

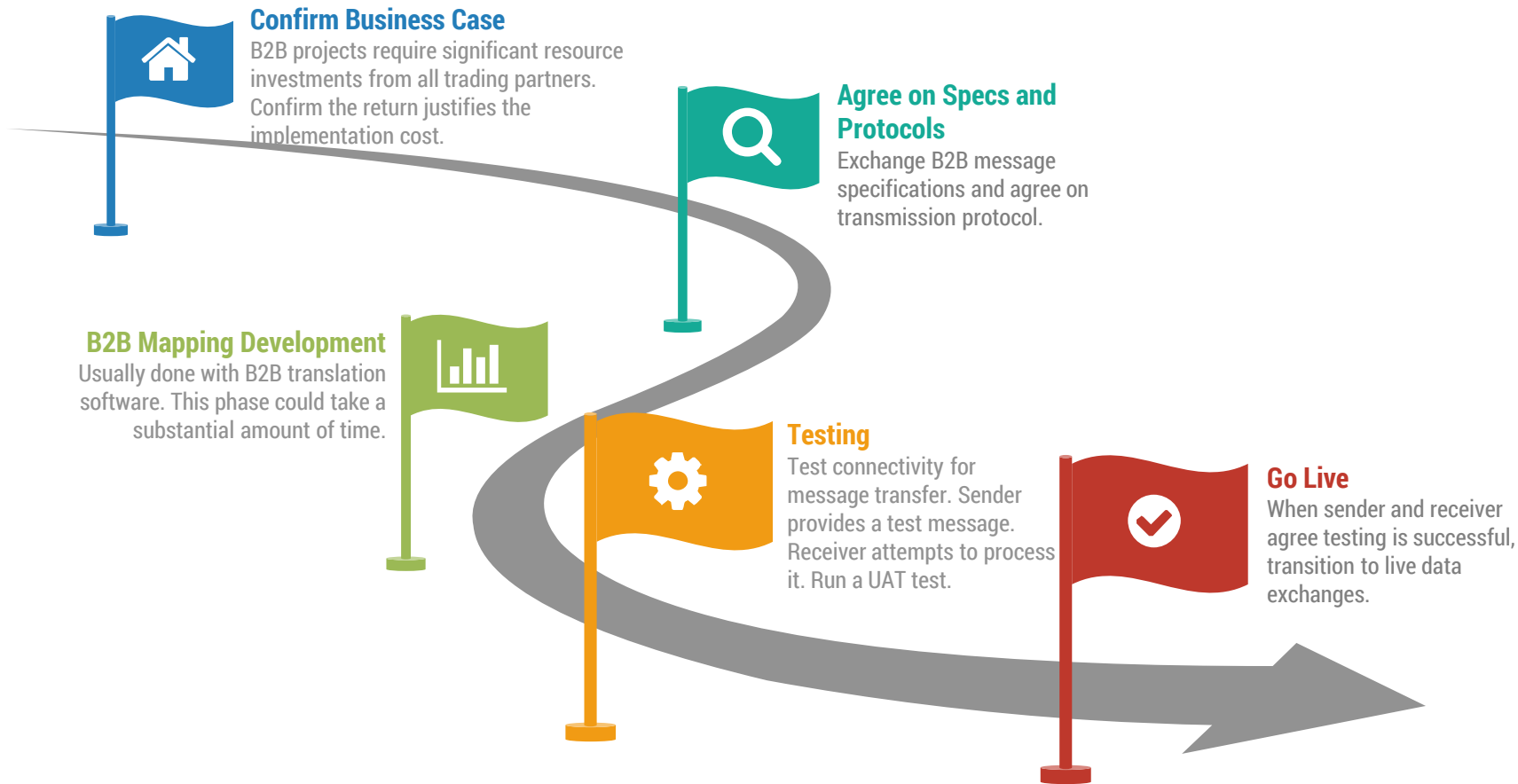


B2B Implementation Process

Business To Business Integration



Typical B2B Implementation Process



Confirm Business Case



Does the project make business sense?

B2B projects consume significant resources for both trading partners. Perform cost / benefit analysis.



Prioritization

Trading partners must evaluate how the B2B project ranks in priority with everything else in their backlog.



Document the Business Case

Intended business value, estimated cost to complete the project, and estimated return on investment



Project Approval Decision

Do the business benefits outweigh the cost?
Sometimes it makes more sense to continue operating without B2B.

Exchange Specifications



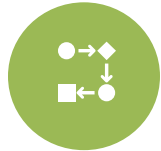
Discuss which B2B standard to use

Often one trading partner already has established specifications they are using with other trading partners.



Exchange Message Implementation Guides

Organizations that do a lot of B2B messaging may have a web portal where they publish specifications like message implementation guides.



Analyze How the Message will Affect Systems

After analyzing message implementation guides, trading partners can understand how the message will impact their own systems and business processes.

Agree on Transmission Protocols



Which protocol for transmitting messages?

Use FTP, AS2, API? Who hosts server? File naming convention?



Exchange Connectivity Information

Provide URI of server, user credentials, path location, and expected file naming conventions.



IP Whitelisting

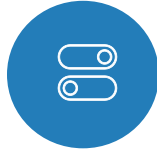
It may be necessary for trading partners to exchange public IPs to support firewall whitelisting. This is common for FTP to enhance security.



Exchange Test File

Often at this stage a simple file is exchanged to validate communications works.

Develop Translation Maps



Translate B2B message into internal format

Usually the EDI or XML message is translated into an intermediate data structure that's understood by the trading partner's internal systems.



Canonical Data Structure

A standard data structure used between all B2B interchanges and internal systems for a particular process type. Serves as a buffer between the B2B process and the business application.



Potentially Long Timeframes

B2B map development can take a significant amount of time. Many companies outsource map development to managed service providers or offshore development firms. Could range from 2 weeks to 3 months.

Test Communications



Exchange a Test File

Exchange a test file using the agreed upon communication method. For example, put a dummy text file on the trading partner's FTP server and make sure they received it.



Address Firewall Problems

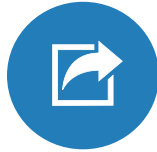
When FTP is being used there are frequently challenges with firewalls. IP Whitelisting may need to be troubleshooted. Perhaps the FTP client trading partner has outbound ports blocked on firewall.



Address Certificate Problems

For AS2 implementations, this is the stage where certificates must be exchanged and tested. Often this takes considerable effort to get right.

Exchange Test Messages



Create Test B2B Message with Sample Data

Uses sample data to create test messages in the agreed upon B2B formats. Receiver attempts to translate test message.



Syntactical Validation

Does the message meet basic syntax requirements of the agreed upon specification (i.e. X12 or XML)?



Required Field Checks

Have all the required segments and elements been sent in the test message?



Semantic Checks

Do the data elements reflect the actual business scenario? Does the meaning of each element make sense giving the context of the test message?

User Acceptance Testing



Testing includes end users

Those impacted by new B2B process are now asked to participate in testing.



Testing includes related business systems

Perform end-to-end tests of the sender and receiver's B2B messaging and related business systems. Check that the B2B process interacts with the overall system workflow without problems.



Preferably use test environments

Trigger B2B messages from business system test environments so that sample transactions can be created without affecting production business processes.

Go Live



Schedule cutover date

Trading partners agree on the date and time to begin exchanging B2B in production



Prepare production transmission channels

Previous B2B tests were probably performed on testing channels. Update FTP, AS2, or HTTP processes to production configurations.



Leave Test Environment In Place

When it's necessary to make changes to B2B messages or related business systems, the original test environment can be used to perform tests without affecting production.



Monitor initial transactions carefully

On go live date, trading partners should monitor transactions carefully and watch for potential problems.

B2B Implementation Challenges



B2B Projects Are Labor Intensive

All trading partners need to allocate human resources to collaborate on implementation.

B2B Projects Can Be Costly

The required human labor and long implementation time frames can make conventional EDI implementations expensive. Sometimes this prevents the project from continuing.

