DocuSign®

How to Choose an E-Signature Solution

5 factors to consider

With features like digital audit trails, automated workflows and mandatory fields, e-signatures:

– **Improve the customer experience**   – **Enhance security and legality**

– **Increase operational efficiency**   – **Increase document visibility**

– **Eliminate human error**   – **Reduce delays**

The benefits of e-signature technology are far reaching. Today, e-signature technology is used around the globe in nearly every industry and department. But not all e-signature providers are created equal—and not all organisations have the same needs. Financial services and pharmaceuticals, for instance, require solutions that hold up against strict regulatory and compliance standards. Business services and technology companies, on the other hand, may need an efficient way to move customers along the sales process and collect payments.

Before selecting the e-signature solution that's right for your organisation, consider some of the critical features and benefits that top e-signature providers offer their customers. This guide outlines five considerations that every prospective e-signature user should look for when evaluating a potential provider.

Find an e-signature partner that:

1/ Promotes an easy, convenient signing experience

2/ Offers simple integration with existing systems

3/ Eliminates manual tasks in sending and signing workflows

4/ Mitigates risks with advanced security and compliance controls

5/ Provides ongoing e-signature support

1/ Design an easy, convenient signing experience

Improving user experience—for customers, patients, students, citizens, etc.—is the number one driver of technological innovation and process improvement in nearly every industry.

For many organisations, the adoption of e-signature technology is the first step on the road to process improvement. When it comes to finding an e-signature provider that can deliver on the promise of an improved experience for your customers, employees, patients and more, here are just some of the key features that you should look for:

Mobile compatibility
Today, consumers enjoy the convenience of completing transactions or signing agreements on the go, from any device. Whether operating from a phone, tablet or desktop computer, users expect a faster, easier and more-efficient signing experience. SMS notifications and mobile applications for iOS and Android streamline the process further. Robust e-signature providers convert and configure documents to maximise usability, regardless of screen size or device type.

ID verification
E-signature ID verification features can streamline onboarding processes that require enhanced signee authentication. For example, digital government- or state-issued ID scanning and verification help HR departments smooth the forms process for new hires and benefits enrollment—which is critical when you consider the fact that a positive onboarding experience improves new-hire retention by 82% and increases employee productivity by 70% according to Glassdoor.

Streamlined payments
20% of businesses waste ten or more hours every week chasing payments. Digitising and automating payments makes it easier for customers to deliver their money to you, and gives you more visibility into order status. Prompting quick transactions decreases the time spent managing or tracking down payments and increases time spent on new business development.

Advanced data collection
Many agreements require more than a signature for completion. For instance, medical intake forms may ask patients to mark an image of the human body to accurately demonstrate the location of a physical ailment. Advanced e-signature providers offer comprehensive markup features that make it easy to capture real-time information.

Customisable options
An ideal way to deliver a good customer experience is with a mobile app. If your business uses mobile apps, you need an e-signature solution that allows customers to sign documents directly within your mobile app. Providers that offer a mobile SDK can make it easy to quickly develop such a solution.

As the digital transformation of the business world accelerates, customers, employees and business owners will only become more reliant on the speed and ease of digital agreements. E-signature usage may seem like a business advantage now, but it's rapid adoption is making it a business necessity and a key differentiator.

79%

of business owners cited improving the customer experience as their highest priority in 2020

(Source)

2/ Integrate e-signature with existing technology

Drawn out implementation processes or employee training requirements are often the biggest barriers to technology adoption. An e-signature provider should be able to readily respond to an organisation's size and needs, thereby whittling a potentially years-long implementation process down to a few weeks. Additionally, a platform that works within the technology or software solutions that you already know and love provides for a frictionless user experience from day one.

Seamlessly integrating with existing technology stacks or workflows is one of the first places where providers can simplify the implementation process. For instance, many providers are speeding up the implementation process by turning to e-signature solutions that offer out-of-the-box compatibility with common business tools (Microsoft, Workday, Salesforce, Google etc.).

But it isn't just about integration with existing technology—it's also about connecting disparate systems and bringing information under one roof. Many e-signature providers simplify the e-signature implementation process even further by offering configurable APIs and SDKs that are tailored to work with almost any existing workplace application.

In addition to technological compatibility, it's important to find a partner that makes it easy to expand e-signature use cases as your business needs evolve. Look for an e-signature solution that fits into a broader, end-to-end agreement-management technology suite. That way, rather than searching for new vendors every few months, you can work with a partner that grows with you.

32 days

The average employee spends up to 32 days a year switching between different apps or line-of-business tools, hugely diminishing productivity

(Source)

3/ Automate sending and signing workflows to reduce errors

Sixty percent of businesses cite human error in the manual transfer of data as a significant source of errors and delays in the documentation process. For instance, manually transferring information from patient intake forms to electronic health record (EHR) software hampers productivity—and even poses a significant security risk for healthcare providers.

Streamlining the signing and data transfer process with automated, configurable workflows eliminates the need for slow-moving manual tasks—which helps employees create, modify and scale agreement management systems effortlessly. Look for helpful features that reduce turnaround time minimise the need for manual management of document sending and receiving, including:

1/ Document templates
Streamline document management workflows with an e-signature solution that stores templates and automatically inputs signee information for easy and error-free generation of common agreements, like purchase orders, NDAs or employee contracts.

2/ Bulk send capability
For agreements that must be sent en masse for signature, bulk send and sign capability makes it easy to share the same document with one click and collect thousands signatures in record time.

3/ Automatically archiving to cloud storage providers
Automated archival of existing documents via a cloud storage solution (like Box or G Suite) makes it easy to promptly organise and retrieve signed documents. It also provides a definitive, easily-traced record of past agreements.

4/ Workflow automation
87% of agreements are still prepared manually, leading to reduced visibility, administrative efficiency, accuracy and security. The ability to route agreements to specific people based on data fields in the agreement accelerates the time to completion and increases productivity.

5/ Self-service documents
Save time and improve customer experience without writing a single line of code. Many self-service e-signature solutions give users the ability to fast-track document generation and send multiple signees a web-hosted link.

88%

A document management solution helped Boehringer Ingelheim bring document turnaround from 13 days to just three—and reduced errors by 88%

(Source)

4/ Mitigate risks with advanced security and compliance controls

In industries or departments where compliance and regulatory concerns rule document workflows, finding an e-signature provider you can trust with sensitive documents is more than just a matter of improving business performance—it protects your bottom line.

In practice, e-signatures provide more layers of security than traditional ink-and-paper signatures, thereby meeting or exceeding the most stringent global security standards.

For instance, advanced e-signature solutions offer multiple ways to verify a signer's identity, like email addresses, SMS authentication, ID verification, one-time access codes, and more. After a signature is completed, digital audit trails that follow Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) protocols are used to confirm a signature's validity, producing a court-admissible stamp that includes the date, time, and IP address of the signee. In addition to court admissibility, e-signatures include an:

Electronic record
All historic actions taken on a document are carefully recorded and easily accessed. Details recorded include time received, opened, and signed and the geolocation of the signee.

Certificate of completion
The identifying information of each signee (like IP address and location) is recorded at the time of signing, along with a confirmation that each signee personally agreed to provide an electronic signature.

Tamper-evident seal
Once required signatures are provided all documents are sealed using PKI data. As a result, any additional edits or changes made to the document after signing will be immediately apparent.

Threat detection
Advanced e-signature solutions also often offer continuous security monitoring and surveillance. Threat-detection software helps analyse and identify security concerns in agreements, enabling you to respond quickly to verified threats, before they cause significant damage.

It's important that your chosen provider doesn't look at security in a vacuum. It is critical to consider all areas that keep your sensitive transactions protected, including privacy and compliance with laws and regulations globally. It is necessary to ensure the enforceability and non-repudiation of your document. Evaluate whether an e-signature provider offers regulatory compatibility with your industry, look for service-industry regulatory certifications, such as PCI Data Security Standard compliance or Soc 1 and Soc 2 certification.

81%

of business users consider e-signature technology the most essential tool in securing legal and security compliance

5/ Choose a partner that provides ongoing e-signature support

An organisation that's deploying an e-signature solution for the first time needs a provider they can rely on as they find their footing. The right provider will offer more than just a seamless technological integration—they'll offer a partnership. An e-signature provider should help you design, implement and manage your agreement process from start to finish, so you can work together to effectively optimise your e-signature solution and reduce adoption time.

It can't be emphasised enough: look for a partner, not just a vendor. A customer-centric e-signature provider will readily provide the tools and knowledge that you'll need to drive maximum ROI. To that end, a partner will work with you to:

1/ Establish a vision
by setting business goals/KPIs, identifying sponsors and admins, and defining strategies that will drive successful e-signature adoption and growth.

2/ Deploy, adopt and optimise solutions
by identifying and targeting high-impact use cases—and providing employees with the resources and support they need to successfully adopt and learn new, technology-driven workflows.

3/ Educate your team
with a robust catalog of resources, such as comprehensive knowledge bases and user forums.

4/ Unlock new opportunities
by offering consistent version updates and creating a clear governance framework by building a center of excellence that centralises best practices and resources for organisation wide adoption and enablement.

E-signature technology—like all digital transformation—provides organisations across industries a simple way to save money, reduce errors and increase productivity. But technology doesn't stand alone. It requires a human interface to ensure end-to-end success. Identifying an experienced technology partner, one that can support you on your digital journey, is integral to successful e-signature adoption. Whether you're deploying e-signature technology to a team of thousands or just five, start with a vendor you can trust and feel comfortable with.

50%

of businesses today claim that they are prepared to invest in an automated, end-to-end contract management solution but simply don't have the tools or know-how to do it effectively

(Source)

Optimising your e-signature solution begins with the right partner

The signing stage of the agreement process is essential to moving your business forward—but like so many ingrained approaches, it's often a side note in the process improvement conversation. No more.

As the business world accelerates into the digital age, organisations are looking at every angle where they can gain a competitive edge. Customers in today's fast-paced, remote business environment expect quick, convenient and digital business solutions, which is why e-signature adoption has soared over the past decade.

Organisations need to be mindful that not all e-signatures solutions—or providers—are equal. To recap, for the greatest assurance of end-to-end success, look for an e-signature partner than can:

– Simplify the signing experience

– Seamlessly integrate with existing systems

– Eliminate manual tasks with flexible automation

– Minimise security and compliance risks

– Offer ongoing technical and strategic support

A proven and trusted e-signature vendor places the benefits of e-signature technology within arm's reach—providing a clear path to reduce costs, minimise risks, improve the customer experience, boost efficiency and ensure compliance for your organisation.

Learn more about how DocuSign eSignature can support your business today.