



Introduction to the

# **Embellished Activewear Standards Initiatives**

## **(EASI)**

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## **Part I – What’s EASI?**

In the late 1990’s the Activewear industry was changing:

- The industry was maturing, growth was slowing, margins were declining, and the number of SKU’s were exploding
- IT (Information Technology) was becoming more affordable and less complicated
- Wholesalers were consolidating, adding branches, with increased sales complexity and volume
- Wholesalers felt that every supplier did things differently
- Suppliers felt that every wholesaler wanted something different

All of these conditions contributed towards industry members focusing more than ever on the cost of doing business and how the overall lack of standardization within their industry was affecting them. It was this overall desire to improve efficiency through standardization that led to the foundation of “EASI”.

In January 2001 a small group of wholesalers and suppliers met in Long Beach, CA and formalized their commitment to establishing industry standards and practices. In February 2001 sixteen industry members met in Tampa, FL and through the efforts of these eight manufacturers, six wholesalers, one consultant, and one lawyer the EASI (Embellished Activewear Standards Initiative) consortium was launched.

In the years since that first official Tampa meeting, a dedicated group of wholesalers, manufacturers and distributors, the Embellished Activewear Standards Initiative (EASI) consortium, have revolutionized their industry by standardizing the flow of electronic data -- and these Open Standards are catching on, creating an environment of collaboration, visibility and predictability.

## **Part II – Benefits of Implementing the EASI Standards?**

What are the benefits of implementing EASI Standards practices and procedures?

Some of the reported benefits are:

- Tremendous savings in data entry
- Reduction in errors and discrepancies
- Reduction in labor cost
- Reduction in ongoing IT programming / customization
- Companywide benefits realized in IT, Purchasing, Merchandising, Accounts Payable, and Distribution Centers

Some specific examples of EASI implementation benefits are:

- Purchase Orders (PO's) and Advance Shipment Notices (ASN's)
  - pre-EASI – most PO's and ASN's are hand keyed and faxed
  - EASI – most PO's and ASN's are transmitted electronically
  - Pre-EASI – data entry errors
  - EASI – reduced data entry staffing requirements and data entry errors
  - EASI – laid groundwork for electronic invoicing
- Inbound Carton Labels
  - pre-EASI – very limited ability to scan
  - EASI – cartons scanned at receipt
  - pre-EASI – most if not all cartons had to be relabeled
  - EASI – minimal if any cartons require relabeling leading to labor and label cost savings
- Receipt Processing and Posting
  - pre-EASI – excess handling of cartons > labeling, sorting, and re-sorting for putaway
  - EASI – significantly less carton handling > minimal or no labeling, planned putaway prior to receipt, and improved cross-docking capabilities
  - pre-EASI – receipts were often held before posting > to reconcile variances often took two days or more from receipt to posting inventory
  - EASI – putaway can begin before truck is completely offloaded with same day inventory posting often within hours of receipt

- Pre-EASI – daily communication between wholesaler A/P Department and supplier regarding receipt variances
- EASI – occasional communication between A/P and supplier regarding variances
- Reported EASI Savings
  - Productivity – initially 10% savings through labels and ASN's and 20 to 30% through gains in putaway efficiency
  - Cost Savings – reduction in data entry labor, 75 to 90% reduction in re-labeling expenses, reduction in A/P variance investigation time
  - Reduction in Errors – data entry, receipt discrepancies, and inventory
  - IT Resources – allowed for new project development (versus customizing programs required to handle the same scenario differently for each trading partner)
- Noted Challenges with Non-EASI Compliant Trading Partners
  - Paperwork – chasing paperwork and faxing PO's and ASN's
  - Discrepancies between PO's, ASN's, Packing Lists, and Invoices
  - ASN's from non-EASI vendors take four times longer to process
  - Non-EASI vendor receipts take twice as long to unload, label, and putaway

### **Part III – What’s EDI?**

EDI, or Electronic Data Interchange, is defined online as:

- Electronic Data Interchange: the computer-to-computer exchange of structured information, by agreed message standards, from one computer application to another by electronic means and with a minimum of human intervention.<sup>i</sup>
- EDI (Electronic Data Interchange) is a form of electronic commerce that supports computer to computer communications. EDI systems provide high speed communication via transfer of files in a standard format between trading partners using secure electronic communication links.<sup>ii</sup>
- EDI is the computer-to-computer interchange of strictly formatted messages that represent documents other than monetary instruments. EDI implies a sequence of messages between two parties, either of whom may serve as originator or recipient. The formatted data representing the documents may be transmitted from originator to recipient via telecommunications or physically transported on electronic storage media<sup>iii</sup>
- EDI can be formally defined as 'The transfer of structured data, by agreed message standards, from one computer system to another without human intervention'. Most other definitions used are variations on this theme. Even in this era of technologies such as XML web services, the Internet and the World Wide Web, EDI is still the data format used by the vast majority of electronic commerce transactions in the world.<sup>iv</sup>

### **Part IV – What’s EASI - EDI?**

What’s EASI – EDI?

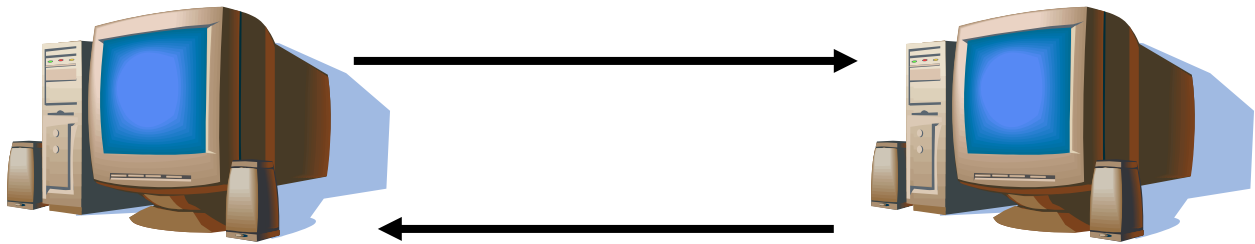
EASI – EDI is the net result of applying a framework of EDI principles and practices to the specific needs and concerns of the Activewear industry.

## **Part V – How Does EASI – EDI Work?**

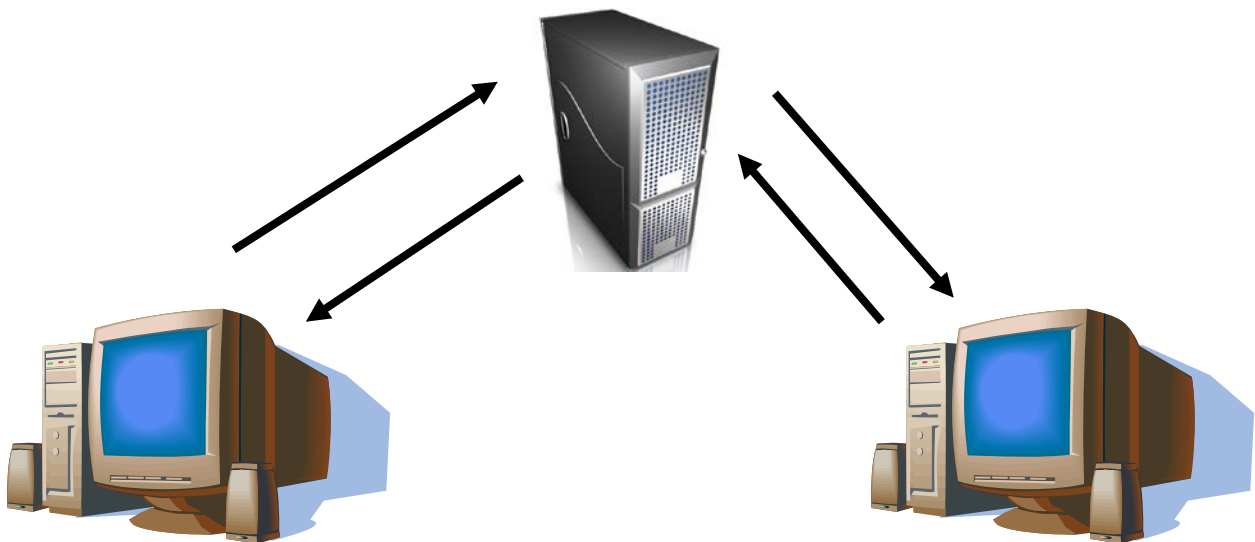
EASI – EDI involves the electronic exchange of standardized files between trading partners.

While the exact hardware configuration of the exchange varies, two of the more common methods are as follows:

- computer-to-computer – In this scenario one computer connects directly to another computer and sends (pushes) or receives (pulls) EASI Documents



- computer-to-ftp server-to-computer – In this scenario an FTP (File Transfer Protocol) Server exists in between the two trading partners. The wholesaler and supplier can both send (push) or receive (pull) EASI Documents. The FTP Server that can be maintained by the one of the trading partners or an unrelated third party FTP Service provider



## **Part VI – Elements Within an EASI File Transmission**

What elements or components are involved in an EASI file transmission?

Every EASI – EDI file transmission contains the following two elements or components

- Routing Envelope – The Routing Envelope is used to “wrap” the contents of the EASI document that is being transmitted. It identifies the sender, the intended receiver, and the type of EASI document that is being transmitted (PO, ASN, Invoice, etc.). The Routing Envelope makes it possible for multiple sets of the same EASI document type (PO, ASN, Invoice, etc.) to be sent in a single transmission
- EASI Standard Document Details – Each EASI document type (PO, ASN, Invoice, etc.) contains the following sections:
  - Header - This section contains the information that applies to the entire file being transmitted such as EASI document type, file version information, sender details, etc.
  - Detail – This section contains the specific details pertaining to the document type being transmitted such as PO Line details, ASN Line details, Invoice Line details, etc.
  - Footer - This section signifies the end of the document and may also contain other summary information such as the number of records, quantity totals, or amount totals transmitted



## **Part VII – What are the EASI Standard Document Types?**

The current list of EASI Standard documents that are either in use or being considered for use are:

<b><u>Document</u></b>	<b><u>Description</u></b>
• Envelope	- Routing Envelope
• GTIN	- Product ID – GTIN (Global Trading Identification Number)
• Labels	- Carton Label with Product and Tracking Bar Code
• 832	- Product Descriptor Data Base (PDD)
• 856	- Advanced Shipping Notice (ASN)
• 850	- Purchase Order (Uses GTIN)
• 810	- Invoice (Uses GTIN)
• 997	- Functional Acknowledgement
• 852	- Point of Sale File (Uses GTIN)
• 870	- Order Status/Expected Available To Ship Dates
• 889	- Special Event promotional pricing - Count
• 890	- Special Event Promotional Pricing - Recount
• 846	- Inventory Status
• 940	- Direct Ship Purchase Order
• 180	- Return Authorization Request
• 181	- Return Authorization Response
• 861	- Inventory Receipt Advice
• 821	- Account Statement
• PLUL	- Product Locator URL Link
• IMG	- Image Spec Standard

## **Part VIII – How Can I Learn More About the EASI Standards?**

The EASI Website (<http://www.easistandards.com>) is an excellent source for EASI related materials such as EASI Member information, detailed Standards write-ups and file layouts, EASI Support resources, Committee activities, upcoming events, etc.

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<sup>i</sup> <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/EDI>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.finance.gov.au/publications/strategic-guide-to-e-procurement/glossary.html>

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.itl.nist.gov/fipspubs/fip161-2.htm>

<sup>iv</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electronic\\_Data\\_Interchange](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electronic_Data_Interchange)