



# Outperforming Paper with DIGITAL SIGNATURES

In our last article, we examined how in business the use of electronic documents outperforms paper for documents that require a signature or authentication such as contracts, technical drawings, official reports, etc. Yet there remains the challenge of how best to encourage individuals, companies and professionals to make the switch. Sadly, the computerization of business processes has often over-promised and under-delivered on features leaving end users to bear the consequences of changes that did not always meet their needs. So to assure success, it is vital that any change in user habits be easy and painless. After all, if using a digital signature is not user friendly, end users will not convert willingly even though doing so may save their company a lot of time and money in terms of printing, handling, shipping and archiving paper.

## A FORMAT THAT FITS

In a paper-based system, documents are usually created electronically then printed to be duly signed or sealed. Paper archives that use up valuable office space are required and documents must be shipped by courier which can be quite expensive. To avoid the potentially high cost of paper shipping and handling, some may be tempted to scan their paper originals and send their documents by email instead, a method that does not offer any protection against tampering or prove authorship.

The Portable Document Format (PDF) is a universal file format that was created to minimize workflows by eliminating the need to print a document for filing and shipping. PDFs have long-term archival properties and can be opened with virtually all operating systems.

For long-term archival of electronic documents, some PDFs have the added advantage of meeting the PDF/A ISO19005 standard. In the Notarius Digital Signature Kit, file conversion software is included to convert documents to the PDF/A format. By replacing the scan and print steps of a workflow with electronic file conversion, the end user is not negatively impacted. On the contrary, the process has been reduced and the electronic documents are archive-standard ready.

## CHANGES THAT MAKE SENSE

With Notarius' trusted digital signature, electronic originals have the same legal value as hand-signed paper documents. As easy to sign as using a pen, digitally signed documents save office space, time and money and is more environmentally friendly than paper printing and shipping by courier. Document authentication and information security of electronic documents continue to be a requirement; when the process is easy and efficient, making the switch makes sense.

## TOOLS THAT WORK

The Notarius Digital Signature Kit is equipped with easy-to-use software that lets the user digitally sign, as well as create and apply templates to, one or several PDF documents at once. In a two-click operation, the digital signature process is quickly done. Also, there is no limit to the number of computers on which the kit can be installed, so the impact of a mass deployment is minimized for the end user.

With the Notarius Kit, changes in procedure for employees who begin to use a digital signature are minimal. On the one end, employees who formerly would prepare paper documents for signatures (print and bind) now prepare electronic documents to be digitally signed instead. They simply replace the print step with the PDF conversion step and apply ready-to-sign signature boxes on the PDFs either individually or in bulk using easy-to-set templates. On the other end, employees who normally approve documents continue to do so by either signing individually prepared PDFs or bulk sign several PDFs at once. The workflow is therefore not affected. Rather it is optimized. Furthermore, it allows rapid document approval between employees from different office locations since transmittal of electronic documents is faster than the traditional next-business-day courier for paper documents.



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The Evolution of Your  
**SIGNATURE**