

HOW TO CUT COSTS AND AUTOMATE BUSINESS PROCESSES WITH E-SIGNATURES





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Automating business processes helps organizations control expenses, improve productivity, and increase profitability. It also creates a more convenient and streamlined customer experience. But with today's rising operating costs, the demand for more

sustainable business practices, and the need for greater digital security, business process automation has also become a requirement for staying competitive in any market.

One process that's ripe for automation is also one of the most time-consuming for any organization: the sign-off. Fortunately, e-signature technology is automating these processes, making it easier to collect signatures, store signed documents online, comply with regulations, and automatically notify stakeholders about the status of a document.

These capabilities save time and cut costs in every industry across every type of business process, including contracts, sales, finance, onboarding, releases, and verifications.

Organizations like Civillaw. Tech have cut the time and costs of many of their business processes simply by [implementing e-signature solutions.](#)

Soon, it may not even be feasible to require physical signatures in your organization. According to 2022 research by McKinsey, [35 percent of employees are able to work from home full-time, while 23 percent of workers are able to do so part-time.](#) With so many digital document processes in place to accommodate remote work, e-signature technology is a vital part of every organization's digital ecosystem.

Here's everything you need to know to automate signing processes and lower costs.

What is an e-signature?

An e-signature (also known as an electronic signature), is a digital version of a physical signature, or wet signature, that enables people to sign documents online. E-signatures take the place of physical signatures to make the signing process faster and more convenient. In fact, many online transactions would not be possible without this technology.

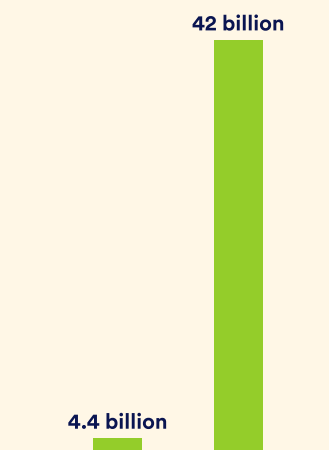
E-signatures are typically created with software that allows a user to type or draw their signature

with their mouse or touchpad. They are considered legally binding in most countries and used widely in industries like finance, real estate, and healthcare to sign contracts, agreements, and other legal documents.

For example, many banks and financial institutions have implemented e-signatures to allow customers to open accounts and complete other transactions remotely. In the real estate industry, companies rely on e-signatures to facilitate contract signing without the need for in-person meetings.

With more people working from home for the past few years, there has been unprecedented demand for secure and convenient ways to sign documents electronically. As a result, e-signature platforms are becoming more and more a part of everyday life. In fact, the size of the global digital signature market is expected to [rise to \\$42 billion by 2030, up from just \\$4.4 billion in 2021.](#)

Digital Signature Market Growth



[Source: Straits Research](#)

Why physical signatures are no longer enough

Since the 1980s and the advent of the [integrated office system](#), businesses operations have become increasingly paperless. In the 1990s and 2000s, wide adoption of email, client-service networks, and enterprise web servers further reduced the need for printing out hard copies. As cloud-based computing and mobile technology became widespread in the 2010s, many organizations were able to digitize even more critical processes.

Now, almost every aspect of our lives can be managed without paper documents, but we still need legally binding agreements, complete with signatures, to conduct business. Even the federal government, notorious for being slow to adopt technology, is embracing e-signature tools.

At the end of 2021, President Biden signed [an executive order on improving government services with technology](#), mandating that federal agencies digitalize more of their interactions with the public. The order also directs federal agencies to adopt a customer-

centric approach to service delivery.

One way the order will achieve this goal is by promoting wider use of e-signature technology. By adopting e-signature solutions, federal agencies can reduce the need for paper documents and make it easier for citizens to access and complete services online.

E-signature ROI: How the technology cuts costs

Five ways e-signatures save organizations money:

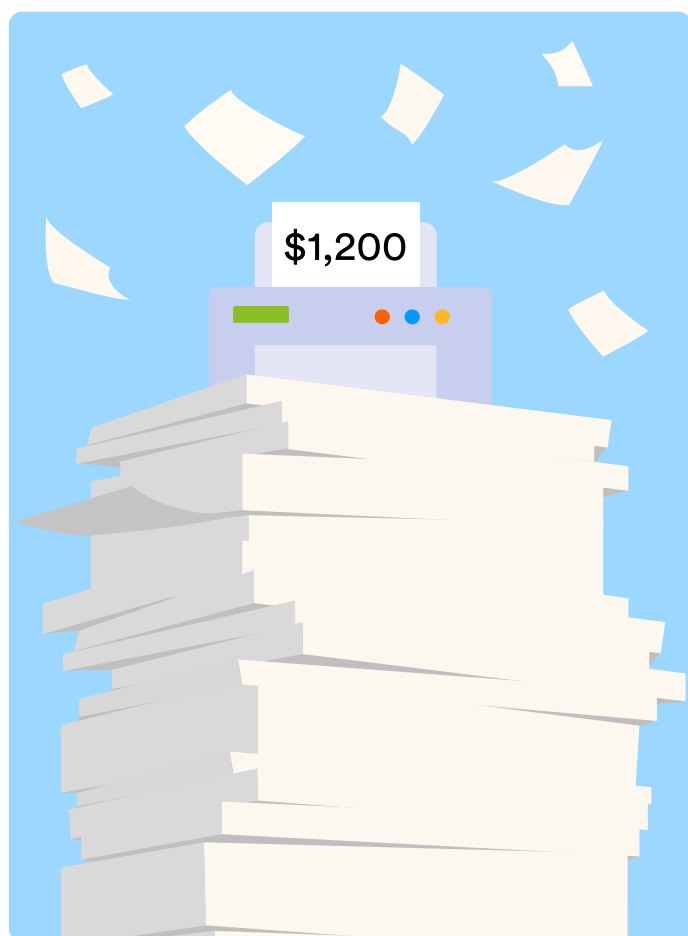
- Reduced paper and printing costs
- Lower filing and storage costs
- Fewer disposal and recycling costs
- Faster document processing times
- Reduced risk of security breaches

Providing streamlined online transactions does more than improve customer experience — it helps organizations save a significant amount of time and money. The way e-signatures cut costs can help any organization improve its profitability. Here's how.

Reduced paper and printing costs

Every year, businesses spend an average of [\\$1,200 on printing costs](#) per employee.

While many organizations have already digitized a lot of their documents to reduce paper usage, e-signature solutions can help further mitigate printing costs by eliminating the need for wet signatures on hard copies. Reducing the amount of time spent on printing, photocopying, and other paper management processes also improves efficiency and allows employees to focus on more impactful work.



Lower filing and storage costs

Business.com estimates that the average employee requires [120 square feet of space to work](#), yet each workstation only needs to measure 50 square feet to meet employee needs. The additional 70 square feet typically serves other purposes, such as storage space. Reducing the amount of paper documents, particularly signed contracts or forms, can reduce the need for expensive office real estate.

At a time when many companies are going fully remote, becoming fully paperless with e-signature solutions could eliminate the need for costly third-party paper document storage, as well.

Fewer disposal and recycling costs

Paper documents that contain sensitive information (including signatures) require careful disposal to prevent identity theft. In-house document shredding can take a considerable amount of labor to stay on top of, not to mention the cost of purchasing and maintaining equipment to begin with. Third-party services can be just as costly, with estimates for large companies reaching upwards of [\\$1,500 per month](#).

Since e-signatures eliminate the need for paper documents, they also mitigate downstream disposal costs.

Faster document processing times

Obtaining a physical signature requires printing documents, scheduling a meeting to physically sign them, or emailing a document as a PDF. The signer has to either physically attend the meeting or print out the PDF to sign, then rescan the document and email it back. But document management still isn't complete, as paper documents need to be scanned for safe digital storage.

E-signatures eliminate almost all of this manual labor and legwork by allowing signing to occur through a secure online platform that's accessible from anywhere with Wi-Fi.

Enhanced security

Paper documents require secure physical storage, as well as time-consuming and costly disposal to prevent theft and protect sensitive information. Digital documents, including those that require signatures, are harder for bad actors to access, even when stored in the cloud. This can protect consumers from identity theft and organizations from the fines for security breaches.

E-signature automation: How it works

Traditionally, collecting and filing signatures requires a lot of steps and manual labor. One of the reasons e-signature solutions are able to generate such impressive cost savings is because they automate so much of that work. Best of all, e-signature solutions can create signing workflows from scratch or plug into the automated processes a business has already established.

Here are some of the automation capabilities of e-signature solutions:

7 benefits of e-signature adoption

- Automate requests, updates, and confirmations
- Trigger communications from workflows
- Identify and remove bottlenecks
- Easy access with a Wi-Fi connection
- View and share embedded digital paper trails
- Avoid version control with digital updates
- Experience faster overall processing times

- **Request e-signatures via online forms.**

With e-signature platforms, users can send links to online signature-collection forms via email and text. Through the link, recipients can access the document that needs to be reviewed and use editable fields to input their initials and legally binding signatures. The signer is often required to enter their name, email address, and sometimes other personal or identifying information to confirm their identity. Once the signer submits the form, the document is automatically routed back to the sender for review and storage.

This process allows organizations to quickly and easily obtain signatures on a wide range of documents, such as contracts, agreements, and forms, without the need for physical printing and mailing.

- **Trigger e-signature requests automatically.** Many onboarding processes and other workflows that involve a lot of documents have already been automated with various platforms, but still require in-person signatures. When organizations add an e-signature solution to the mix, they can set e-signature requests to trigger automatically during the workflow,

so recipients can sign on the spot.

E-signature solutions allow organizations to fully automate entire document workflows instead of disrupting processes for wet signature collection.

- **Automate document routing for multiple signers.** For complex workflows involving multi-level approvals, such as for budget allocation and large purchases, e-signature solutions can automatically route documents to appropriate recipients for review.

Users can program their organizations' approval rules using conditional logic, so documents are automatically sent up the chain of command for review. For example, when signing a contract with a new supplier, an e-signature solution can automatically submit documents to the appropriate department head for review and then up to the CFO or CEO for final approval.

- **Enable workflow tracking.** E-signature automation makes it easier to track workflow performance and get insight into status, as well. Users can look at any open tasks in a signature collection workflow to see who has signed a contract and which stakeholders still need to sign.

The immediate visibility of document status eliminates much of the need to request updates. This visibility can also help users identify bottlenecks in their processes, including which stakeholders tend to hold up the signing process.

- **Automate email confirmations.** A lot of the manual work that goes into signature collection involves notifying each party about the status of a document. When a customer signs a contract, the other party needs to provide confirmation that their signature has been accepted.

Likewise, document managers need to be notified when a contract has been fully signed so it can be filed. And stakeholders need to know when a document is awaiting their review and signature. E-signature platforms can automatically send notification emails at all of these junctures so the appropriate parties know it's time to take action

- **Enhance accessibility independent of location and time.** Modern e-signature solutions are cloud-based, so users can access them anywhere they have a Wi-Fi connection. All documents and signing tools are available only online rather than on a computer-based software platform, so users can manage and sign

documents whether they're on their desktop computer, laptop, tablet, or smartphone.

- **Automatically create a digital paper trail.** E-signature platforms automatically log every action taken by users, making it easy to audit processes. The notification messages automatically sent out to various users create an additional layer to a paper trail.

All of this improves security by making it simple to see when documents were shared and who accessed them, all objectively and without relying on people's memories. If there ever is some sort of security breach, stakeholders can easily review activity logs and determine who might have been responsible.

- **Enable easier version control.** Traditionally, when PDFs of documents are emailed to recipients, senders must distribute a new version if they update it. On any cloud-based platform, there's only one live version of a document, regardless of how many times it's been distributed and to whom. Users simply make changes to the one document file on the platform, and the changes automatically update for whoever has the link.

- **Speed up processing times.** All of these automations streamline and speed up every aspect of signature collection and document management. Automatic notifications eliminate delays that can occur while distributing documents, enabling faster response times. Filing happens automatically after the final signature is accepted, preventing bottlenecks from stopping next steps in a process.

useful in many different industries. They can be used in virtually any industry that requires people to sign documents. Here are some of the leading use cases.

Human resources

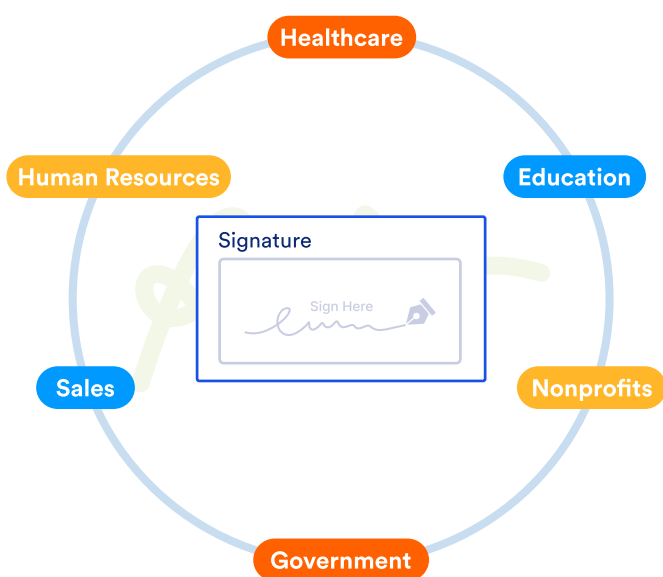
HR departments can use e-signature technology to facilitate the electronic signing of offer letters, non-disclosure agreements, and employee handbooks. This can save time and resources by eliminating the need for HR teams to print, sign, and scan these documents. E-signature technology can also be used for performance evaluations, benefit enrollment forms, and company policy updates to collect necessary signatures and consent.

Another way HR departments can use e-signature technology is to track an employee's progress during onboarding. E-signature platforms often include features that allow HR departments to see which documents have been signed and by whom, ensuring all necessary documents are completed in a timely manner.

Sales departments

Sales departments are keenly aware of the importance of removing as many hurdles as possible when trying to close a deal. Using e-signature technology, sales teams can quickly track the status of proposals, revise

Where to leverage e-signatures



Given the convenience, efficiency, and security they provide, e-signature platforms can be

and resend contracts and addenda, and designate the appropriate signer(s) based on the purchase amount or other criteria.

The added benefit of automating sales processes with e-signature technology is that it gives salespeople more time to create revenue by connecting with and converting leads. Providing a seamless, elegant signing experience also starts new customer relationships on the right track.

Education

Educational institutions, such as schools and universities, can use e-signature technology to process a wide range of documents electronically, including academic transcripts, enrollment agreements, registration forms, financial aid forms, and more.

Academic affairs departments can use e-signature platforms to facilitate the signing of new student intake and enrollment documents. This can save all involved parties from the hassle of scheduling in-person appointments to review everything.

E-signature technology can even collect signatures for permission slips, without relying on students to bring a paper home to their parents for review. Instead, teachers and administrators can email links to permission slips directly to the parents and collect their

signatures online. Not only is this more economical and convenient, but it can also prevent students from forging their parents' signatures.

Government

Government agencies can use e-signatures to facilitate the signing of a wide range of documents, including contracts, forms, and assistance applications. The technology is especially useful for making services like granting permits, disbursing benefits, filing taxes, and processing passports and licenses more convenient. Agencies can digitize forms related to unemployment benefits, Social Security, and other types of assistance, eliminating the need for in-person appointments.

For services that still require physical check-ins, like completing TSA PreCheck applications or renewing driver's licenses, workers can use e-signature technology onsite to quickly capture digital signatures, rather than having to scan in signed physical documents to create a digital record.

Healthcare providers

Healthcare organizations can use e-signature platforms to facilitate signing consent forms and medical records. Reception staff at clinics and other provider facilities can speed up the

sign-in process by using e-signature solutions with forms like financial statements and payment agreements, eliminating the need to scan inked paperwork later on. In fact, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many providers began requiring that patients complete check-in processes on mobile apps before even entering the office to prevent unnecessary physical contact.

In the emergency room, e-signatures can be used to sign discharge summaries, progress notes, and other types of patient documentation, making it easier to track compliance. Nursing staff and other workers can use the technology to complete their own internal sign-offs and cut down on paperwork.

Nonprofit organizations

Nonprofits and charities can use e-signature technology for everything from accepting donations to event waivers, volunteer contracts, and beyond. Managers can use the technology to sign contracts with vendors, partners, and other organizations without the need for time-consuming, back-and-forth emails.

E-signature platforms can also facilitate the signing of grant applications, donation forms, and other critical documents. With so many contracts in process at any given time, an e-signature platform is especially useful for

helping nonprofit managers check the status of each document and quickly find what still needs review or signing.

Overall, e-signature platforms are a valuable tool for streamlining document-signing processes in any industry imaginable. The technology can be the key to a fully digital and automated office.

Getting e-signature ready

Now that you know how e-signatures can benefit your organization, you're probably wondering how to integrate them into your document processes. To do this, you need to understand what makes e-signatures legally binding, and what type of platform you need to manage them.

The legal framework for e-signatures

E-signatures are a relatively new tool, and the laws and regulations that support them continue to evolve. In the U.S., e-signature law is based on two acts:

1. [The Uniform Electronic Transactions Act \(UETA\)](#), passed in 1999, recognizes electronic signatures as equivalent to handwritten ink signatures. It allows parties to enter into contracts and conduct business online, exactly as they would with traditional paper documents. The UETA provides legal recognition for electronic signatures and records by establishing that they are admissible as evidence in court. It also stipulates that electronic signatures cannot be “denied legal effect or enforceability” just because they are in electronic form. In short, the UETA specifies that a contract or other legal document that is signed electronically has the same validity as a document that is signed with a handwritten signature on paper.

2. The [E-Sign Act](#), passed in 2000, regulates the use of electronic signatures across the U.S. It allows parties to use electronic means to create, store, and sign documents and conduct business electronically, just as they would with traditional paper documents. This law overlaps with UETA. However, the E-Sign Act applies to transactions that involve interstate or foreign commerce, while UETA applies to transactions that occur within a single state.

A number of other regulations have shaped e-signature laws around the globe as well. The European Parliament [enacted the eIDAS Regulation in 2014](#), which defines the legal framework for using e-signatures in the European Union, including who and what entities can leverage the technology and in what circumstances. In Australia, the government [implemented the Electronic Transactions Act in 1999](#), which retroactively updates laws that require citizens to provide a handwritten signature by allowing them to sign electronically.

Any organization that conducts business in Europe, Australia, or other regions, should research local electronic signature laws to ensure compliance with them.

What to look for in an e-signature platform

There are many e-signature software solutions on the market, but not all provide the same level of convenience and impact. As you evaluate different options, look for an e-signature platform that meets these criteria.

- **Simple to adopt.** The e-signature platform should be cloud-based and should run on any operating system or mobile device. The software should be no-code so that any user can set it up without any technological expertise

and you don't waste valuable time and resources setting it up and training staff to use it. The user interface should be straightforward and intuitive to navigate.

- **Easy to integrate.** If your organization already uses automation for your business processes, you'll need an e-signature solution that plays well with your existing systems.
- **Secure.** The platform should have state-of-the-art data encryption and storage capabilities to keep user information secure. Look for platforms that have a demonstrated history of meeting evolving security standards. Check for integrations with your existing single sign-on provider for an added layer of security.
- **Legally compliant.** The software you choose should state whether or not they are compliant with existing regulations for e-signatures. E-signature platforms used in the healthcare industry in the United States should also be HIPAA-compliant.
- **Unlimited.** The solution you choose should be able to grow with your organization over many years.

Your e-signature solution should allow your organization to collect an unlimited number of signatures, so you are not penalized for your success by paying more as your business grows. Additionally, you should be able to keep an unlimited number of records, so storage is never an issue.

- **Clear cost structure.** Many e-signature vendors have complex pricing structures based on cost per document or the amount of storage space available. These pricing methods can make it challenging to estimate the actual cost of the solution and determine ROI. Look for a solution that offers straightforward and transparent pricing to avoid unexpected fees.
- **End-to-end.** The best e-signature solutions do more than enable users to collect signatures online — they allow organizations to manage and automate many of their document processes. Opting for a full, end-to-end solution will help consolidate vendors and reduce overall operating costs, while eliminating issues that could arise from incompatibility between different software.

Jotform Sign: The future-proof e-signature platform

E-signatures improve the convenience, efficiency, and security of any type of transaction, for signers and signees alike. Incorporating e-signature solutions throughout your organization is key to reaping the full benefits of the technology, including improved productivity and lower costs.

[Jotform Sign](#) empowers users to automate every aspect of e-signature collection, from document and workflow creation to secure cloud storage. Part of the [Jotform Enterprise](#) suite of solutions, this versatile platform can improve efficiency so much that users are able to reduce the length of many of their signature workflows to just 1.8 days on average. For fast setup and easy deployment, the platform integrates seamlessly with many third-party platforms users might already have installed.

Customers, and the organizations that serve them, deserve convenience when it comes to signing and managing documents. E-signature

solutions do more than save time and money — they improve the signing experience for everyone involved.

***The best
e-signature
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