



Electronic Signatures, Essential for Paperless Processes

A Whitepaper



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Picture this: You've got Enterprise Content Management (ECM) figured out. Your documents are stored electronically, you route them electronically and you have abandoned the world of paper. You've arrived! That is, until one of your electronically stored documents needs a signature. Now you have to stop in your tracks, print a document, sign it and get it back into the electronic system somehow.

This is a huge waste of time and it also throws a wrench in your paperless initiatives. Don't worry, signatures can be added to the electronic mix! Thanks to the birth of electronic signatures, you can sign a document without having to print! With a few simple clicks you can sign a document and get it on its merry way. Plus, it's safe and secure. What more could you ask for? This document will teach you everything you need to know about what electronic signatures are and how to add them to your ECM system.

What is an Electronic Signature?

While systems vary from provider to provider, the general idea behind the technology is the same. In technical terms, an electronic signature is an electronic indication of intent to agree to or to approve the contents on a document.

Definition: "The term electronic signature means an electronic sound, symbol, or process, attached to or logically associated with a contact or other record and executed or adopted by a person with the intent to sign the record." -FDIC Compliance Manual

How does it work?

You simply upload a document, whether it's a Word document, PDF, or even an image file, to an online service, and then tag it with special annotations where signatures eventually need to go. The marked-up file is then sent to the appropriate recipient, who "signs" it with a few clicks. This can be accomplished with stock cursive fonts or with a scrawl they actually draw, using a mouse or their finger when it's a tablet. The method of electronic signing will depend on the provider. After the file is signed, it is sent back to you. It's that simple.

Is This Actually Legal?

Using electronic signatures to speed up your document approval process boosts efficiency and reduces headaches, but is it legal? Yes!

PIPEDA clearly describes “secure electronic signatures” with the following requirements:

- the electronic signature must be unique to the person using it;
- the person whose electronic signature is on the document must have control of the use of the technology to attach the signature;
- the technology must be used to identify the person using the electronic signature; and
- the electronic signature must be linked to an electronic document to determine if the document has been changed after the electronic signature was attached to it.



Although every province has laws pertaining to e-signatures, federal law lays out the guidelines for commerce. Electronic signatures and records are just as good as their paper counterparts, and therefore subject to the same legal scrutiny of authenticity that applies to paper documents.

Global Adoption

The adoption of electronic signatures across business has increased at an exponential rate. In fact, most of the world’s major industrialized nations have incorporated electronic signatures into their business practices, as a way to expedite commerce across the internet. Obviously, each country adopts its own legislation approach dedicated to electronic signatures. In the following countries, e-signatures have the same legal status as written signatures: Australia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Finland, Hong Kong, Ireland, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and the United States.

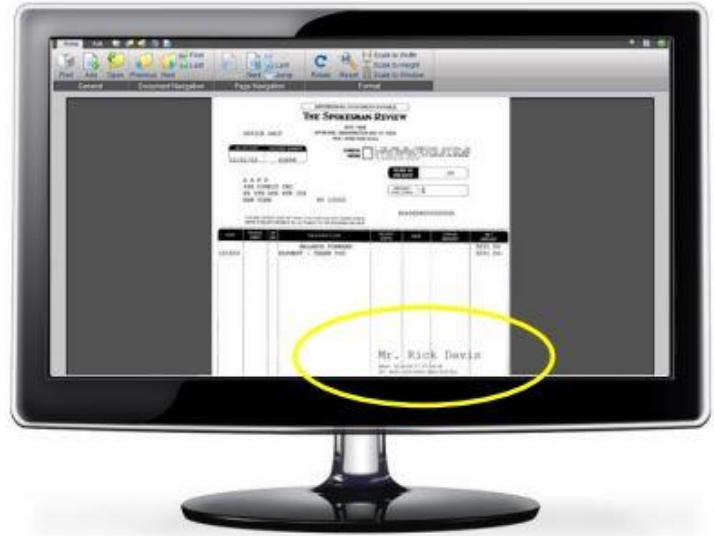
“More than 15 Million people have electronically signed more than 20 million documents in 188 countries” – The Next Web

Now, Just Sign the Dotted Line

To meet the many demands of our customer base, we’ve made sure to be on point, and eliminate the need for a ballpoint. PaperVision Enterprise includes electronic signature capabilities. The PVE e-signatures addition allows users to include a validated electronic form or signature with a document as part of a review or approval process. When you need a document signed, you can simply stamp the signature right on the document and continue it on its path. No printing needed! For example, a business executive might sign a contract with a legally-binding electronic signature as part of the process of completing a large scale to a client.

Electronic signatures offer the following abilities:

- Add electronic signatures to any document type including e-forms
- Graphically display signatures on .tif, .bmp, .jpg, .png and .pcx images
- Clearly validate that the signature and document have not been altered
- Add a Sign Document step to any workflow process to seamlessly integrate electronic signatures into daily task flows
- Set user permissions to allow them to sign documents electronically



Incorporating electronic signatures into your document routing and approval processes will save you time and headaches. It's quite surprising how much time you waste printing a document, sending it to the appropriate individuals, getting it signed and waiting for its return. Make sure to take all the legal precautions and research necessary before incorporating e-signatures. Then start reaping the benefits of a business day with much more time on your hands!

