5 Things to Consider before Integrating Digital Signature Capture
Into Your Business Environment

Businesses are always looking to improve their bottom line. Every department is given goals to improve processes and become more efficient. IT departments are no different. In fact, by leveraging new technologies, the IT department can realize some of the greatest improvements. A paperless environment is one of those improvements that more and more companies are adopting.

Contracts, agreements and other paperwork have been created electronically for a very long time. It wasn't until the year 2000, that electronic signatures became the legal equivalent of their hand written counterparts. That year, the Federal E-SIGN Act was signed into law.

Since that beginning, electronic signatures are now everywhere. Many brokerage and insurance firms now use a signature pad to capture digital signatures. Other high tech companies are using digital signatures to process many more contracts at a faster rate, increasing their productivity and generating more profit. Even your local supermarket checkout counters are adopting electronic signature technology.

This article will review 5 areas pertaining to the integration of digital signature capture technology into the business environment:

1. Types of Digitizing (Touchscreen) Technology

Resistive

Resistive technology uses a multi-layer touchpad panel. Two of these layers are made up of thin, conductive materials separated by a narrow gap. When a pen (or finger) is pressed down on these layers, the gap is closed, changing the properties of the electric current. This change is sent to the processor and registered as a touch event.

These resistive (pressure sensitive) devices are easily scratched and can be destroyed by sharp objects.

Electromagnetic

An electromagnetic signature pad uses a sensor to record the pen's position over the pad without the use of pressure sensitive components. Benefits of this technology are that the pen does not need to touch the glass since the unit uses an electromagnetic field. A downside of this technology is that many manufacturers require batteries in the pen units. Scriptel's pens do not require batteries in their pens.

Scriptel's Static Capacitive Glass

Static capacitive glass is a state of the art design that produces a high level of accuracy and clarity. The glass is durable and is not easily scratched. Demonstrations have shown that even when the static capacitive glass is sliced with a glass cutter, the input from the pen still works. A finger or palm resting on the glass, does nor register a signature thanks to Scriptel's Palm Rejection technology.

2. Document Creation

Companies that manufacture the signature pad technology may also provide software that can merge the digitally captured signature into your documents. Other companies such as Scriptel Corporation have partnerships with software developers and can provide integrated solutions for you.

If not, there are many companies that specialize in third party digital signature capture software that have out of the box solutions for the popular software applications such as Microsoft Office, Adobe Acrobat, AutoCAD, WordPerfect and others. Scriptel Corporation can provide you with a free plugin for Microsoft Office and Adobe Acrobat.

3. Document Transmission

Once a digitally captured signature is bound to an electronic document, the merged file can be transmitted through email, published on a website or stored on a server or cloud infrastructure just like any other electronic document.

4. Authenticity

As mentioned earlier, the Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce (ESIGN) Act was signed in 2000 making digital signatures the 100% legal equivalent of "wet" handwritten signatures. But, to make sure your documents will stand up in court, you will want to research methods you may need to implement to guarantee the trustworthiness of the document;

Authentication – know who the person is that signed the document.

Access control – once you know who the person is, you must limit the access they have over the document.

Attribution / non-repudiation – proof that they said "yes" or "no" to the transaction.

Integrity of data – methods used to prevent damage to the electronic file.

Confidentiality – how you keep this data secret and private, even during transmission.

You will also want to have your legal department review these areas or have them define guidelines for the use of the signature pad and the documents created for it.

5. Archiving

When moving to a paperless environment it is important to have a document retention and retrieval process. Depending on the size of your company, you may want to create a position whose sole responsibility is document retention and retrieval.

File archive methods should be tested periodically. If the technology used to back up files is updated make sure the updated system is backwards compatible with the information that has been archived with the older method. This is particularly important if you use tape backup systems.

Depending on your industry, you will need to determine which documents are necessary for retention. These decisions will probably be dictated by industry standards or compliance audit guidelines.

Summary

Using a signature pad to capture electronic signatures and then merge those signatures into your documents is a great time saving and efficient way to improve your business processes. Just make sure you do your research into the technologies available and the proper ways to integrate them into your business practices. Scriptel is also available to assist in finding the right solution to fit your business needs.

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