



## Technology Brief

FOR IT PROFESSIONALS



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### Digital Signing – Improve Efficiency by Reducing Paper Copies

The digital signing of documents has quickly become more widely accepted by the legal community. This is due to many people recognizing the need for a paperless office along with multi-tiered compliance and electronic record keeping. These are the driving forces behind going digital.

Why make the switch to digital signatures? First and foremost, it leads to better organization by allowing you to get rid of paper copies. It's not unusual for firms to have stacks of boxes filled with nothing but papers that contain important signatures. This takes up valuable real estate space and costs your firm money. More importantly, digital copies are always secure and protected in the event of an emergency.

While digital signatures can come in a wide array of offerings, this article will touch on the basics and discuss how the process works.

#### How it Works

Again, there are different methods that can be used to capture digital signatures, but we will discuss Adobe's version. Adobe software is commonly found in law firms and has a strong reputation as a leader in software development. Adobe offers a free service called Adobe E-Signatures, which is quick and easy to set-up. This website can import a copy of your digital signature or help you create a new one. When working with a PDF, the software gives you the ability to easily direct the recipient to where their signature is necessary. Upon delivering the PDF document (available through email, or Adobe's website), the recipients can then choose to electronically sign it. When choosing to sign the document, the recipient must enter a secure code that was created when the Adobe E-Signature account set-up. This code is then verified by encrypted channels, and compared with other important computer information (such as an IP address and other secure information) to further identify you.

#### Acceptance of Digital Signatures

Organizations that accept digital signatures:

- Bank of America
- Federal Housing Administration
- Fannie Mae
- Freddie Mac
- Internal Revenue Service
- IBM
- Wachovia
- Comcast

# Digital Signatures

After the document has been signed, all involved parties receive electronic confirmation of this event. A final copy of the signed document is also sent out to the sender and receiver. These items can now be filed electronically into a document management system and are safely preserved forever without wasting a single sheet of paper.

## **Is using a Digital Signature Legal?**

Before we answer this, we must stress that this is not intended as legal advice.

The answer is yes, the acceptance of digital signatures was passed in 2000 and signed into federal law (E-Sign Act) and provides legal authority to digital signatures. 48 States have also ratified the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act that further cements acceptance in the legal community.

If you still have questions, we can help. Feel free to contact Orion Support today.