Beginner’s Guide to E-Signatures for Government

An introduction to electronic signatures for all levels of government: what it is, why you need it, how it works and which government organizations are using e-signature technology to go paperless. This guide answers common questions, shares ROI metrics and outlines best practices based on 20 years of transforming e-government processes with electronic signature solutions.
Forms filled out 30% faster  Contract modifications  Project management documentation
Expedited contract approvals  Action orders  Munitions requests  Time sheets
Order requests  Vendor agreements  G2C  E-Signed GSA Schedules
Mobility  Teaming agreements  Recruiting  Faster permit processing
Military purchase requests  e-Contracting
G2B  Provisioning  Operations  Funding certification  G2G
Paperless Government  Task orders  Government-backed student loans
Performance reviews  Procurement  Missile Flight SOP  Regulation drafts
Eliminated an entire floor of paper archives in Washington  75% reduction in approval time
Finance  Officer Evaluation Reports  IRS Form 4506-T  General ledger
Auditability  Purchase orders  Supply chain management
Non-disclosure agreements  Web-based forms  Staff papers  HR  Evidence
Field Force Enablement  Tax filings  Accounts payable
Saving 30 minutes / day = $10M / year  Zero Environmental Footprint
Travel requisitions  Complete audit trail  Regulatory compliance

US Army saves $1.3B/year
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Use of Electronic Signatures Surges At All Levels of Government

For years, government has been moving processes online. Virtually all government organizations now have websites and portals that provide information and services to constituents. Most procurement and contracting takes place in a completely electronic environment. In almost every aspect of federal, state and local operations, documents are created, signed, distributed and archived electronically. Within all of these electronic records, e-signatures are crucial to maintaining the electronic chain.

So crucial that 500 organizations across all levels of government are using electronic signatures. E-Signatures are everywhere, from the most sensitive military action orders to legally enforceable contracts with vendors.

The benefits of e-signatures are staggering. More than a billion dollars in savings. Improved service delivery, with fewer resources. Increased security, agility, efficiency, responsiveness and transparency. Better protection of critical information assets.

As a result, government has begun mandating e-signatures, from the General Services Administration (GSA) to the Kentucky Department of Natural Resources. Electronic signature capabilities are no longer seen as a “nice to have”. Government subject matter experts have recognized e-signatures as a secure, compliant, enforceable and cost-effective way to achieve e-government. And because e-signatures can be deployed either on premises or on the cloud, government can benefit from the high degree of control, scalability, customizability and functionality found in an enterprise solution, without having to compromise due to limited budget or IT resources.

With the federal government’s full support, the public’s high comfort level with the Internet and everyone’s need for efficiency and speed, now is the time to get on-board with this foundational technology.

ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE MILESTONES IN GOVERNMENT:

- 1997: The US Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) adopt Silanis e-signatures - the longest running e-signature implementation in government
- 1998: Government Paperwork Elimination Act (GPEA)
- 2000: Federal ESIGN Act
- 2001: More than 80 federal agencies are using Silanis e-signatures
- 2003: GSA begins using Silanis e-signatures
- 2005: The US Army purchases an e-signature license from Silanis for 1.6 million personnel - the world’s largest e-signature deployment in government to date
- 2007: The US Dept of Education specifies e-signature regulations - the student lending industry then begins using e-signatures
- 2007: The US Air Force selects Silanis as as the e-signature standard for web-based forms
- 2010: State of Vermont adopts cloud e-signatures
- 2011: It becomes mandatory for 19,000 vendors to e-sign billions of dollars worth of federal GSA Schedules contracts
- 2012: 500 government organizations are now using Silanis e-signatures
- 2013: The IRS announces the acceptance of e-signatures
“E-signature market momentum is increasing due to rapidly evolving business process and workflow automation… As a result, business process professionals and content and collaboration professionals should make e-signing part of their overall enterprise content management (ECM) and business process management (BPM) strategy; it should be a foundational technology along with records management, e-discovery and other content services used across all lines of business.”

What To Look For In E-Signature Providers
Forrester Research, Inc.
November 2011
E-Signature Education 101

WHAT IS AN ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE?

Citizens’ expectations are changing. People want everything to be available quickly, at their convenience, in their preferred channel and on their preferred device. In response, the traditional paper contract is changing. It’s about getting the signature – without using paper. This requires an electronic signature. However, e-signatures are about so much more than just capturing the electronic version of a handwritten signature. They are about capturing consent.

Like its paper equivalent, an electronic signature is a legal concept. Its purpose is to capture the intent of the signer to be bound by the terms and conditions in a contract. A common misconception about e-signatures is that it’s a technology designed to facilitate signature capture, when in fact it is designed to create a legal process resulting in an enforceable agreement.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH “DIGITAL SIGNATURE”

The term “e-signature” is often confused with “digital signature”. Digital signature refers to the encryption technology used in a variety of security, e-business and e-commerce products. When used within an e-signature application, digital signature encryption secures the e-signed data. This means that if a document is modified or tampered with in any way, digital signature technology will detect it and invalidate the document. However, a digital signature alone does not capture a person’s intent to sign a document and be legally bound to an agreement or contract. As an expression of intent, signing requires a specific act such as clicking a button or entering a password.

As an extension of digital signature technology, Silanis can leverage individual end-user digital certificates from providers like Global Sign, Verisign/Symantec, Entrust, Identrust, Operational Research Consultants, ACES Business Representative Certificate and the DOD ECA certificate. Certificates can be software-based or stored on a smart card. For secure e-signing on a mobile device, Silanis supports the BaiMobile SmartCard reader.

WHAT ARE ENTERPRISE ELECTRONIC SIGNATURES?

While many e-signature products claim enterprise status, there aren’t many solutions in the market that address true enterprise requirements for organizations both big and small. An enterprise e-signature platform goes far beyond simple signature capture to:

- Electronically execute enforceable and regulated customer transactions.
- Manage e-signature processes from start to finish, so organizations don’t have to build in additional functionality.
- Provide the flexibility to design the optimal e-sign process for any channel, to maximize adoption.
- Scale easily and cost-effectively across the entire operations of any size organization.
- Provide different deployment options for individual departments and processes throughout the enterprise.
- Capture comprehensive electronic evidence of everything that takes place during each transaction, to mitigate the risk of disputes and prove full compliance.
- Provide real-time visibility and control over electronic transactions.
- Ensure a consistent approach to electronic transactions and records.
- Easily integrate with core business systems, third party services and devices.
E-Signature Education 101

IS IT LEGAL?

The Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce Act (E-SIGN) is a US Federal law passed in 2000 that enables organizations to adopt a uniform e-signature process across all 50 states with the assurance that records cannot be refused by a court of law solely on the basis that they were signed electronically.

Today there is no longer any question about whether electronic signatures are legal. In fact, recent legal disputes indicate that e-signing processes can actually provide a stronger legal defense of a signed contract than is possible with paper.

Instead, the question is how reliable e-signatures are in helping you defend your case should a legal dispute arise. The key to ensuring a legally enforceable record is to capture and reproduce as much electronic evidence as possible – something that isn’t possible with paper. At Silanis, we recommend that your e-signature solution provide you with secure, comprehensive and easy to understand electronic evidence.

Best Practices for Legal Enforceability:

- Legal intent and consent must be captured step-by-step as the signer goes through the signing process.
- Evidence must be secure, reliable and easy to understand.
- Audit trail information must be securely embedded in the signed document.
- The electronic signatures must always be accessible and tamper-evident.

WHAT IS A CLOUD E-SIGNATURE SERVICE?

Before cloud computing, organizations would buy e-signature software and work with an IT team to deploy and manage the software on-site. This was cost-prohibitive for small to mid-sized organizations with limited resources and budgets – and even departments or satellite offices within a larger organization. The cloud changed that.

What the cloud has allowed us to do is take the sophisticated e-signature technology trusted by the top banks, insurers and government agencies, and make it available as an on-demand service over the web. Instead of paying for software and servers up front, you pay a monthly subscription fee and use the service when you need it. This model makes secure, enforceable and compliant e-signatures available to you at a much lower cost, and gets you up and running faster.

Our cloud e-signature service, Silanis e-SignLive™, can be used two ways, either as a standalone, turnkey solution or integrated into existing systems.
Securely capture signatures from personnel, vendors, constituents and other agencies

GOVERNMENT SECURITY STANDARDS

Silanis meets the security certification standards issued by:

- The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)
- The Joint Interoperability Test Command (JITC)
- The National Security Agency’s National Information Assurance Partnership (NIAP), through our support for FIPS PUB 140-2, a computer security standard used to accredit cryptographic modules
IS IT SECURE?

Security is always top of mind when organizations consider moving their signing processes online. To mitigate e-signing risks, security must be addressed at three levels that are interdependent.

User Authentication

Security at the user level helps attribute the signature to a specific person. During an electronic signing process, the identity of the person is verified or authenticated prior to signing documents, and then stored as part of their electronic signature.

To prevent anyone from claiming, “I didn’t sign that,” Silanis offers multiple ways to validate each signer’s identity:

- Traditional login and password
- Challenge question and answer
- SMS passcode
- Third-party authentication services
- Handwritten signature capture (with biometrics)
- Voice signature
- Video capture
- Digital certificates and smart cards (DoD Common Access Card)
- Email notification

Document Authentication

Document authentication helps prevent an e-signed document from being modified, and to keep signatures from being copied into another document. Equally important, your e-signature solution must embed the electronic signatures and the audit trail directly within the e-signed document so that the document can be securely emailed, stored, viewed and verified from any location and at any time in the future. Silanis provides ironclad security by embedding the e-signature audit trail into the actual e-signed document.

Silanis also digitally signs the final e-signed document to produce a tamper-evident seal. This means that if a document is tampered with or if someone attempts to make unauthorized changes after it has been signed, a bold red mark will appear on the e-signed document which signals that the document is invalid. In short, that makes it impossible for the signer to claim, “That is not what I signed.”

Process Evidence

Silanis’ electronic evidence goes beyond basic document-level security to include a process audit trail. The goal of process evidence is to prove what took place during the signing process. This is accomplished by gathering electronic evidence throughout the entire signing process including any web pages, documents, disclosures, or pop-up windows that were displayed; emails or SMS messages sent; any voice or image capture; IP address; as well as the time/date of each event. A cryptographic link between the process evidence and the document evidence helps to prove who did what, on what date, at what time, etc.

“It’s probably even more secure than sending something in an envelope for somebody to sign -- you don’t know who signed it on the other end. This way we have a fair degree of certainty as to who signed it because we can track it electronically.”

- Kris Rowley, CISO
  State of Vermont
## E-Signature Adoption

### An Overview of Real-World E-Signature Implementations in Government

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Process</th>
<th>ROI / Benefits</th>
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| E-Contracting | · Billions of dollars worth of GSA contract award & modification documents e-signed by 19,000+ vendors annually  
· A top 20 defense contractor and their 1,500+ suppliers e-sign $800M of contracts annually  
· State of Vermont and vendors e-sign contracts with up to 10 signatures  
· US Air Force Global Combat Support System (GCSS) transfers e-signed documents from their e-procurement system into the e-contracting system  
· The Kentucky Department of Natural Resources mandated the use of electronic signatures among all staff, contractors and suppliers to automate the mining inspection process | · GSA Schedules  
· Contract award notices  
· Contract modifications  
· Vendor agreements  
· NDAs  
· Teaming agreements  
· Contracts with partners  
· Funding certifications  
· Solicitations and proposals  
· Service agreements  
· And more | · COST SAVINGS  
· Eliminated mail, fax, courier fees: Defense contractor saves $24,000 annual saving in courier costs alone  
· Real estate: GSA eliminated entire floor of Washington archives  
· Auditor travel costs eliminated  
· PRODUCTIVITY  
· Fewer errors & delays, no lost/misplaced paper records  
· Immediate document turnaround  
· IMPROVED VENDOR EXPERIENCE  
· Shortened approval cycles: 25% reduction in contracting cycle for top 20 defense contractor; 75% reduction in approval times for State of Vermont, from 1 month to mere days  
· Embraced by vendors: 90% of defense sub-contractors adopted e-sign solution; 100% of GSA vendors use e-signatures  
· e-GOV COMPLIANCE  
· Meet paperless mandates and commitment to Zero Environmental Footprint |
| Procurement | · US Air Force Purchase Request Process System (PRPS) uses e-signatures to automate procurement processes  
· State of Vermont e-signs internal procurement documents | · Purchase orders and requests  
· Delivery order requests  
· Military inter-departmental purchase requests  
· And more | · AUDITABILITY  
· Greater control, auditability and security of transactions  
· EFFICIENCY  
· Increased efficiency: 5,000 users of USAF’s e-procurement system reduced administrative time by 22 days  
· Eliminated document shipping/storage, re-keying of data  
· Provided visibility into contract assets and availability |
| Finance | · Defense Enterprise Account Management System e-signs financial management functions DoD-wide  
· Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) Comptroller’s Office uses e-signatures to ensure expenses related to events are accounted for  
· An intelligence agency uses e-signatures to manage funds | · Accounting  
· General ledger  
· Project accounting  
· Tracking revenue and billing  
· Accounts payable  
· And more | · AUDITABILITY  
· Greater control over transactions; greater data security  
· Auditable/compliant with US Standard General Ledger guidance  
· EFFICIENCY  
· Removed paper and errors from the process  
· e-GOV COMPLIANCE  
· Comply with Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990 and Government Management Reform Act requirements |
| Human Resources | · US Army e-signs annual reviews for 1.6 million personnel – the largest implementation of e-signatures and Lotus® forms for HR  
· USAF Reserve Recruiting | · Personnel evaluations  
· Recruiting  
· Travel requisitions  
· Time sheets | · FASTER TURNAROUND  
· Requests for leave approved and signed in 15 minutes instead of days at White Sands Missile Range  
· One-third reduction in time to fill out forms overall  
· Personnel are more efficient, productive and responsive |
## E-Signature Adoption

### AN OVERVIEW OF REAL-WORLD E-SIGNATURE IMPLEMENTATIONS IN GOVERNMENT

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</table>
| Supply Chain Management | · US Army Munitions Office e-signs 500,000 munitions ordering and tracking transactions/month globally. E-Signing the Munitions Request Form is the only way munitions can be ordered, for training and warfare operations | · Munitions requests  
· Munitions consumption reports | · SAFETY  
· No need to hand-carry forms into battle zones for signature  
· EFFICIENCY  
· Streamlined the managing, ordering and tracking of munitions, as well as the ability to report unused munitions  
· Better visibility into ammunition requests  
· Better inventory management |
| Mobility / Field Force Enablement | · Field agents with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) use laptops in the field to conduct damage reports from natural disasters. They meet with citizens to e-sign critical forms using a signature capture tablet, accelerating victims' access to vital US Government aid.  
· Field staff at the Kentucky Department of Natural Resources (KDNR) go to mine sites to complete and sign inspection documents on their laptops  
· US Air Force Reserve Recruiting Command deployed e-signatures to 280 offices for recruiting applications in the field  
· US Army personnel deployed around the world e-sign over 2,500 forms | · Release forms  
· Victims statements  
· Inspections and certifications documents  
· Damage reports  
· Claims approvals  
· And more | · TRUE "ANYWHERE, ANYTIME" OPERATIONS 24/7  
· Decisions can be authorized and approved from anywhere, at any time, on any web-enabled device  
· RESPONSIVENESS  
· In times of disaster, responsiveness is critical. E-Signatures dramatically accelerate FEMA processes.  
· EFFICIENCY  
· Electronically transmitting documents for processing and storage eliminates delays and lost/misplaced paperwork  
· Eliminated the need to scan tens of thousands of pages back into electronic format and re-key information into a database  
· KDNR has significantly improved its data accuracy, responsiveness and overall productivity  
· Army personnel now save 60 hours annually per form  
· The Air Force reduced time to process new recruits by 25%  
· SERVICE DELIVERY  
· Kentucky Dept of Natural Resources has streamlined its processes and improved services for enforcing mining laws  
· COST SAVINGS  
· Prior to e-signatures, palettes of paper forms were flown by air cargo ships back to the US for processing and storage  
· SAFETY  
· Use of e-signatures in e-forms eliminates the need for soldiers to organize combat patrols to get documents signed back into the system |
| Operations | · US Central Commands and other base commands like Fort Belvoir and White Sands Missile Range use e-signatures for documents that require up to 18 signatures  
· State of Minnesota Department of Corrections  
· Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services  
· Minnesota Dept of Transportation | · Task/action orders  
· Missile Flight SOP  
· Staff papers  
· Regulation drafts  
· Memos  
· Permits and licenses  
· And more | · COST SAVINGS  
· Eliminated postal fees, faxing costs, vehicle use charges, gasoline costs and the expense of labor time  
· White Sands eliminated 25 million photocopies  
· FASTER TURNAROUND  
· Processes that took days/weeks now completed in minutes  
· No need to print out e-forms for signature and scan them back into the system  
· IT INFRASTRUCTURE  
· Integrated seamlessly with e-forms and workflow system |
Featured Case Study: The General Services Administration

ON-PREMISE ENTERPRISE E-SIGNATURE PLATFORM AUTOMATES BILLIONS OF DOLLARS WORTH OF E-CONTRACTS

The U.S. Federal Government procures $400 - $500 billion annually in goods and services. More than $66 billion of this is spent via the General Services Administration (GSA). Through its Federal Acquisition Service, the GSA establishes contracts with businesses to provide government organizations and the military access to over 11 million commercial products and services.

In 2004, GSA deployed e-signatures to enable an all-electronic contract process. However between 2004 and 2010, e-signature adoption by vendors stood between 60 - 70 percent, which while considered a strong adoption rate, fell short of the Agency’s goal of a 100-percent-electronic contracting process and environment.

As a result, on October 1, 2011, it became mandatory to e-sign contract offers and modifications. As contractors complete forms and documents over the web, the Silanis e-Sign Enterprise™ platform (formerly ApproveIt Web Server) enables vendors to apply an enforceable electronic signature to documents using nothing more than a browser. To the user, the experience is similar to clicking an “I Agree” button, but the agency benefits from the capture of electronic evidence during the approval process. An electronic signature is embedded into each document and a final, signed and verifiable copy is distributed to all parties.

The Agency now stores the final contracts electronically, reducing the need for physical storage space. Prior to moving to the eOffer platform, GSA’s paper files occupied a full floor of the Agency’s Washington headquarters. While the contract information requires a 42-tab electronic file cabinet for every contract, this is all done electronically in a virtual filing system so it is easy to index, archive and retrieve documents like solicitations and contract proposals.

Looking to the future, the GSA is considering offering e-signatures as a shared service to other agencies based on the large number of inquiries received regarding the technology.

KEY BENEFITS

- GSA’s eOffer/eMod platform demonstrates the Agency’s commitment to environmental leadership and sustainability. Additional benefits include:
  - Improved customer experience
  - Dramatic reduction in the amount of paper processed
  - Reduction of errors and delays
  - Elimination of mail, fax and overnight delivery fees during the contracting process
  - Reduced paper storage space
  - No more lost/misplaced records
  - Shortened process cycle times
Featured Case Study: State of Vermont

E-SIGNATURES ON THE CLOUD
ACCELERATE CONTRACT APPROVALS

The State of Vermont’s Department of Information and Innovation manages the delivery of IT products and services to all of the state’s government departments. By using e-SignLive, the Department is processing vendor contracts more efficiently, speeding up processing times, saving money and reducing paper consumption.

The Department signs hundreds of vendor contracts every year and internal approvals for each one used to take up to four weeks. “With e-SignLive, the Department’s approval time has been reduced to just seven days, and in some cases two days instead of the usual four to six weeks,” says Peter Kipp, Contracts and Procurement Specialist, State of Vermont.

Additionally, the $30 round-trip fee for couriering each contract to and from the vendor has been eliminated, resulting in significant cost savings. Signing electronically also means that the Department prints much less paper and is better able to meet the State’s commitment to green business practices.

Employing e-SignLive for its vendor contracting process also helped the Department surpass goals set in response to the State of Vermont’s 2009 “Challenges for Change” initiative, which asked all departments to find innovative ways to improve services while cutting costs. Apart from making signing more efficient, e-SignLive captures secure and easy-to-understand legal evidence that makes its electronic signatures more secure than traditional hand-signing. Contracts signed with e-SignLive are also digitally sealed using advanced security technology that reveals any tampering.

“It’s probably even more secure than sending something in an envelope for somebody to sign — you don’t know who signed it on the other end. This way we have a fair degree of certainty as to who signed it because we can track it electronically,” says Kris Rowley, Chief Information Security Officer, State of Vermont.

“e-SignLive provided us with an extremely cost effective, and secure means to relieve the paper signing bottleneck. Not only have we slashed the time it takes to approve contracts, we have reduced courier costs and supported our commitment to the environment.”

- Kris Rowley, CISO
State of Vermont

Read more about Vermont’s use of Silanis e-SignLive cloud e-signatures in this Government Technology article: http://bit.ly/ZWJzmH
Products & Solutions

Silanis’ software solutions can be deployed and delivered in multiple ways to meet the requirements of any size organization. Our flexible delivery model offers electronic signatures deployed on-premise, through a private cloud offering or as an on-demand e-signing service.

E-SIGNATURES ON THE CLOUD

e-SignLive

Silanis e-SignLive™ provides the quickest time-to-market and the lowest up-front investment for moving to paperless signing processes within an organization, and with partners and customers. The Integration Edition of this cloud service enables an organization to integrate e-signing functionality quickly and easily, with virtually any custom or third-party software system using standard Web services. Customers can brand the GUI, create and manage e-signing ceremonies, and control the documents to be signed by one or more signers, with one or more signatures each.

ON-PREMISE OFFERINGS

e-Sign Desktop

Silanis e-Sign Desktop™ is an out-of-the-box desktop application that makes it easy to e-sign ad hoc processes such as purchase orders, manufacturing paperwork, HR forms and more. It is also a cost-effective e-signature solution for smaller deployments. With e-Sign Desktop, users can seamlessly and securely e-sign Microsoft Word, Excel, InfoPath, Adobe Acrobat PDF, Adobe Reader PDF and IBM Forms. e-Sign Desktop is a flexible, easy to use and highly secure e-signature solution that has been in use by over 1.6M US Army personnel since 2004.

e-Sign Enterprise

Silanis e-Sign Enterprise™ is an on-premises and/or private cloud e-signature platform that automates enforceable and regulated customer-facing transactions. More than just a signature, it manages e-signature processes to enable end-to-end STP and is designed to scale across different lines-of-business, products and sales/service channels. The platform can be extended to mobile devices, and supports real-time access to transaction data for management and monitoring.
Where To Go From Here:

**Book a personal demo**

**Determine your ROI**
Need an indication of the benefits you could achieve within your particular process? Our complementary value assessment service can help you identify and quantify the specific value areas and corresponding metrics that will give a fair prediction of ROI. Or, get started with our whitepaper entitled, “Calculating E-Signature ROI for Customer Transactions”. Call 1-888-SILANIS (745-2647) and ask for an inside sales representative.

**Visit our site for webcasts, case studies, white papers and many other resources**
[www.silanis.com](http://www.silanis.com)

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Special Government Pricing Available.
We’re listed in the GSA Schedules.

About Silanis

Silanis has been providing secure electronic signature solutions to government for over 15 years, and understands the unique security and signing needs of Federal DoD and civilian agencies, as well as state and local governments. We stand behind the longest running implementation of e-signatures in the US government, and the largest e-signature initiative ever undertaken in government. Organizations that have standardized on Silanis include the US Joint Chiefs of Staff; the US Army with an enterprise license for 1.6 million personnel; and the General Services Administration (GSA), which recently mandated the use of e-signatures for GSA Schedules.

Since 1992, our solutions have strengthened the processes of thousands of banking, insurance and government organizations. Our on-premise and cloud solutions make enterprise-grade e-signatures accessible to all, regardless of deployment preference, budget or IT resources. Silanis e-signatures underpin e-government and help:

- Accelerate delivery of services without the need for additional staff;
- Meet paperless mandates;
- Improve compliance by gathering evidence of what transpired during the signing process;
- Increase efficiency and cost savings by eliminating paper documents and forms.