

Investing in more seamless digital signature and document workflows can have an outsized impact on driving workforce transformations

The 451 Take

Enterprises everywhere are dealing with application overload, which can lead to the fragmentation of people, data and content and, consequently, the diminution of workforce productivity and engagement. Our Voice of the Enterprise: Workforce Transformation 1H survey shows that only a third of employees are 'very satisfied' with the mix of tooling to get their work done; having to use too many apps is their biggest pain point, and 40% think that the number will increase over the next year. Employees are struggling to leverage tools that don't integrate well, making it difficult to create useful workflows.

This is now a strategic imperative for companies. Thirty-eight percent of business leaders cite the recruitment, retention and development of staff as the strategic area their company needs to improve on the most, and the employee experience is at the heart of this. In our September 2018 VoCUL Corporate Software report, 43% of early-adopting employees said tools are an important part of their decision about whether to take a job with a new employer, and those expectations are becoming more mainstream across the workforce. This hasn't escaped companies' notice; indeed, improving productivity and collaboration tools is now cited by technology decision-makers as the top priority in IT-led transformation initiatives.

Employees' expectations are increasingly predicated on digital leaders getting the right balance of agility, autonomy and alignment in the tooling experience. They want tools that give them flexibility to do more things seamlessly and that allow them to align with the workflows of their peers and managers. Mitigating friction in work processes and automating the long tail of manual, unstructured work are key to enabling agility and alignment.

So, where does one start? 451 Research believes that focusing these efforts on employees' core daily tools will have the greatest impact. Our surveys show that the tools employees rely on most are email and calendar, their content creation productivity suites, telephony applications, content lifecycle tools, and instant messaging. In most companies, these tools are still mostly siloed, but demand is growing for tighter integration. Indeed, automating discovery and creation across the document lifecycle are the two use cases that employees mentioned most often for workflow automation.

The digital signature component of the content lifecycle deserves particular attention because the workflows it enables in most companies are pervasive and agnostic across business units. Integrating the digital signature with document creation and messaging tools, for example, can significantly reduce the manual effort, time and number of steps involved in the reviews, collaboration and approvals for important document-based workflows. The range of benefits users and IT can reap are broad:

- Reduce costs, increase operational efficiencies and initiate process transformation.
- Simplify and automate document management with digital solutions.
- Increase employee, customer and citizen engagement through more seamless digital solutions.
- Improved compliance and risk mitigation by having clear processes and a full audit trail.
- Increase user mobility through mobile apps and support for diverse form factors.

Also, the digital signature is one of the content services with the highest planned investment over the next 12 months. According to 451 Research's VoCUL Consumer Representative Survey from 2H 2018, 26% of respondents listed digital signature solutions from companies such as Adobe Sign, DocuSign and HelloSign as their highest content lifecycle investment priority. Importantly, digital leaders are significantly more likely to be using digital signature and document automation solutions as the figure below shows.

The 451 Take (continued)

Digital Leaders Have a Significantly Higher Propensity to Invest than Laggards

Source: 451 Research, commissioned by Adobe

Early-Stage Digital Transformation Businesses:
Proportion With Plans to Implement in Next 12 months

38% Use digital signatures within Microsoft Office or PDF documents to streamline sales process (NDAs, Contracts, Proposals, etc.)

Digital Leaders With Formal Transformation Strategies:
Proportion That Have Already Deployed

64% Use digital signatures within Microsoft Office or PDF documents to streamline sales process (NDAs, Contracts, Proposals, etc.)

Business Impact

NEXT-GENERATION PRODUCTIVITY. Knowledge workers will enjoy a more contextualized and seamless workflow increasingly infused with intelligence that will improve their productivity by eliminating burdensome manual tasks and freeing them up to focus on more valuable work.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT. Employees want to be able to add value to the organization and accomplish tasks as efficiently as possible. Digital signature tools help eliminate roadblocks in daily workflows — empowering users with more autonomy and hence catalyzing employee engagement in the process. Our surveys show that 22% of managers and 29% of C-suite leaders want employees to have more control over the design of their own workflows.

CATALYST FOR TRANSFORMATION. Digital signature sets the stage for IT to become a catalyst for change in workforce transformation strategies because it creates a clear tie between technology investment, improved workflows and the business outcomes those workflows serve.

Looking Ahead

The deployment of digital signature solutions within a productivity suite sets the stage for future tech investments and serves as a stepping stone for broader transformation initiatives. Our research shows that technology decision-makers rank the main drivers for digital transformation as follows:

1. Reduce cost through operational efficiencies – 51%
2. Improve customer experience – 51%
3. Manage risk – 40%
4. Enhance the ability to innovate – 38%

In one way or another, digital signature solutions have the potential to address each one of those drivers across the various systems and processes within and across business divisions. With broad applicability, digital signature products give a clear picture of the impact that digital initiatives can have on the workforce and – if successful – could incentivize other investments in digital tooling.

Digital signature tools and their related automation functionality will also help to normalize the integration of next-generation machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI) into content-based workflows and document productivity. Putting end users in charge of this functionality can alleviate apprehension regarding AI- and ML-based automation and its potential impact on their role in the organization. The integration of digital signatures into adjacent tooling areas will allow for seamless workflows and wider document lifecycle support across business systems. This bolsters the growth of new WorkOps modalities and sets the stage for new levels of cross-organizational productivity.



Adobe Sign and Adobe PDF tools are now built right into Microsoft Office 365. That means everyone in your organization can transact business and collaborate faster in their favorite Office apps.

Learn more: <http://adobe.ly/dc-msft>