

E-signatures and sales: How IT can enable the business to close deals faster

The wait for signatures grinds the sales cycle to a halt. But IT has the power to solve the problem by leveraging efficient SaaS solutions.

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Getting signatures takes too long

Today, much of the sales process involves waiting for signatures. A deal that is all but official can sit in limbo for days or weeks while all parties review and revise agreements, collect signatures, and courier signed documents back and forth. And sales reps know the danger in delay: If it takes too long, they might lose the deal. Usually there isn't an easy way to know the current status of the contract or find the most recent copy.

In the sales world, speed is everything. The faster reps get deals signed, the faster prospects become paying customers. And although sales reps are on the front lines, the delay in turning prospects into paying customers affects the entire organization's ability to compete. But as enormous as the problem may be, there is a simple solution that is easy for IT to implement and easy for sales departments to adopt. It requires minimal investment, software that IT and customers have already installed, and virtually no learning curve.

The solution: cloud-based electronic signatures. Thousands of organizations around the world are already speeding the sales cycle by substituting fast, legally binding electronic signatures for ink signatures and incorporating e-signatures into electronic workflows. And because these strategies entail very little change to existing processes and infrastructure, they offer IT departments an opportunity to act as a strategic business partner and bring real competitive advantage to the entire organization.

This white paper shows how IT departments can lead the business toward making the sales process faster and more agile—all within a trusted environment.

Business acceleration: Remove sales roadblocks

IT departments are all too accustomed to hearing about game-changing innovations. But many times, the hoped-for productivity gains don't match reality. Integrations turn out to be complicated, deployments take too long, and learning curves are too high.

But in the sales process, the simple answer really is a game changer. Substituting e-signatures for pen and paper removes the single biggest roadblock to closing deals. And it removes the roadblock instantly: With a click of the mouse, sales reps can compress the entire contract process from a weeks-long struggle to a simple exchange that's done in hours or minutes.

Close deals faster

Even if every other part of the sales process goes quickly, it invariably bogs down at signing time. An automated e-signature solution keeps the sales cycle moving.

- **Get to the decision maker faster.** All parties can review and sign a contract anywhere, anytime, on any device. Reps don't have to travel to the customer's site or wait for key signatories to return from travel before closing a deal.
- **Track the approval process.** Real-time insight into the status of approvals helps ensure that deals don't fall through the cracks. And if the process stalls, reps can pinpoint the roadblock. They know who has signed and when, and whose signature is still needed.
- **Ensure review processes are transparent.** A lot can happen to a contract before it's signed. Terms might be debated and modified, and multiple parties often have to weigh in. Companies can manage version control and simplify a complex review, helping to ensure that the process remains transparent for all parties.

"Processing thousands of contracts every month requires a solution that is customizable and easy to use for our business consultants and merchant partners to create, review, and save their contracts. Adobe EchoSign automates contract management and processes for the majority of our contracts every month."

Jay Klauminzer,
head of sales operations,
EMEA, Groupon

Make it convenient for reps

The most valuable use of sales reps' time is courting new customers. But today, they spend far too much time on administrative contract tasks like chasing down signatures and finalizing deals that are all but official. Automated e-signatures can give reps the freedom to do their jobs more effectively.

- **Get to the customer while interest is high.** No more time wasted copying, faxing, and scanning; sales reps can act quickly to close a deal before customer interest goes stale.
- **Help the sales team work productively.** Because contracts live in the cloud, sales reps can get the latest version or initiate a new contract while on the road, in the air, or at home.
- **Let reps focus on relationships.** Reps can obtain signatures from anywhere, so they can spend their time building relationships, not chasing down customer signatures.
- **Integrate with other sales apps.** Some e-signature solutions are made to integrate with the same systems that reps already use every day, such as Salesforce and Microsoft SharePoint. These integrations can minimize rework and data entry, freeing up reps to focus on selling.

Make it easy for customers

These days, customers expect the tools they use to be simple and intuitive. So if they perceive the sales process to be a hassle, they'll quickly disengage and turn to a company that makes it easier. Companies can delight customers with the kind of speed, simplicity, and elegance that they demand by offering automated e-signatures.

- **Sign from anywhere.** Customers are just as pressed for time as sales reps. They want the signing process to match the way they already work, whether on a mobile device, tablet, or desktop—without printing documents, installing software, creating new logins, or ever touching a pen. E-signatures let customers sign from anywhere: at home, on vacation, even 30,000 feet in the air.
- **Make it friendly.** The cloud puts a friendlier face on what can be a daunting business process for some customers. Signing is as easy and intuitive as email, and customers don't need any special training or software.
- **Make it local.** An e-signature solution may even support multiple languages, making signing easier for customers in other global locations.

Business agility: Make the organization more nimble

The ability to quickly respond to change is what makes or breaks an organization. And because a cloud-based e-signature solution requires virtually no IT resources to deploy or maintain, it can create that kind of agility in both the sales and IT departments.

Deploy quickly

A hosted, cloud-based e-signature solution can be deployed in almost no time, to a small group or the whole enterprise.

- **Get value faster.** The switch from ink signatures to e-signatures is intuitive for sales reps, so organizations experience few barriers to deployment and adoption. It can start generating value from day one.
- **Scale on demand.** Test the process with a single client or group of clients. Then roll it out to all of sales.

"By integrating Adobe EchoSign, we continue to improve our service and employee productivity. The delay and hassle of signing hardcopy forms and sending them on is now a thing of the past."

Paul Newman, head of IT, Leasedrive

Integrate with existing systems

The sales contract process can't integrate with existing systems when it takes place manually and offline. An e-signature solution unlocks the value hidden in other systems, such as CRM or sales force automation, by pulling contracts into the systems that sales reps already use every day.

- **Enhance previous CRM investments.** Easy integration with the CRM systems that reps use every day helps them get more value out of those systems.
- **Integrate with other existing systems.** Robust APIs promote easy integration with legacy systems and allow customization according to the organization's established workflow.
- **Extract greater value from proven business processes.** With few changes required to existing processes, it's easy and cost-effective to expand the use of e-signatures to other parts of the business, such as procurement and HR.
- **Bring more customer insight into your management processes.** An e-signature solution shines a light into parts of the contract process that were impossible to see before so that managers can maximize efficiency at every step.

Seamlessly mirror existing process

When you substitute e-signatures for pen and paper, you don't have to change any other part of the sales process that reps and customers are already comfortable with. You also don't have to change the business processes that take place before and after signing.

- **Don't disrupt.** Sales reps may resist anything that turns their process upside down. But e-signatures make their lives easier by making contract signing a mobile, fast process without any training required.
- **Don't confuse customers.** Customers intuitively understand the value of signing something electronically rather than by hand. And the faster signing process makes your organization seem more attentive to their needs, giving them greater confidence in the relationship.
- **Build on current business process improvement investments.** Implementing an e-signature solution is an easy way to build upon your current BPI investments in areas such as contract lifecycle management and document storage.

Trusted partner: Do business the secure way

The obvious draw of a cloud-based, automated contracting process is the way it speeds and streamlines the sales cycle. But most IT departments are surprised to learn that it offers the security they need—without a large IT investment or complicated integration with existing systems.

Trust the legality of e-signatures

Governments around the world have established laws that make e-signatures legally enforceable. In October 2000, the U.S. Congress passed the federal ESIGN Act, making electronic signatures legally equivalent to written signatures. The ESIGN Act includes provisions to:

- Protect the consumer with appropriate notifications and disclosures
- Ensure technological neutrality and universal access
- Ensure authentication and privacy
- Create legal certainty and protection to prevent fraud
- Allow easy document access and record retention

Store contracts securely in the cloud

Because sales contracts may contain confidential or sensitive information, protection of electronic contracts is paramount. And while IT departments may feel most comfortable with storing documents securely on in-house servers, the reality rarely matches that ideal. Today, sales reps are most likely to work with contracts in one of two ways: First, they may work with contracts in paper form, leaving them vulnerable to loss or theft without leaving an audit trail; second, they may dump contracts into a personal cloud storage folder that lets them access documents from anywhere but leaves contracts vulnerable to a breach or stolen or lost device.

A cloud-based e-signature solution can store contracts in a secure online repository that is accessible from anywhere and simple to search. Passwords and permissions control document access, and every document maintains an audit trail that shows who has accessed it, when, and how.

Conclusion: Enable sales to work faster—with a solution IT can trust

Sales organizations are rapidly replacing manual signature processes because they're out of sync with the way customers and employees want to work. IT departments are removing a major source of pain for sales with the combination of PDF software and automated e-signature capabilities to create an end-to-end workflow that satisfies everyone who needs to sign contracts—and meets the needs of IT.

Thousands of organizations around the world have turned to Adobe to speed sales cycles and close deals faster. From document creation and review to collaboration, Adobe Acrobat streamlines the entire process by collecting all feedback and approvals in a single PDF file. Adobe EchoSign then moves contracts through the signature process, including sending, signing, tracking, and archiving. These products are low-cost, simple to implement, easy to use—and, in many cases, already deployed in enterprises around the world.

Adobe's e-signatures are backed by rigorous enterprise security standards that millions of customers have come to trust over the company's 30-year history. Adobe invented the PDF standard and is widely recognized as the leader in secure, reliable document workflows. Today, Adobe EchoSign offers:

- Dedicated servers in a state-of-the-art, SSAE16 Type II SOC 1 facility (Note: The SSAE 16 supersedes and replaces the Statement on Auditing Standards No. 70, or SAS 70.)
- Backup of all documents and data, both on-site and off-site, at a remote facility
- A high uptime and availability record. Current service status and past service availability records are available online at <http://trust.echosign.com>.
- Secure HTTPS encryption of all site traffic and data access utilizing 128-bit AES (Advanced Encryption Standard) encryption

Checklist: How to evaluate an e-signature solution for sales

An e-signature solution can be game changing for sales departments—if it offers the right capabilities. Look for software that offers these features:

Sending, tracking, and managing

- Reps can upload, customize, and send contracts in a few quick clicks—as easy as email.
- Real-time tracking of contracts tells exactly when they're opened, viewed, signed.
- Contract initiators can get alerts when things happen (and when they don't).
- Sales reps can present and gather contracts, even when offline.

Integration with existing systems

- The solution integrates with the sales and CRM systems your reps use.
- All integrations are premade and require little or no manual work.
- The e-signature process is automated within the CRM system.
- Customer records and signed contracts are accessible from within the CRM system.

Secure storage and access

- Documents are encrypted and stored in a secure cloud environment that you trust.
- Secure passwords and permissions control access to all documents.
- Documents stored in the cloud are easily searchable.
- Reps can retrieve executed contracts anytime, anywhere, on any device.
- Every document has an easily accessible audit trail and history.
- Signers' identities are verified through multiple mechanisms, including knowledge-based authentication that uses industry-standard questions extracted from public and commercial databases.

Customer experience

- Recipients can e-sign contracts anywhere, anytime, on any smartphone, tablet, or desktop.
- The signing process is simple and intuitive and requires no software installations or new logins.
- All parties automatically receive PDF copies of the signed contract.
- Customers can sign using software they already have, such as free Adobe Reader.

For more information

www.adobe.com/go/acrobatitinfo



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