Ebook

Digital Signature for the Remote Workplace

symtrax

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Working From Home and "the New Normal"
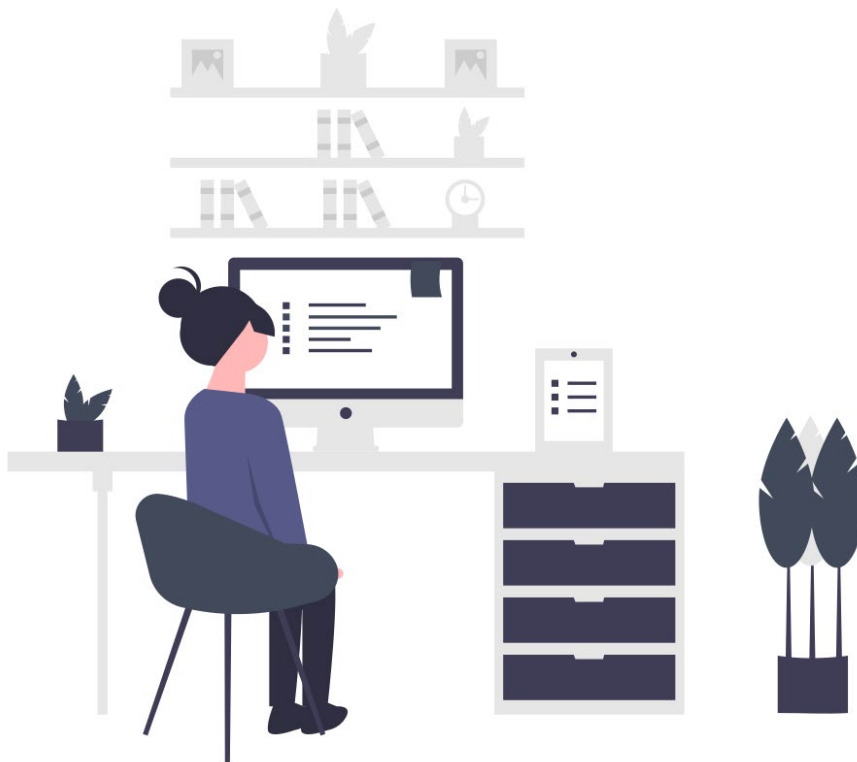
Remote working, telecommuting, working from home: no matter how you phrase it, none of these terms are new. Although 2020 may be seen as a turning point, the need for remote business process support has existed for years. There is now evidence to suggest that flexible, digital-friendly workflows are going to be even more of a priority going forward. As a result, companies may want to ask themselves which processes could benefit from being "remote-friendly", and the best way to accomplish this.

For many, the new emphasis on remote working in 2020 might seem sudden. In 2013, Yahoo gained attention by calling for remote workers to return to offices, a move met with criticism and backlash. In the memo announcing this change, the company's HR head, Jackie Reses, emphasized the importance of being physically in the same space for "communication and collaboration" as well as "the interactions and experiences that are only possible in our offices."

However, the decision came with mixed reactions, even at the time. While some saw it as a bold, positive change that would increase productivity, others criticized it as a backwards step, giving workers less flexibility. The fact that Verizon bought Yahoo just a

few years later, in 2017, could contribute to the impression that this had an overall negative impact on the company.

Since then, numerous studies have cited remote working to not only be a desirable option for employees, but one with enterprise-wide benefits. In 2020, this trend has accelerated even more, requiring companies to be prepared for a "new normal" that sees more workers offsite. Human Resources in particular seems to have been affected: A Gartner survey of HR leaders "nearly 50% of organizations reported 81% or more of their employees are working remotely" as of April 2020, in response to the pandemic.

However, shifting to digital use in this way can put enormous strain on HR departments, as processes that were normally done manually have to be reimagined. Without the ability to print and deliver documents in person, companies need to know each transaction will reach the proper endpoint. This demands security, flexibility, and above all, an online signature solution for validation.

While signing a document electronically might sound like a simple process, implementing it involves many of the same concerns as other digital services. Companies may be reluctant to invest in them if not required to, due to modernization costs, security issues, and complex demands. Furthermore, standards and legal requirements can vary, depending on where your company is based and what exchange platforms you may be interacting with. This requires an enterprise-specific solution built to reflect your specific use case and adjusted to meet the proper workload.

This ebook will outline the importance of digital signatures, what a signature process contains, and how implementing one can help any company with remote working.

1.

Remote Working **Statistics**

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than 20 percent of wage and salary workers in 2018 worked from home on an average day. For self-employed workers, the number was over 50 percent. However, the amount of hours worked from home for both of these groups was far below the average of around 8 per day.   Strategy Analytics has also forecast a rise in the mobile workforce worldwide, with this group accounting for nearly 2 billion people by 2022.

Remote working doesn't have to be the norm to be important, however. A study announced in 2019 found that more than 80 percent of businesses were adopting flexible working hours to retain employees. In addition, 52 percent of this study's respondents said they worked outside of their company's main office for at least half of the workweek. Even when remote working isn't a necessity, it is often seen as an incentive and an advantage when retaining employees.

Finally, validating and approving documents in which signatures are needed, including digital signatures are to be considered. A 2019 report from ResearchAndMarkets.com predicted that the digital signature market would account for a market size of $5.5 billion in 2023. Similarly, a 2020 report from Prescient & Strategic Intelligence Private Limited found that 75 countries currently mandate electronic signature. While there are some important differences between electronic and digital signatures, larger trends suggest a growing need for these services as part of a business workflow.

2.

Digital and **Electronic Signatures:** What's the **Difference?**

First, let's outline an important distinction between digital and electronic signatures. These are commonly confused but refer to slightly different things. The following explanation is taken from the official Symtrax blog (read the full post here):

> *"An electronic signature, also commonly referred to as an eSignature, is 'data in electronic form, which is logically associated with other data in electronic form and which is used by the signatory to sign,' (according to Wikipedia). In recent times, they have surpassed handwritten signatures as a means to validate and complete several types of transactions, including sales and delivery processes.*
>
> *Digital signatures are a form of electronic signature with added security features to verify the signer is who they say they are. These features include a means to identify both the parties that request and provide the signature through the use of a personal key infrastructure (PKI). This is important as it ensures that the signed document has not been tampered with."*

With this in mind, it's easier to determine the best signature solution and corresponding requirements.

3.

Digital Signature Challenges

Despite obvious advantages, there are several obstacles to successful remote signature implementation. These may vary based on use and industry, but in many cases, the core concerns remain the same, and echo the issues with implementing other new technologies:

- **Security:** The most common worry surrounding any digital service is often security, and with good reason. Businesses large and small can be subject to data breaches, with malware, identity theft, and phishing scams all still active threats. Even without these hazards, users need to be assured that their information is secure.

- **Accessibility:** User-friendliness may be more important than decisionmakers realize. Keeping a signature solution accessible can help ensure recipients complete documents and abide by procedures. It also keeps the process inclusive, especially when documents are made available to signees regardless of their platform and device of choice. The average employee may not have the necessary knowledge or time to follow a more complicated workflow.

- **Cost:** Always a consideration, cost is an important factor in considering how to implement signature solutions. Moreover, the expense in delays to important processes (such as supply chain documents and sales orders) is crucial in deciding whether or not to use electronic signature. In many cases the cost of relying on physical printing and signing can be high as well, forcing companies to weigh their options.

- **Flexibility:** Every party involved in a document workflow needs to be accounted for, and that means preparing for various ERP, OS, and device arrangements. Can partners or customers sign on their preferred device? Do they have the choice of how to add a signature? Are there ways to adjust should new changes arise? All of these questions point to the need for adaptability, and a remote signature option that meets your specific demands.

- **Scale:** Along the same lines, the path to digital signature has to accommodate every step of the document verification process, with the option to add and revise elements as necessary. Successful remote working and signature means supporting your entire enterprise. As such, a project that includes a wide-range of components may seem daunting.

- **Traceability:** The ability to trace the document every step of the way from when the document was created to when it was signed and delivered to the appropriate parties and every step in between

4.

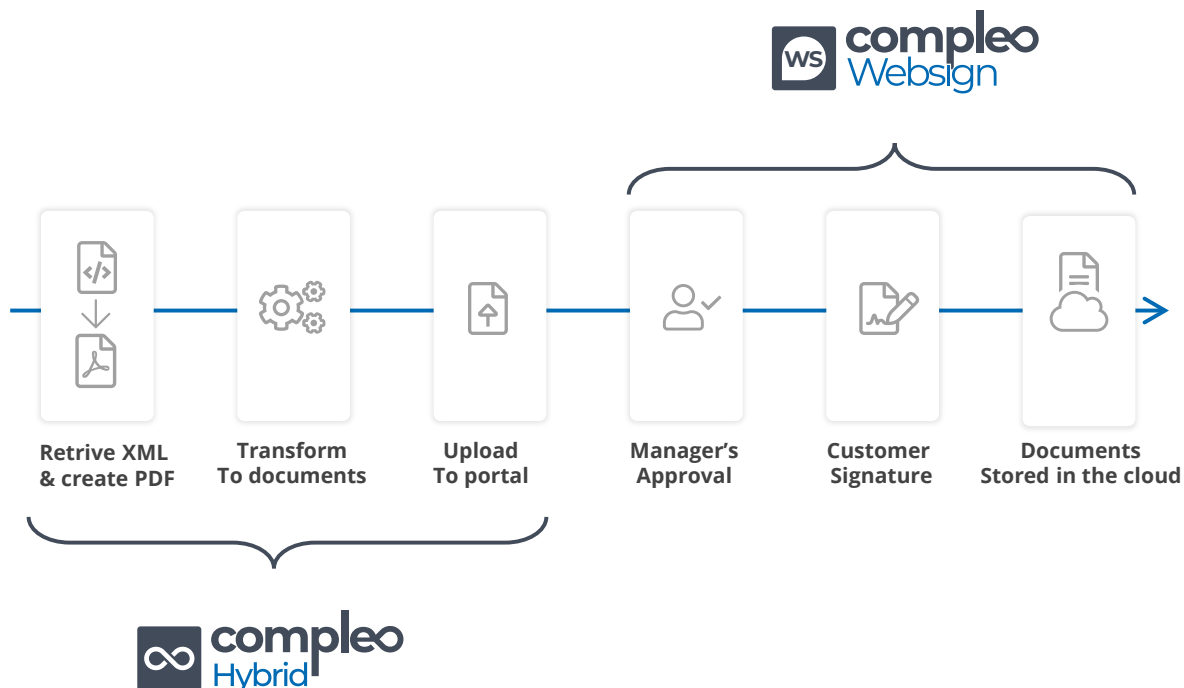# The Essentials of a Signature Process

Now that we've identified the common barriers to adopting a remote signature process, let's examine the crucial features for making one work. As expected, these features are meant to address some of the issues mentioned above.

- **Out-of-network support:** Participants need to be able to sign, even when not using the same ERP or specific network as the originating company.

- **Invoice, work order, and/or purchase acknowledgment support:** The actual process for each of these document types is different, but there are similar components that must always work. For example, vendors should be able to receive and sign orders and acknowledgments with the same level of ease, regardless of the particular purpose.

- **Review, sign, and send:** Building these functions into a digital signature workflow gives recipients the option to make changes and submit as needed. This is important because it helps detect issues without slowing delivery down too much.

- **Workflow continuity:** A complete process, from beginning to end, secures creation, signing, storage, and other aspects of businesses documents. In addition, a proper solution can account for what will happen after a signature is complete and how common operations play out.

5.

Sample Workflow

compleo Websign

Retrive XML & create PDF | Transform To documents | Upload To portal | Manager's Approval | Customer Signature | Documents Stored in the cloud

compleo Hybrid

This workflow consists of a sales associate creating an order to be signed between two companies. The associate will fill out the necessary information, which can be done manually, via ERP, online form input, or other methods. Whatever the source, this content will then be grabbed by Compleo to be sent to the web application, WebSign. Before going out to the corresponding parties, it will first be sent to the sales manager for approval. If everything looks good, the document is then sent to the customer for review and signature.

Once the customer signs, the document is then passed to the sales associate, manager, or team, depending on the company's policies. Next, the document is validated by the server with a digital signature stating who signed, along with additional location and timestamp information. The document is then sent to both parties. Finally, the document itself can live on a cloud repository or simply be attached to the email as preferred.

Finally, you can review the document's status in Compleo Console. whether it was signed by both parties, whether it is stuck in the validation step, or simply waiting for another party to sign. In addition, if the document is not approved/validated at any step of the way, it will have it's own corresponding notification that the processes stopped.

6.

Advantages of using Compleo

Compleo is a flagship document management solution capable of creating and augmenting business workflows, whether working off of existing architecture or implementing from scratch. Whatever the need, Compleo can offer your company a way to process different kinds of paperwork:

- **Easy external use:** Add signatures to business documents and share with all required parties, even when traveling.
- **Handle everything via email:** There's no need to set up a VPN, and all recipients can access the necessary documents by clicking on a URL.
- **Use cloud-ready architecture:** Work securely in your existing cloud environment and avoid disruption.
- **Track and review document details:** See each document's status throughout the process as well as data analytics reports for further insight.
- **Manage new hire paperwork:** Onboarding new employees is simple and can be handled through a single continuous process.

Conclusion

Digital signature is not a mere add-on: it's an important, in-demand aspect of document continuity that needs to be considered from implementation onward. It's also a potential step to a paperless, fully digital workplace that can help your company prepare for the future. Remote access is likely to be even more desirable in the future, for employee satisfaction and user efficiency alike. Because of this, digital signatures can contribute to the increasingly important remote workplace, allowing businesses to face new challenges without disruption.

Another important aspect that Digital Signature allows is traceability and accountability of the document. The implementation of Digital Signature can allow the entity to view every aspect of the document from when it was created, to when it was sent to be signed, to when it was actually signed and to when the document was received by the appropriate parties and every step in between.

About

Symtrax

Symtrax is a worldwide software company helping organizations enhance document management processes with cloud-ready solutions in mind. Our ever-expanding range of connectors establishes compatibility easily, and our Compleo Suite software can address a wide range of challenges through its specialized modules. To learn more, visit our site or contact us at sales@symtrax.com.

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