

CLEO AS2 vs. OFTP2 | A Comparison of Advanced Protocols

When looking closely at some of the newest protocol advancements, it's interesting to note that some protocols are very similar in functionality. So, why are mandates directing the use of one protocol vs. another? Most of the reason comes down to the history of implementation and market use. To demonstrate this point, we'll compare two of the more advanced protocols, AS2 and OFTP2.

The Stats

Protocol	Transfer Supported	Message Size	Encryption Methods	Non-Repudiation	File Restart	Certification	Advantages	Challenges	Primary Application
AS2	Real-Time	Small – Large (end of 2010)	SSL CMS	Y	Y (Q4, 2010)	Drummond Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Built-in Certificate Exchange (CEM)▶ File Restart	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ CEM is not yet widely adopted▶ Requires an "always on" Internet connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ U.S. Retail & Manufacturing
OFTP2	Real-Time	Small – Large	SSL CMS	Y	Y	Odette	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Built-in Certificate Exchange (CEM)▶ File Restart	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Newer protocol▶ Track record and adoption yet to be determined▶ Requires an "always on" Internet connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ European Automotive & Government

The History

OFTP was first introduced by ODETTE International Ltd., a membership organization formed by the European automotive industry for the automotive industry, which sets the standards for e-Business communications and data exchange. OFTP is the most prolific protocol inside Europe for the exchange of EDI data, in particular for the automotive industry, and was initially designed to work over an X.25 network. The historical use of this protocol has been over ISDN networks that are/were popular in Europe but now this protocol is migrating to communication over the Internet with the implementation of OFTP2. OFTP2 enhances security via encryption methods and uses digital certificates – expanding what OFTP offers. Recent mandates issued by Volkswagen and Volvo are increasing the demand to quickly implement OFTP2.

AS2 was developed in the U.S. by the Uniform Code Council (UCC) and is a secure, reliable Internet data transport standard. Security is achieved by using digital certificates and encryption. The AS2 standard supports EDI or any other data transmittals over the Internet using HTTP. The AS2 specification describes how to transport data, not how to validate or process data. Much of the success of AS2 has been seen in America, notably the retail sector. A large influence behind the adoption of AS2 was in 2002 when retail giant Walmart mandated its 10,000 suppliers use AS2 to exchange EDI data with them directly.

Moving Forward

When evaluating protocols that are appropriate for your business, it's to your advantage to learn a bit about the protocols, their security features and the industries that use them. By doing this you can ensure that the secure communications solution you choose works for your business not only today, but well into the future.

