Why certification?

Why should the fcB2B provide certification? Without some type of validation process the B2B documents that are being passed between suppliers, distributors and retailers will continue to be inconsistent. Certification has been attempted multiple times in the fcB2B groups existence. In the past there wasn't an independent entity to perform the certification. There also wasn't a defined process for how certification happened.

The fcB2B group has now defined a certification process and will act as the independent entity. The certification process was approved at the annual meeting in October 2019. A tool was selected and is maintained to validate the documents being tested. This helps to ensure the structure is correct before continuing with the data validation.

Certification will only be performed on the latest version of documents which currently is version 3.0 and at the present will not certify web services. The web services validation process is still being reviewed so a process can be defined. The certification process as defined, will validate both the senders process and the receivers process. This will ensure that all parties are compliant, and the data being processed is consistent. We hear quite often that one supplier sends information differently then other suppliers and this either causes extra work for the software providers or problems for the receiver of the information. This has mostly been because of how companies interpreted the original standards. The new version of the documents are much clearer and eliminates the ambiguity in the interpretation. With certification we can ensure that the standards are being interpreted the same across the industry. Once a company completes certification the company and the approved document(s) will be identified on the fcB2B website with a marker indicating they are certified. This certification process will remain in effect for a timeframe or until changes occur that require recertification.

The retailers will then be able to view the suppliers and software providers and know who has gone through the certification process. You can feel comfortable that the data being passed between the suppliers and software providers is good. The process also validates that if bad information does get sent that the receiver will handle it correctly and not populate bad information in your system to cause you problems. The certification list will also allow you to see what documents a supplier or software provider are able to transact. This allows for informed decisions when selecting your next flooring software provider.