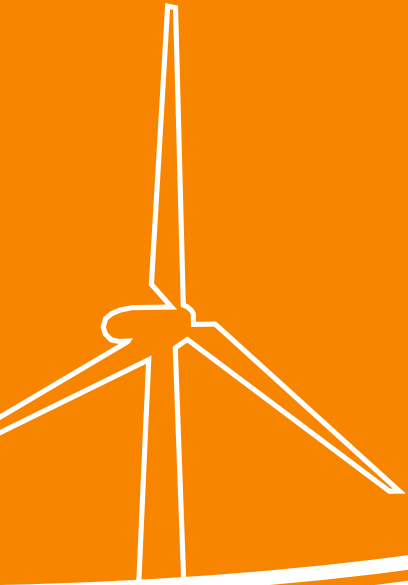


Digital Signing

A Case Study

Cutting Paper



IP® Breeze
PRO-JECT/CES-NGT

Keywords

Attorney-Client Communication, Paperless, Digital Signing

Company

IP law firm providing services related to intellectual property matters

Target Audience

Patent Attorneys and Paralegals

Phase

Customization

Services Provided

Process Management & Development

Challenge

The client wished to cut down on the usage of paper and ink, decrease time-to-market in response to competitive pressures, and last but not least, improve continuity and efficiency.

In practice most documents were generated via the IP Management System (IPMS) in digital format (Word) and subsequently printed by the paralegal to be presented to the responsible attorney for review. Once a document had been approved and signed the document was scanned, thus making it digital again, and pushed to the corresponding case record in the IPMS. Finally, the document was sent to the client in PDF format.

In cases where the responsible patent attorney worked at a different location as the handling paralegal the documents to be signed had to be exchanged via mail or courier.

Solution

In cooperation with the client's IT manager we developed the following method. A Word document generated from and stored within the IPMS is connected to a term in a signing workflow by a paralegal. Subsequently, the signing deadline appears on the attorney's term list.

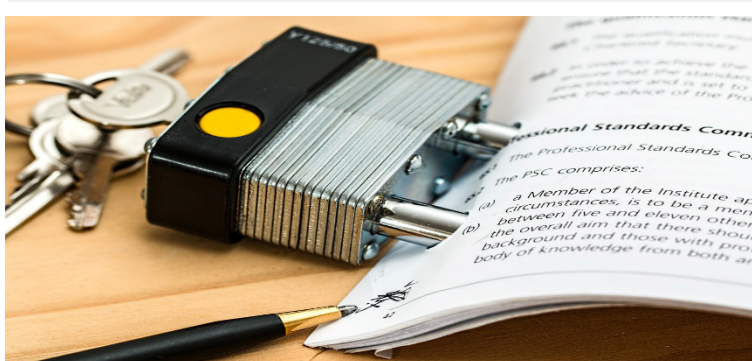
The attorney opens the document attached to the signing deadline and reviews the document. If necessary the attorney adapts the content. Once the document is ready to sign a PDF converter is launched from the print menu or a quick launch button, and merges the document with the company's letter head.

The PDF converter used is compatible with specific digital signing certificates. At the end of the merge process the converter initiates the digital signing process (if the attorney's USB token is active). The attorney enters his/her unique pin code to apply the digital signature.

Finally, The PDF converter launches a custom developed script to automatically move the signed document to the corresponding case record. The whole signing process takes not more than a minute.

WHAT IS A DIGITAL SIGNATURE?

Digital signatures refer to electronic data that carries the intent of a signature. Digital signature software is designed to apply signatures, without printing or signing a physical document. A digital signature demonstrates the authenticity of a document. A valid digital signature caters for, apart from authenticity, non-repudiation and integrity.



BENEFITS OF USING DIGITAL SIGNATURES

Digital signature software allows companies to reduce the processing time of a document, as well as to reduce the costs of gathering and storing signatures on paper. It can be used to speed up legal paperwork by replacing physical documents with electronic alternatives.

The use of digital signature software or services can greatly improve operational efficiencies, help drive new business and create a more convenient experience for signatories and recipients.

Moreover, by using digital signatures, security is improved in the sense that only users with a certified token (digital key) can sign a document in their name. An ink signature can be replicated by copying the image manually or digitally. Digital signatures cryptographically bind an electronic identity to the whole of an electronic document.

FAST FACTS

69%

Total reduction of paper and ink usage

37%

Reduction of processing time per document from generation to sending

Results

The total usage of paper and ink within the company dropped with a significant 69%. This did not only allow for a reduction in costs but also contributed to the reduction of the company's ecological footprint, a secondary objective set by corporate management.

The reduction of processing time per document is estimated around 37%. The cutting of the printing, scanning and storing of the scanned document steps greatly contributes to this figure. Furthermore, a correction cycle between attorney and paralegal is not needed anymore.

The exchange of physical files between the company's offices has dropped to almost zero after implementation of the digital signing process.

Due to the success of the project the digital signing process will be extended to the signing of e-mails. This will be covered in a future case study.