full-service private network, plus real-time visibility and control over your B2B operations.

Comprehensive experience in the B2B space cannot be developed overnight, which is why many vendors offer only point solutions, which fall short of multi-enterprise products, or require you to work with multiple vendors. The latter approach often results in an inflexible network that can't provide adequate visibility or ramp up to meet new business needs. Watch out for:

- Vendors who lack EDI experience
- Vendors who can only provide legacy services such as translation and value-added networks (VAN) through partners
- Vendors without a proven track record of success and financial stability

[return to menu](#)

Is the solution available in hosted (on-demand) packages (the firewall), or hybrid options?

Every B2B partnership is unique, which means you need the tools to respond to new partner demands and changing requirements quickly and reliably. Flexibility is the underpinning of our solution. We offer hosted, integrated, and hybrid solutions in flexible configurations so you can select the option that best maximizes your IT resources and help you strategically manage growth.

Many vendors tout a "one-size-fits-all" solution, without admitting this usually means the solution must be tailored to your needs. This requires pricey consulting services or locks you into a solution/deployment model, which hinders your ability to react quickly to changing needs. Beware of:

- Vendors who do not offer hosted solutions
- Vendors with weak software capabilities

[return to menu](#)

How does customer support provide timely resolution of data-processing issues?

Given the pace of B2B, data-processing issues need to be resolved quickly and reliably. Support proprietary data, and immediately grasp the business impact of issues, and forward complex issues to your business technicians so your experience is back running at optimum efficiency as quickly as possible. We offer 24/7 support, online Web-based support, and a single location for hosted-services support, so you can immediately access the assistance you need to resolve the issue.

When you have a data-processing issue, you need a support staff that understands your business, and maintains core competencies to support your business or partners, forcing you through a maze to find the answer to your problem. Watch out for:

- Vendors who take a long time to resolve issues
- Vendors who outsource support services overseas

[return to menu](#)

Can the solution meet global connections requirements?

B2B depends on reliable connections around the globe, which requires a vendor with the full range of capabilities needed for both small and large trading partners. Our solutions meet present and future communications needs with support for older and emerging protocols, including EDINT, UCINTE and RosettaNet. In addition, our value-added network (VAN) handles billions of transactions a year, more than any other vendor, giving you a wide range of options to meet your global connection requirements.

Many vendors lack the experience and full capabilities demanded by multi-enterprise collaboration. Watch out for:

- Internet-based providers without value-added network (VAN) connections
- Vendors who do not support complex EDI processing or turn this over to third parties
- Vendors who don't support mailbox subsystems

[return to menu](#)

How does the solution meet security and compliance regulations?

Single sign-on is a key element of an effective — and cost-efficient — identity management system. Our system provides a single sign-on to authenticate the user of the dashboard, the operator GUI, and Web extensions. Our patent-pending perimeter security service protects your data in transit across all B2B protocols. Our solution provides seamless connections that eliminate the need to store data in the DMZ, protecting you from destructive programs or invasive or intrusive data.

Many vendors treat security as an afterthought. These solutions use multiple sign-ons and passwords, requiring more effort to manage and possibly leaving security gaps that could make you susceptible to hacking. Put you in violation of compliance regulations. Watch out for:

- Vendors who refer you to third parties to handle security
- Vendors without identity-management capabilities

[return to menu](#)

Business Process Management (BPM)

Explore the Sterling Commerce Advantage

Then Consider the Alternative

Does the solution provide a single unified modeling environment?

Creating and managing business-process models is difficult when you have to learn a variety of languages, systems, and business rules. Our single unified modeling environment removes this obstacle, as it requires no proprietary scripting and can be modified as customer requirements and business needs change. This permits a business user to handle a vast amount of the work involved in designing, deploying, and testing business processes, allowing even extremely complex process changes to be implemented notably faster.

Many vendors require you to change your business processes in order to manage those processes through technology. Their workflow server may not be integrated with the rest of the systems. They might even force you to learn a new language or seek specialized assistance to use their solution. Beware of:

- Solutions that aren't integrated
- Solutions that offer standalone applications that don't create actionable process models for the BPM system
- Solutions with a gap between workflow design and implementation, meaning that workflow processes may not be actionable

[return to menu](#)

Does the solution provide a wide range of adapters?

Monitoring and improving performance of applications depends on accessing the information within them. We ease this formidable technical challenge by providing a consistent architecture with more than 250 adapters, including application adapters such as Oracle, SAP, PeopleSoft and Siebel as well as e-Business adapters, including eSXML, EDINT (AS1 and AS2), and many more.

Many vendors offer limited adapter support, hindering your ability to optimize your applications and supply chain. Beware of:

- Solutions with an inconsistent adapter architecture
- Proprietary applications/software that only work with customers or partners that have the same technology in-house

[return to menu](#)

Can the solution handle straight-through processing and coordinate business processes with key partners?

Achieve a fast-reacting extended enterprise, you need a BPM solution that can strip away barriers and bridge, integrate, and centralize various infrastructures to provide data visibility from end to end.

The Sterling solution enables straight-through processing applications that combine integration of internal business systems with B2B edge processing in a single managed process environment. Straight-through processing speeds business transactions, improves real-time event handling, and makes accurate data available faster to business users, allowing them to make better decisions more quickly.

Many vendors moved into the B2B space only recently, and their legacy in enterprise technology and B2C leaves them without the experience or capabilities to provide multi-enterprise business collaboration. They are unable to deal with the complex computing environments and a large mix of incompatible applications. Watch out for:

- Vendors with limited experience in partner management
- Vendors who lack strong capabilities in EAI and BPM, as well as B2B workflow

[return to menu](#)

Does the vendor provide a packaged solution for building business rules and custom development, while leveraging existing assets in the form of composite applications?

For successful collaboration, IT and business professionals must be able to share management and control activities within the infrastructure domain. Our flexible package of templates lets you build and manage users develop business rules and processes quickly and effectively. This flexibility means that BPM is not limited to, say, J2EE developers with specialized expertise, but also process owners to make near-real-time changes as needed. This lets your company react more quickly to changing business conditions while relieving IT of unnecessary burdens.

Many BPM solutions can be adequate for developers but are too complex for business users. Solutions with rigid templates or complex business modeling tie up IT departments with debugging and maintenance chores, while adding steep learning curves and high consulting fees. Watch out for:

- Solutions that don't support business rules
- Solutions that keep the broker, integration server, and workflow as separate (rather than seamlessly integrated) components
- Solutions that offer BPM as an auxiliary rather than a core capability

[return to menu](#)

Does the solution enable secure data sharing and information-access control and enable secure data sharing by community members?

An agile and effective extended environment requires that key performance indicators be shared with your community based on rules and profiles. Understandably, before companies share proprietary data, especially over the Internet, they need to be confident that robust security, encryption, and identity verification are in place. Our solution provides tight security to restrict access to sensitive data, removing the complexity from obtaining and monitoring KPIs.

A recent survey found that access control is the highest security issue related to Sarbanes-Oxley, which this is a key area in which many vendors fail. Many solutions hinder reporting ability because of the complexities involved with sign-on and access. Watch out for:

- Vendors that provide limited identity management
- Solutions that use multiple passwords and sign-ons

[return to menu](#)

Supply Chain Management

Explore the Sterling Commerce Advantage

Then Consider the Alternative

Is the solution configurable, adaptable, and network-centric to change as your supply chain does?

Customers must be able to add innovations and new capabilities as needed to maintain a competitive advantage. We offer a full range of solutions that provide an unspliced combination of supply chain, warehouse and order management functionality. Our process-centric applications span multiple enterprises so the rules, processes, conditions, and users can be accurately modeled and flawlessly managed. This drives increased clarity and understanding of the conditions and uses of transactions across the supply chain.

Many vendors offer data-centric, inflexible solutions that don't provide the agility that B2B collaboration demands. Many packaged applications force changes in business practices or can't be scaled to new conditions. Watch out for:

- Vendors who offer custom solutions that are expensive and time-consuming to build
- Vendors who offer only out-of-the-box solutions
- Vendors who lack extensive experience in community management

[return to menu](#)

Does the solution offer integration and connectivity capabilities as core competencies?

Extended enterprises collaborate on an increasingly varied mix of platforms; from traditional EDI to the multiple technology and message types such as BPM, XML, EDINT, RosettaNet, and ebXML. Our service-oriented architecture gives you the flexibility to communicate with partners and customers on whatever platform they choose. With integration and connectivity as core competencies, we provide deep visibility into extended enterprises, allowing you to react quickly to new business opportunities and changing needs.

B2B or supply-chain vendors can offer provide visibility into your internal processes, but struggle to connect with business partners outside the firewall. EAI vendors have similar limitations in trying to permit end-to-end visibility. Vendors without integration and connectivity capabilities as core competencies are likely to be in violation of compliance regulations. Watch out for:

- Solutions that can't use new and emerging standards
- Vendors who need partners to fill in missing capabilities
- Solutions that use proprietary software

[return to menu](#)

Does the solution provide visibility into participant networks, processes, and demand and supply?

Companies need end-to-end visibility in order to efficiently manage the flow of orders, inventory, and shipments throughout the supply chain for their organizations. Our solution provides a full set of applications that proactively balance supply and demand in real time so that orders, schedules, and inventory capacity are always maximized. In this way you can simultaneously track multiple systems across the value chain, keeping track of materials, supplies, inventory, distribution channels, or any of the multiple variables that impact performance.

Many vendors who lack experience in enterprise technology show their inexperience in the multi-enterprise space. They lack end-to-end visibility and the ability to optimize process and maximize demand and supply. Effective partner management requires hands-on experience and a full range of capabilities, but many vendors offer only self-service. Watch out for:

- Vendors with limited or no experience in partner management
- Vendors who lack strong capabilities in B2B, EAI and BPM
- Vendors who offer only self-service

[return to menu](#)

Business Activity Monitoring (BAM)

Explore the Sterling Commerce Advantage

Then Consider the Alternative

Does the solution handle straight-through processing and coordinate business processes with business partners?

Business collaboration depends on a network that is agile and flexible, so users can react quickly to changing needs. This requires a solution that can intelligently integrate and centralize various infrastructures to provide data visibility. Our capabilities in EAI, BPM, and B2B provide the foundation to meet these stringent requirements. Our superior, real-time processing, which speeds business transactions, improves real-time, even handling, and makes accurate data available faster so you can react quickly to changes.

Many vendors lack the full range of capabilities and experience to provide multi-enterprise business collaboration. Their expertise is in B2C or enterprise technology, which falls short of multi-enterprise competencies that are necessary to coordinate business processes on this scale. Watch out for:

- Vendors with limited experience in partner management
- Vendors who lack strong capabilities in EAI and BPM

[return to menu](#)

Does the solution give community members information-access control and enable secure data sharing?

Key performance indicators must be shared with your community based on rules and profiles. Understandably, before companies share proprietary data, especially over the Internet, they need to be confident that robust security, encryption, and identity verification are in place. Our solution provides tight security to restrict access to sensitive data, removing the complexity from obtaining and monitoring KPIs.

In a recent survey, executives identified the key challenge to implementing BPM as the ability to deliver trustworthy data, closely followed by the difficulty in selecting KPIs. Many solutions add to these challenges by using multiple passwords and sign-ons, causing added management burdens and potential gaps in security. Watch out for:

- Vendors that provide limited identity management
- Solutions that use multiple passwords and sign-ons

[return to menu](#)

We hope you found this to be useful. About Sterling Commerce
 The year 2005 marks 30 years of Sterling Commerce leadership and expertise in extending beyond the edge of the enterprise to enable visible business with suppliers, customers, and employees. A wholly owned subsidiary of SBC Communications Inc. (NYSE:SBC), the company is one of the world's largest providers of multi-enterprise collaboration solutions. With more than 29,000 customers worldwide, Sterling Commerce builds collaborative, multi-enterprise communities for customers in the retail, consumer goods, manufacturing, financial healthcare, and telecommunications industries.

For additional information about Sterling Commerce solutions call 1-800-346-8113 or send an e-mail to inquiry@stercomm.com

