

E-Signature Software in the Spotlight, Thanks to Digital Transformation



By David Roe | *Sep 27, 2016*



E-signature will never steal the thunder of bigger, dare we say sexier, enterprise technology.

It's a workhorse. And as such, it's rarely in the spotlight.

But in the last six months, the technology has received a growing amount of interest. And in the past month alone Adobe, SIGNiX, DocuSign and HelloSign announced updates to their e-signature offerings, adding to a list of updates by other vendors in 2016.

Whether it's because digital transformation initiatives require end-to-end processes with electronic sign-off, or because vendors have convinced organizations of the tech's security, or because changes in laws all over the world have made e-signatures legally watertight — whatever the cause, e-signature applications are having their moment in the sun.



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3 Vendor's Reads on E-Signatures

Adobe: Digital Transformation Drives Demand

To find out what's driving the current interest, we asked a number of vendors for their insights and what they see as e-signature's future direction.

Jon Perera, vice president of product management at [Adobe Document Cloud](#), identified digital transformation as the main driver behind the demand.

He pointed to the recent mobile integration of [Adobe Sign with San Francisco-based Salesforce](#) that aimed to simplify the process of adding e-signatures to digital processes from any device.

“Digital transformation today is driven by the desire for increased productivity and efficiently getting work done — securely and across any device,” Perera told CMSWire

“Customers who use the [Adobe Sign](#) integration with Salesforce, for example, report nearly 90 percent reductions in their signing processes. In fact, some average signature cycles are now measured in minutes rather than hours or days.”

It isn't just sales or business people who are using e-signature tools:

“A prevailing trend today is the increasingly global adoption of electronic signatures across not only businesses, but also academic and government institutions. As a result, we’re seeing a growing demand for more education on the legality and validity of electronic and digital signatures,” Perera said.

Meeting these higher demands led Adobe to work with the California government on Assembly Bill 2296, which allows state agencies to accept electronic signatures whenever possible.

San Jose, Calif.-based Adobe also played a key role in the creation of the [Cloud Signature Consortium](#) in Europe to build an open standard for cloud-based digital signatures.

“It’s about meeting a global need for secure digital signature solutions across a full range of cloud apps and mobile devices,” Perera said.



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DocuSign: Reduce Friction, Build Trust

San Francisco-based [DocuSign](#) is an e-signature and Digital Transaction Management (DTM) specialist that claims more than 100 million users in 250,000 companies globally .

[DocuSign](#) CMO Brad Brooks agreed that digital transformation plays a part in driving the growing use of e-signatures, but also said it's about reducing friction in cross-border transactions.

"The [business] success that enterprises are achieving has put 'digital transformation,' 'going paperless' and 'going digital' at the top of the priority list for companies of every size, industry and geography. That's because going digital delivers on nearly every area where a business and the C-Suite is measured," Brooks said.

"We see our customers increasingly transacting across borders, but not without friction or complexity."

To enable that, the company's fall release updated its Standards-Based Signatures suite to help companies working in public and private clouds meet different regulatory requirements.

The Standards-Based Signatures suite focuses primarily on companies in or doing business within the European Union (E.U.).

The suite is a core element of the DocuSign platform, which allows companies to automate and manage entire agreement workflows, while natively providing all the e-signature types currently defined under the eIDAS regulation, published by the European Parliament and Council in 2014.

"Even though business is global, trust remains local. How can organizations transact business with trust and confidence when in many cases, the parties to the transaction have never met?" Brooks said.

"From language to culture, laws and regulations, DocuSign breaks down these barriers to commerce, removing the friction and complexity that often delays or even stalls business."

SIGNiX: Integration and Ease of Use Increases Adoption

E-signatures takes more than just providing the technology that makes it possible. It also means providing the technology that workers willingly work with and use. Pem Guerry is executive vice president at Chattanooga, Tenn.-based [SIGNiX](#), an independent e-signature solutions provider.

“Digital transformation won’t occur unless technology is widely adopted across a user base. Integrating e-signature technology into document platforms is one of the foremost ways to accelerate user adoption of true paperless workflows, because it creates a single user experience from multiple digital technologies,” Guerry said.

“Rather than using one software platform to create and manage contracts, for example, and another to e-sign the contract, users have all document management capabilities in one place. They never have to leave the software they’re using just to get an e-signature.”

Guerry pointed out that this is far more efficient and cost-effective than managing and collecting paper and ink signatures. Integrated e-signatures are easy and intuitive, meaning user adoption is far more likely to increase than if everything is handled piecemeal.

He predicts deeper e-signature integrations with different enterprise software — including enterprise content management, customer relationship management, vendor and contract management, even companies’ individual, proprietary software systems — will become a priority in coming years.

“As the market continues to respond to the value of using e-signatures to save money and make business processes more efficient, companies will take steps to ensure that end users are able to take full advantage of the benefits of e-signatures,” Guerry added.

“The single user experience that integrations provide is the best way to promote e-signature adoption, because users aren’t having to pop in and out of multiple software platforms. And because they’re using just one solution, an integrated service is typically trusted more by end-users — further facilitating adoption.”

The Continued Evolution of E-Signatures

The next step in the evolution of e-signatures is happening now. Digital signatures are used to implement electronic signatures, a broader term that refers to any electronic data that carries the intent of a signature.

Digital signatures use public key infrastructure to permanently embed the cryptographic information of a signature into a signed document. They provide a more enhanced level of security, data privacy and legal evidence than basic electronic signatures.

Not all electronic signatures currently use digital signatures. In some countries, including the U.S. and E.U., electronic signatures have legal significance, but with security at a premium it’s likely that the use of digital signatures will expand significantly in the coming years.

Digital signatures are already legally preferred worldwide — “another reason why we can expect to see adoption grow,” Guerry said.

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As more enterprises begin to use e-signatures for important transactions, they will need those signed documents to be recognized and accepted in other parts of the globe.

This will especially apply to highly regulated industries and those with high volumes of transactions with significant legal and/or financial value, such as financial services and healthcare.

Title image [Alexander Dummer](#)