HR's Guide to Digital Agreements

5 ways to rethink your HR department's approach to the agreement lifecycle, from hire to retire

Organizational leaders now increasingly rely on HR to help navigate shifts to remote work, manage hiring freezes and furloughs, unite employees around the company mission, and develop a talent strategy for the future.[1]

Despite HR's strategic role, it has traditionally lagged behind other departments in terms of adopting user-friendly, employee-focused technology investments. Legacy tools and reams of paper are still often used to prepare, sign, act upon, and manage the overwhelming document load, from recruitment and onboarding to performance management and off-boarding.[2]

The combination of outdated processes and additional paperwork limits HR staff's ability to do their most important job: hire, support, and nurture employees.

But as employees increasingly become remote workers, relying on paper processes will simply no longer cut it. Remote work has been on the upswing for years, and there's no sign of the trend slowing in the near term.[3] PwC's recent survey found that 83% of office workers want to permanently work from home at least one day a week, and 55% of employers anticipate that most of their workers will do so.[4]

By digitizing the agreement process, HR is turning to the cloud to meet the demands of this new, digitally-reliant workforce. According to another PwC survey of HR executives, 72% of HR leaders have core HR applications in the cloud or are in the process of moving them. The payoff? PwC found that 44% of these users were more likely to report gains in productivity; 40% reported improved employee experience; and 42% reported better workforce insights compared to those using on-premise solutions.[5]

An increased focus on employee experience and the general growing trend toward remote work means the imperative to adopt digital solutions has never been greater. The following is a guide to implementing a modern system of agreement to enable HR staff, candidates, and employees to easily manage every form, document, and contract involved in the employment lifecycle. Don't let outdated processes and paper prevent your company from attracting—and retaining—the best and brightest people.

1 www.spglobal.com
2 www.humanresourcesonline.net
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4 www.pwc.com
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Five ways to take your agreement process digital—and what to look for in partners and digital solutions

Step 1

Understand how agreements get done today

Before you can digitize the agreement process, it's important to understand how your HR agreement process currently works. Consider where digital solutions could replace manual data-entry or paper-based forms, and how digital alternatives will integrate with existing digital investments like Jobvite, Greenhouse, SAP SuccessFactors, Workday, Oracle and more.

There are reams of HR documents in the lifecycle of a single employee, and different processes to manage those documents—from filing paperwork to more modern, cloud-based tools. Now, scale these disparate approaches to an entire workforce, and it's no wonder that the HR document deluge can be overwhelming. For example, 58% of organizations say their onboarding is built around paperwork and processes—as a result, only 12% of employees say their companies do a good job at it.[6]

Digitizing all of this paperwork may seem like an overwhelming task, but it doesn't have to be. Start small, ask HR staff to help identify pain points, and build a plan for how to digitize agreements. Focus on creating a digital and connected system of agreement process that will mesh with future departmentand company-wide digital investments. A smart place to start? Identify forms and documents across the agreement lifecycle that can be signed electronically.

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Step 2

Paper-based tasks and documents that HR leaders are taking digital include:

Recruiting
Offer letters, NDAs, background check consent

Onboarding
Federal and state tax forms, I-9 forms, employee handbook, payroll forms, equipment requisitions

Compensation
Bonuses, stock agreements, relocation agreements

Performance management
Performance evaluations and improvement plans, goal documentation

HR admin
Contractor agreements, ACA documentation, role changes, security and training materials, annual policy updates

Benefits
Enrollment summaries, contracts, required annual notices

Off-boarding
Termination certificates, stock and severance notifications

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of office workers want to permanently work from home at least one day a week.

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of employers anticipate that most of their workers will do so.

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Eliminate roadblocks in the employee lifecycle, from recruitment to off-boarding

The recruitment process is a candidate's first impression of your company. Don't let it be the last by burdening job seekers with paperwork and a clunky application process. This is your company's chance to impress candidates and to demonstrate that it is a modern workplace.

This is especially important for younger job seekers who increasingly expect employers to be tech savvy.[7] Don't alienate them with old-fashioned paperwork during the recruitment and application process.

Consider other processes too, including the offer, onboarding, and offboarding. There's no clearer way to signal that your company is out of touch than by emailing an offer letter that candidates must print, wet sign, scan, and send via email. On average, new hires are expected to complete 54 onboarding tasks, which largely include paperwork. With over 20% of turnover happening in an employee's first 45 days, employers can't afford to deliver negative experiences during this critical time. Improving onboarding by eliminating certain hurdles, like printing and scanning documents, can increase employee retention by 82%.[8] Implementing digital alternatives throughout these initial interactions, including e-signature, will speed up the processes and provide seamless experiences to employees.

And don't forget about offboarding, too. As many as 15% of former employees can boomerang back into your workforce after leaving or even being let go, so don't squander your chance to leave a lasting impression on them.[9] Plus, over 30% of employees recommend open job positions to their network—offer them a positive digital experience from their first day to their last.[10] Using e-signature to finalize any severance packages or other documents can make the process more organized, efficient and painless.

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Step 3

Give employees the digital experiences they want, where they want them

Product Spotlight

SMS Delivery of Signature Requests meets employees wherever they are.

Give employees the freedom to e-sign form on their mobile devices. Send a request for an e-signature via SMS, and recipients can sign the required agreements directly from their device. No computer needed.

Today's employees are increasingly working remotely with 72% saying that even post-COVID, they planto work away from the office at least two days a week, and about a third say they'll never return.[11] But employees aren't necessarily just working from home. As remote work grows, it gives rise to a mobile workforce, unbound by a central physical location. IBM estimates that the mobile workforce will reach 1.87 billion workers by 2021.[12] That means HR must provide mobile- friendly experiences, including e-signing of agreements and SMS delivery of important documents.

Not only do these digitized processes provide better experiences for employees, but they also free up HR staff to focus on their core mission: finding, hiring, and supporting employees. And, already, HR teams are reaping the rewards of digital experiences. Over half (51%) of HR leaders say they're getting the benefits they expected from their implementation of digital benefits administration, enabling them to pivot their attention to other critical aspects of their jobs that can't be digitized or automated.[13]

With DocuSign, Salesforce reduced the time it takes to complete offer letters from five days to a single day (or less).

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Step 4

Stand up for sustainability

Product Spotlight

DocuSign eSignature and Bulk Send make administrative tasks easier and more efficient.

DocuSign eSignature enables users to send and sign digital agreements from virtually any device. Part of the DocuSign Agreement Cloud, eSignature can eliminate manual tasks for your HR teams and employees, making administrative tasks simpler and faster to execute.

Need to send a high volume of documents (benefits summaries, remote work policy updates, training materials, or termination notices) to multiple recipients?

DocuSign Bulk Send can save you time and money. Simply import a list of signers, and each will receive a unique copy of the document to sign— eliminating the need to create and send separate envelopes.

A digital agreement process not only satisfies employees' expectations for how they want to work, but it also signals your company's commitment to sustainability. Candidates and employees increasingly expect their employers to be environmentally conscious, but a 2018 Deloitte global survey of millennials suggests that employers routinely fall short: 33% of respondents said employers should prioritize sustainability, yet 14% said that the environment was actually a business priority in their organization.[14]

A digital approach to agreements also eliminates time and money spent printing, filing, and storing paper documents. A study of the 5,000 largest publicly traded U.S. companies found that the companies could save $1 billion by reducing paper waste by 1%. Sustainability is what your employees expect; it's good for the environment, and it's good for your bottom line.

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Step 5

Product Spotlight

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eSignature Template Library

Reduce errors and save time with the eSignature Template Library. Templates enable you to upload your document and add fields just once. After that, re-use the template as much as needed.

Peace of mind: reduce errors, eliminate security risks

By digitizing the agreement process, HR eliminates security and privacy vulnerabilities common with paper documents stored in file cabinets, and reduces errors caused by manually entering (or re-keying) data from paperwork and other back-office systems.

Digital agreements are easy to manage and track, reducing the risk that HR staff will misfile important documents or mistakenly share sensitive employee data. Leveraging pre-built templates for forms can cut down errors as well by eliminating the need for users to manually create fields. Features like version control and form auto-populate ensure that documents are accurate and current. Digital tools can also integrate with existing back-office software—think Workday, Greenhouse, Jobvite, SAP, and ADP—so HR can easily verify information during the recruitment and onboarding process.

A modern system of agreement can also strengthen security and reduce compliance risks inherent to paper processes (and legacy software) by ensuring that all documents and workflows meet requirements across industries, including healthcare, financial services and others. This is especially important as companies take their businesses global—research shows that most organizations are undeterred by the impact of COVID-19 and are still moving forward with plans for new or expanded international operations, which means they'll need to navigate international compliance requirements.[15]

The time to transform your HR workflows is now. Disruption is an opportunity to adapt and improve. Doing away with paper processes in favor of more efficient and seamless digital experiences that meet your candidates and employees where they are will set your company—and your work—up for lasting success.

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Checklist

Choosing a vendor to digitize your agreement process

"On paper alone, the cost savings with DocuSign are in the thousands and possibly the hundreds of thousands when all is said and done."

Laura Martella
Director of HR
San Diego Zoo

When evaluating vendors, ask yourself whether the company and its tools are…

- ✓ Simple to implement and use
- ✓ Compatible with existing systems—and with industry-leading solutions
- ✓ Offering extensive, customizable features that solve needs now—and in the future
- ✓ Secure and compliant with global regulations
- ✓ Exhibiting a proven track record of customer success and innovation
- ✓ Reliable and accessible on any device

Are you ready to transform the agreement process at your company?

Let DocuSign help you adopt a modern, digital way to prepare, sign, act on, and manage every employee agreement—forms, documents, contracts, and more—from hire to retire. Call us at 877-720-2040, or visit our website to learn more.

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