Your signature move

Five great reasons to add electronic signatures
to government processes.
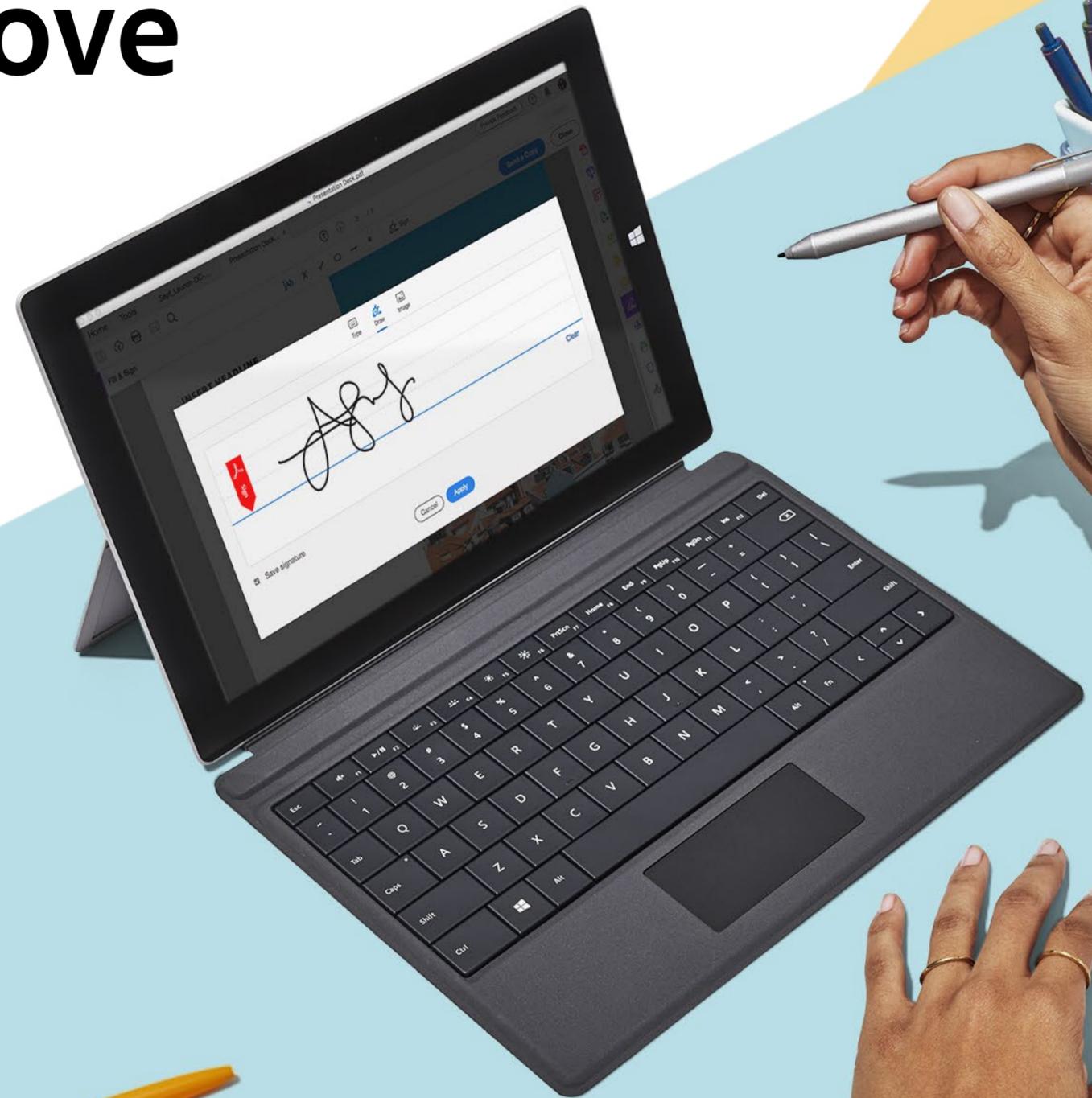
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Set your agency to FULL SPEED AHEAD. And don't look back.

Government agencies are embracing digital transformation to power modern government service delivery, making work faster, easier, and more accurate. But there's still one tool that lags behind—the electronic signature.

If you're still using archaic, paper-based processes to get documents and forms signed, you're not alone. The majority (80 percent) of business document processes today involve printing, scanning, and faxing papers manually.[1] And that means spending time correcting errors, tracking down and reminding people, and having to file and maintain all of your physical documents. Managing and collecting signatures is not only a massive roadblock in your workflow, it's frustrating the citizens you serve and keeping you from complying with the growing number of mandates prompting delivery of friendlier government services.

The pains of pen-and-ink signatures.

- More than a third (**37 percent**) of business leaders say they have problems with agreements that are missing signatures, initials, or dates—or that have been signed by the wrong person.

- Nearly half (**46 percent**) aren't sure they have copies of all signed agreements.

- Just over half (**51 percent**) say they have problems with documents that are misfiled or lost.[2]

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Imagine giving citizens or employees instant access to documents and forms that they can fill, sign, and submit 100% digitally from their computer or mobile device. Imagine those documents or forms auto-routing themselves to others when additional signatures are needed. And then, being able to track them, send reminders, and see reports on which ones are still waiting for signatures and which are complete.

And imagine building end-to-end review and approval processes that let citizens verify their identity and sign anytime, anywhere, while employees sign digitally using pre-issued identity credentials, such as single sign-on (SSO) or IDs like PIV or CAC cards.

Electronic signatures are quickly becoming the way agencies get documents signed and deliver services faster. But not all solutions are equal. The best are simple for employees and citizens to use. They integrate with the digital systems you already have in place. And they're a legal, secure solution for streamlining document signatures. Here are just five of the many reasons to adopt e-signatures now—so you can accelerate your agency's digital transformation.

Forrester's 2019 Total Economic Impact Study[3] reveals:

28x faster

Average time to get
a signature

US$6.8 million

Total benefit over
3 years

420% ROI

Over 3 years and < 3 months
to break even

E-signatures equal big benefits. For everyone.

- Reducing manual signature steps saves employees **1.5 hours per transaction**, on average.

- Reducing the use of paper documents results in costs savings of **$6 per transaction**, on average.

- Digitizing enrollment processes saves organizations **2 hours per form**.

- Standardizing regulation and compliance forms allows organizations to repurpose **three full-time compliance employees** for higher-value work.[5]

1. MAKE your work flow.

Electronic signatures speed up government processes. Today, e-signature solutions have evolved to encompass much more than just collecting signatures electronically—they automate the entire operation, from document creation, collaboration and execution, to archiving and management.

Business leaders say their staff spends more than one-third of their time on administrative tasks.[4] With an automated e-signature solution, you'll reduce the time employees spend on administrative activities like hunting down and processing documents.

Get internal processes on the inside track.
By moving your agency operations to electronic signatures, you'll fast-track HR processes such as offer letters, new hire documents, and employee policy acknowledgments. You'll be able to streamline legal and procurement operations by automating the process for nondisclosure agreements, vendor contracts, and confidential business-to-business agreements.

Just as in candidate recruiting, e-signature solutions can play a helpful role in onboarding, keeping the entire process of hiring employees as quick and frictionless as possible.

In the State of Hawaii, newly hired government employees, who once spent two hours filling out onboarding paperwork on their first day, can complete online forms at home before ever setting foot in the office. First-day employee onboarding now takes the HR department just 20 minutes.[6]

Less time to sign. Happier citizens.

Getting e-signatures into your workflow also means you'll improve citizen experiences and differentiate your agency as an innovator in modern government service delivery. These days, citizens are comfortable conducting business using web and mobile devices, and they're demanding digital experiences so that they can conduct business anytime, anywhere. Offering a convenient, quick means of getting work done not only helps demonstrate your commitment to serving constituents, but it helps you comply with legislative mandates too, such as the U.S. 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act (IDEA).[8]

Electronic signatures also accelerate review and approval processes, eliminating days' worth of paperwork and reducing wait times from days to minutes. By removing the manual aspects that slow things down, employees can quickly prepare the right documents, request action from others, and track progress automatically—so that tasks can flow with the speed and efficiency of a chain reaction. It's great for you and your citizens. Everyone's happy.

Turnaround times used to be a real problem for the government of Sonoma County, California. The public was previously required to print and mail a grant funding request form to the County Administrator's Office. By digitizing the submissions process, constituent forms are now reviewed and approved faster, and automated archiving with audit trails improves accountability.[9]

"Electronic signatures are key to driving new innovations in the State of Hawaii, as it's the linchpin that allows us to push many workflows digital."

Todd Nacapuy
Former chief information officer,
State of Hawaii[7]

2. Send and sign documents in NO TIME.

E-signature platforms offer simple, intuitive processes that won't slow you down. Your employees can work with web and mobile apps, or you can add signing workflows to the tools they use every day—productivity apps like Microsoft Word and Microsoft SharePoint, and enterprise apps such as ServiceNow and Workday—so there's nothing new to learn, and no special software required.

No matter where you're doing business, electronic signature solutions can make preparing and sending a document a simple, fluid process. It's easy to specify which documents and participants to include, prefill form fields, or include instructions for the recipient. You can create reusable workflow templates to help ensure repeatable, error-free results—preventing common mistakes, such as missing a required signature or using an outdated document.

Workers can quickly prepare new documents for e-signing or approval, and you can add signature and form fields as needed. It's easy to post them to public or internal websites for self-serve access by citizens or employees. Or, workers can send them directly to one or more recipients, and let people sign in parallel or serial order, or a combination of the two. And you can track the status of any document in real time—set your preferences to get notifications when people sign or to automatically send out reminders when they don't.[10]

International Fortune 500 company NetApp uses e-signatures for its nondisclosure agreements (NDAs). Rather than waiting for the legal department to issue each NDA separately, sales representatives can now use their e-signature platform to instantly route the NDA and have it signed by the client from any tablet or laptop device. NDA templates are already preapproved by NetApp's legal team and comply with legal requirements for different regions, allowing sales representatives to simply choose the appropriate template.[11]

Mobile apps that integrate electronic signatures let your team members connect and stay productive wherever they go. Using a smartphone or tablet, they can access stored documents, collect signatures in person, send documents for signature, and manage the signing process quickly and easily. It's just as easy on the citizen's end, too. They'll be delighted by fast response times plus speedy review and approval processes. And they can sign from anywhere without printing or faxing documents, installing software, creating new logins, or scanning anything. The entire process can take just minutes from start to finish—so everyone can finish quickly and get on with their day.

3. Put e-signatures into ACTION—no sweat.

Implementing e-signature technology into your workflow is easy. Electronic signature platforms are rolling out built-in integration capabilities, so that you can seamlessly use them with other enterprise applications, like those used in Microsoft SharePoint or ServiceNow, and share information across departments—leading to tremendous time savings for staff.

These days it's possible to do it yourself using intuitive administrative tools and a few step-by-step tutorials—so you can have your team up and running in minutes.

To hire the best possible candidates for jobs, global life sciences company Illumina decided to streamline recruiting and onboarding workflows by integrating an electronic signature platform with its Workday Human Capital Management solution. After entering details about a candidate into Workday, an HR staff member can send offer letters and contracts that can be up to 20 pages long. Since administrators previously set the electronic signature solution to establish required fields and populate the document with data from the Workday record, Illumina reduces the possibility that recruits will provide inconsistent information or accidentally return incomplete forms.[12]

Filing for travel reimbursements used to be a long process for the State of Hawaii, as employees had to fill out the Travel Approval Form (TAF) by hand and wait for three levels of approval signatures. Now, employees just log in to their Microsoft SharePoint account and click the TAF button. After the employee fills out the digital form, Microsoft SharePoint automatically sends the document for signature using the required approval workflow, sending the document to the first person for signature and then forwarding it to the next person on the list once the document is signed. After three signers approve the TAF, all parties now receive an email confirmation through Microsoft Outlook that the workflow is complete. The signed document and accompanying audit trail are stored in a single location within Microsoft SharePoint, making it simple for staff to check all documents that they have sent or signed."[13]

4. Legally binding. Identities confirmed.

Electronic signature technology can help you avoid stoppages that can occur when you wait for legal approvals of contracts or nondisclosure agreements. These obstacles can really slow things down, but e-signatures let you maintain your momentum.

Today, e-signatures are legally binding in nearly every industrialized nation. In 2000, the United States passed the Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce (ESIGN) Act, which granted electronic signatures the same legal status as handwritten signatures throughout the United States.[14] In the EU, the Electronic Identification and Trust Services (eIDAS) regulation took effect in 2016, establishing a consistent legal framework for the recognition of digital IDs and electronic signatures across all of the EU.[15] These, and other laws like them around the world, recognize electronic signatures and make them legal and enforceable in a court of law as long as the processes are designed and implemented in accordance with a few specific requirements. Today's best e-signature systems are designed to meet these requirements.

For e-signatures to be legal, a signer's identity needs to be verified. A range of methods can be used to authenticate the identity of participants. "Standard" e-signatures use email authentication, paired with a secure signing process and audit trail, while "enhanced" signatures require an additional password, phone PIN, or photo upload of a government ID. High-security digital signatures use certificate-based digital IDs, such as U.S. federal employee CAC or PIV cards, issued by trusted service providers. And just as with a handwritten signature, a signer must show clear intention to electronically sign an agreement—usually an easy requirement to satisfy. For example, signers can show their intention by using a mouse to draw their signature, typing their name, or clicking a button clearly labeled "I Accept," or something similar.[16]

Sophisticated e-signature platforms can automatically generate audit trails that track every step of the signature process, which are encrypted, digitally sealed, tamper evident, and stored securely so that they can be used in court to help prove who signed a document and when they signed it.[17]
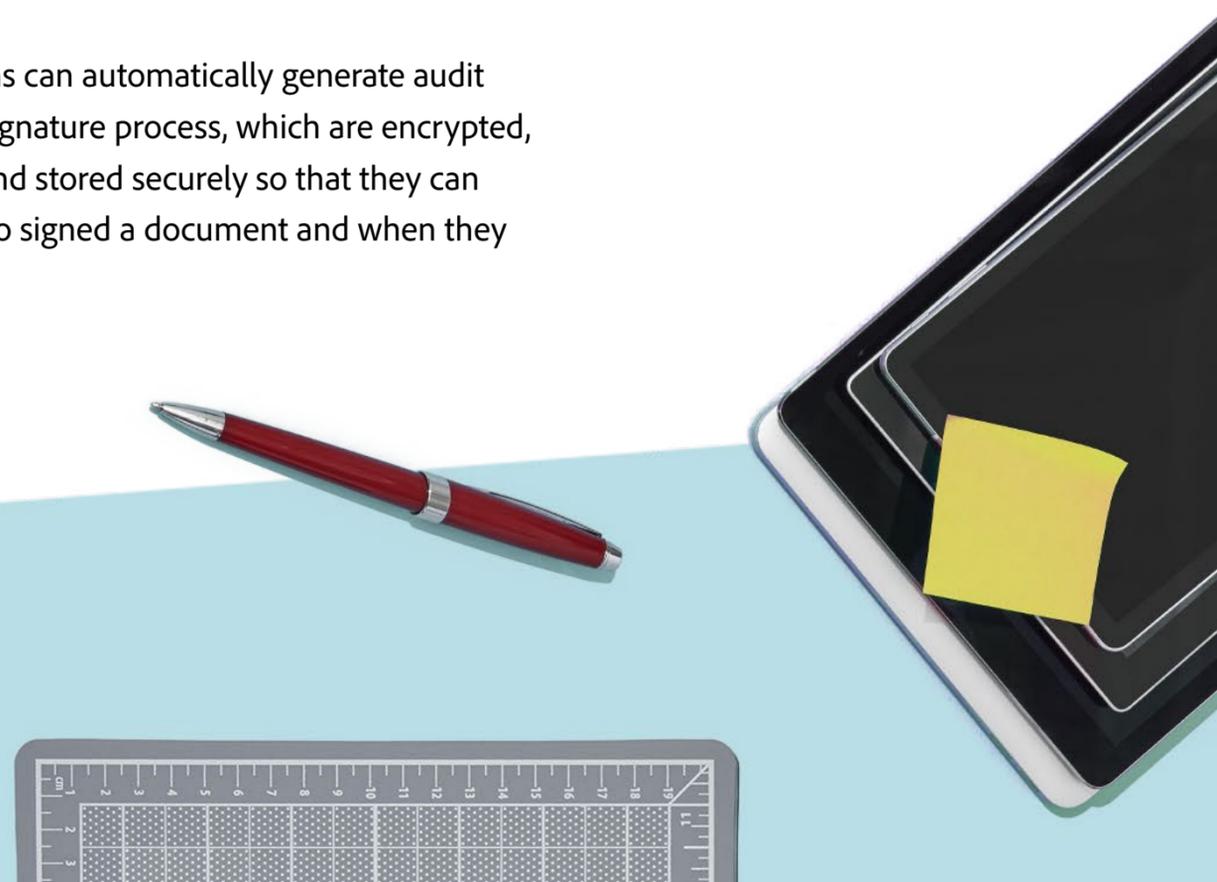
5. Secure data at private-sector speed.

Protecting the privacy and security of constituent information is job number one in government, but that doesn't keep citizens from expecting the same consumer-friendly experiences they see in the private sector. The best e-signature platforms are designed to meet the most rigorous requirements. But not all solutions are the same. To be sure your data and documents are secure—at rest and in transit—look for security certifications, such as ISO 27001, SOC 2 Type 2, PCI DSS, and FedRAMP. These let you know the solution meets the most demanding security standards.

The City of Seattle serves more than four million citizens and is home to one of the nation's fastest growing tech hubs. The city is on a digital transformation path to modernize operations and improve productivity. Starting with a shift to the cloud, the city then adopted Adobe Sign integrated with Adobe Microsoft 365. The city's goal is to improve productivity and provide secure and transparent services to citizens and businesses.

"I am very excited about what is happening in our workforce," says Chris Smith, Digital Workplace digital signature administrator. "As people experience the ease and power of digital tools, I do not believe we will go back to the top-heavy paper processes we used to use. I am really excited to see how that moves forward."

The timing of Seattle's digital plans worked to their advantage. When COVID-19 hit, the government was well-positioned to adapt to their new digital challenge to keep government running and serving citizens. "Our city's finance teams were suddenly working from home, but no longer had access to their paper. They started running invoices through Adobe Sign and saved time, money, and effort. We digitized so many departments overnight—it was really exciting," says Kimberly Flin, Digital Workplace senior business analyst.

When choosing an e-signature platform, remember to look for:

- **A trusted vendor with a proven success rate.** Choose a strong enterprise-level platform that's investing in digital transformation and meeting the needs of the modern, mobile citizen.

- **An easy-to-use solution that's ready to go out of the box.** Choose a solution that's easy to implement and integrates with existing workplace software with no coding or extra fees required. Not all integrated solutions are created equal.

- **A solution that supports a broad range of legal requirements.** Choose a vendor who can provide legal compliance, has a deep understanding of the laws, and can assure you that the company's systems will comply with your specific requirements.

- **A trusted vendor with a proven security history.** Your solution should keep your data and documents safe wherever they go.

Fulfill your digital destiny with an e-signature solution. To truly modernize government services, it's time to remove the last remaining roadblocks from your workflow and fire on all cylinders with electronic signatures. Today, no one wants to deal with complicated paper-based forms. And everyone expects a great experience on every device. Every interaction and every touchpoint affects your ability to deliver on your mission efficiently and effectively. And when you exceed expectations by giving people what they want and need exactly when they need it, you'll also meet agency goals and comply with legislative mandates driving digital transformation. Adopting electronic signatures in your workflow means making government service delivery quicker and easier for everyone. It means speedy, seamless, streamlined signing processes that delight citizens and employees alike.

Adobe can help.

Ever since we invented the PDF, we've been focused on digital transformation with secure digital documents that make it easier for governments to accelerate and advance their workflows. Almost four million people in U.S. government agencies use Adobe Acrobat software to create, edit, and manage PDFs today, and more than 50% of the Fortune 100 use Adobe Sign for their electronic signature needs. FedRAMP certification and a conscientious investment in R&D allows us to better help you throughout the entire digital document lifecycle.

Learn more
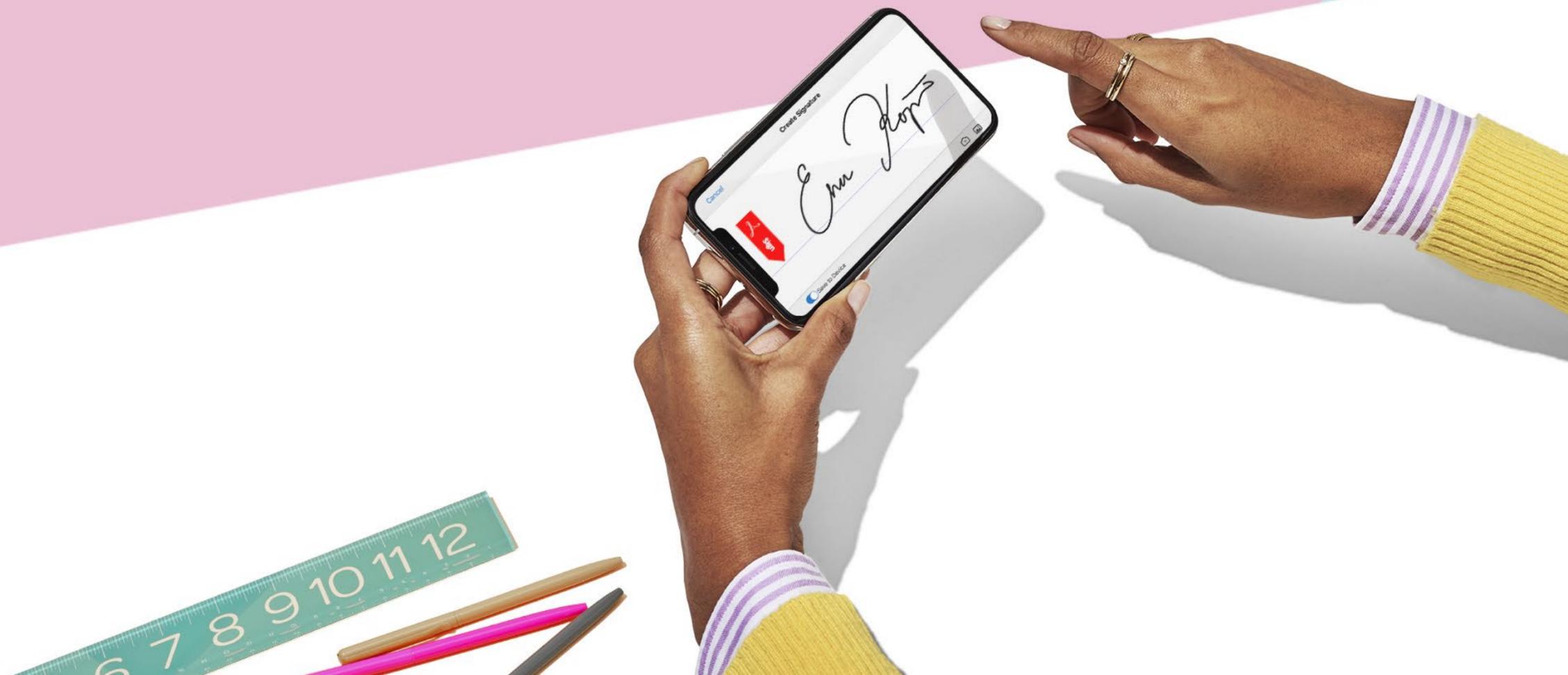
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