

Everything You Need to Know About Electronic Signature

Going paperless

Stacks of papers that need to be signed, filing cabinets full of paperwork—these are quickly becoming relics of the past. Whether or not it's part of a formal initiative, your company will need to undergo a digital transformation if it's to keep up with client (and employee) expectations.

Going paperless is an essential part of this 'switch to digital' and electronic signature ranks highly among the tools required to make this possible. It simplifies the management of documents requiring a handwritten signature, whilst at the same time:



Enhances security as documents are sent to the intended recipient(s) securely.



Saves time as signatures are collected online in minutes.



Reduces operational costs by eliminating paper, print and postage fees.



Is kinder to the environment – no more paper!

Whether you need to approve a commercial contract, sign a sales contract or validate an agreement, electronic signature simplifies the day-to-day across all company departments, from HR to purchasing. No more paperwork, post to send, lost documents or time-consuming round trips to get documents signed!

Electronic signature is legally recognised and secure, and has proved to be a major innovation for companies who have implemented it. This practical guide will explain in detail everything you need to know before you get started.

What is electronic signature?

Electronic signatures deliver a way to sign documents in the online world, much like we sign a document with a pen in the offline world. An electronic signature is a symbol or other data in a digital format that is used to identify a person and is applied to an electronic document by that person with an intent to sign. Most often, eSignatures take the form of an image of a physical signature.

An electronic signature can have as much value as the handwritten version and fulfil the same functions: identification of the signatory, validation and certification of the document and non-repudiation.

Is it legally recognised?

eSignatures have legal value in most countries around the world. In Australia, the Commonwealth, State and Territory electronic transactions legislation (The Electronic Transactions Acts) confirm that eSignatures can be used and provide for enforceability of eSignatures, subject to certain conditions and a limited set of exceptions.

The various Electronic Transactions Acts were put in place between 1999 and 2012 to facilitate electronic signing. The Electronic Transactions Acts are roughly uniform and have laid the foundation for a legal and practical framework for the use of eSignatures across Australia.

eIDAS Summarised

The Electronic Transactions Acts create a more predictable regulatory environment for easier cross border business. They confirm that documents can be validly executed using an electronic signature across Australia and cannot be denied legal effect merely because they are in electronic form.

The Electronic Transactions Acts do not require the eSignature to be in a specific form to be legally enforceable. Provided the conditions set out in the Electronic Transactions Acts are met, an eSignature could be a handwritten signature image, a typed name, a touch

screen signature, or other forms of indicating acceptance through electronic means.

An electronic signature is valid if it identifies the person signing and shows their intention, the signing method is reliable, and the person receiving the signature consents to the signer using an eSignature. A digital signature, which provides stronger verification of identity, may be preferable in certain circumstances.

The **DocuSign legality guide** is a great first resource to understand Australia's requirements.

“The ETA provides legal recognition of electronic signatures”

NSW Fair Trading

A standard electronic signature will do...

Under Australian law, a written signature is not necessarily required for a valid contract - subject to specific statutory requirements, contracts are generally valid if legally competent parties reach an agreement, whether they agree verbally, electronically or in a physical paper document.

That means, a standard electronic signature (SES) has legal effect and, in many instances, this is what you can use for your agreements.

The exceptions

There are exceptions where an eSignature is unlikely to be sufficient. For example, an eSignature cannot be used for wills, codicils and other testamentary instruments. The regulations implementing the Electronic Transactions Acts for the Commonwealth and each State and Territory contain a specific list of statutory provisions to which the provisions of the Electronic Transactions Acts do not apply and accordingly where the presumptions of validity contained in the Electronic Transactions Acts will not be available to support eSignature use.

In order to understand this better you can review our legality guide which gives you the facts about current eSignature laws, local legal systems and eSignature technology preferences for over 60 countries around the world.

“If ... the signature of a person is required, that requirement is taken to have been met in relation to an electronic communication [if]...”

Electronic Transactions Act (Cth)
section 10(1)



1. Access the DocuSign platform and create a new envelope



2. Select the document(s) to be signed



3. Set who must sign it and their role in the process



4. Insert the signature field on the document



5. Send your envelope

Receiving a document to sign



1. Click the link in the email informing you that you have been sent a document to sign



2. Follow the instructions of the DocuSign platform, it is not necessary to create an account



3. Sign and confirm

Luckily, as DocuSign is the global industry leader in eSignatures, we have the capabilities to provide you with all three levels of electronic signature.

Please see our digital [eSignature legality guide](#) for further information on the legality of eSignature in your region.

Why use electronic signature?

eSignature is often the first step in a company's path towards going paperless and achieving its digital transformation goals. The quick implementation time and the possibility of demonstrating ROI in just a few months are significant benefits.

Save time

Sorting, printing, archiving and posting, as well as organising meetings to sign documents or going around the office to collect signed documents is inefficient and time consuming.

Forrester research shows that in using DocuSign, 1.6 hours of productivity are gained per transaction in addition to an 85% increase in the number of documents being returned incomplete or incorrect.¹

The research also identifies that in simplifying the process, both employees and customers benefit from an improved experience and shortened turnaround.

Increase productivity

Waiting for paper documents to be signed and returned can slow business to a crawl. Digitalising your agreement process means you can get business done at a faster rate, through:

Improved productivity

With an average of 2.2 hours saved per contract, eSignature improves productivity, which in turn can lead to a positive impact on your profit.

Accelerated sales cycle

Through adopting eSignature, Kantar Media cut their deal close time from weeks to within 1 day, minutes in some cases.

Reduction of business costs

Factoring in the cost of paper, printing, postage and storage, the average document carries a cost of \$14.21 – a cost totally eliminated with eSignature.

“Our executives were spending between 5 and 10 hours a week signing documents. DocuSign takes that, turns it into minutes or seconds.”

Jamie Holden
Contract Manager
Specsavers

“DocuSign has helped improve our relationship with external suppliers and stakeholders. We can now easily keep track of agreement workflows. Digitising our agreement process has also allowed for greater security, especially for Finance and HR documents”

Agnesia Sapati
Knowledge Management
WWF-Malaysia

Reduce running costs and other expenses

Costs associated with managing paper documents are increasing rapidly and the risks associated with using paper are significant.

- It is estimated that each four-drawer filing cabinet contains 11,000 documents on average and represents an annual maintenance cost of around \$3000.
- On average, 5% of physical documents will get lost and 2% of documents will be misfiled, resulting in an hour rework time to find and refile the missing document.
- Over 70% of companies would be forced to close in three weeks if they lost their paper archives in a fire or flood.

Postage, paper, printing, storage, poor filing and document loss are some of the costs associated with manual document processing. As the number of documents processed by your organisation increases each year, so too do these costs.

Reduce environmental footprint

As environmental awareness increases, companies are starting to take into account the impact their business has on the environment. Going paperless is an easy way to start immediately reducing the environmental footprint of an organisation.

At DocuSign, we believe that we all need to come together to promote a healthier planet. That's why we joined the **Step Up coalition** to address the world's pressing sustainability challenges in partnership with other global companies. That's also why we annually donate over \$1M to non-profit organisations working to create a more sustainable future for all.

The environmentalists argument for going paperless

Through adopting eSignature along, since 2003 DocuSign and our clients have saved:

- 20 billion sheets of paper
- 2 million gallons of water required to make that amount of paper, in addition to 105 million pounds of waste
- 1.6 million pounds of additional CO2 spared as a result of the paper saved

Research shows that consumers are also becoming more environmentally aware, so embracing digital transformation and going paperless will not only benefit the environment, but also impact consumer sentiment towards your business.

“As we compete to deliver service excellence to our clients and fill urgent temp positions, speed is critical. That’s why we’ve used DocuSign not only as an electronic signature solution but as a way to modernise our business and accelerate our entire agreement process”

Carlos Estrada
General Counsel, APAC
The Adecco Group

Environmental engagement benefits



73%
of companies surveyed by Barclays who had invested in sustainable development reported commercial benefits.¹

45%
believe that this transition has had a positive impact on their image.

According to the 2019 BrandZ study, brands with strong social or environmental engagement have seen their annual value rise twice as fast as those who don't.²

¹ <https://www.barclayscorporate.com/content/dam/barclayscorporate-com/documents/insights/industry-expertise/Environmental-Commitment-Report.pdf>

² <https://www.strategies.fr/blogs-opinions/idees-tribunes/4023321W/pourquoi-les-marques-ne-doivent-pas-negliger-la-rse.html>

Other benefits

In addition to the 'hard' benefits of cost-reduction and hours saved, eSignature presents a number of other advantages to your organisation: improved customer and employee experience, increased security and conformity of contracts and increased competitive advantage.

eSignature increases employee productivity by saving time on everyday tasks and workflows. Manually filling in forms and entering information into a database is time-consuming and increases the risk of errors.

It also provides you with a faster, more accurate process whilst also removing the risk of losing contracts or documents.

With DocuSign, companies can monitor all operations performed and keep track of all documents in one place. Forrester estimates an average of \$160,000 worth of legal fees and penalties would be saved each year, through being able to demonstrate the validity of the disputed agreement with an electronically signed document.

Conclusion

Clients / employees satisfaction, growth and corporate social responsibility: the benefits of adopting eSignature span across all areas of your business.

Whether it's the first or final step in your company's digital transformation, adopting eSignature is an integral part of going paperless, and is key to the economic future of companies today.

To see how easy it is, why not [try our eSignature solutions](#). Try the experience for 30 days, no obligation or credit card required.

15%

Increase in customer satisfaction through implementing DocuSign

“Mortgage applications have been one of our flagship DocuSign implementations. Customers can upload their signed documents and these come back to the bank through a set of APIs we've developed.”

Barclays

About DocuSign

DocuSign helps organizations connect and automate how they prepare, sign, act on, and manage agreements. As part of the DocuSign Agreement Cloud, DocuSign offers eSignature: the world's #1 way to sign electronically on practically any device, from almost anywhere, at any time. Today, more than 500,000 customers and hundreds of millions of users in over 180 countries use DocuSign to accelerate the process of doing business and to simplify people's lives.

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