

Taking a step towards a Paperless Office

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Technical Advisory
Committee Presentation

The quest for the paperless office seems to be eternal and never ending. This utopia was first envisioned by information scientist Frederick Wilfred Lancaster in 1978. However, in the year 2013, it has yet to be realized. The use of communication technologies like fax machines and printers have been greatly reduced with the wide adoption of email and electronic storage and sharing technologies. But several businesses still use paper based communication systems, especially when it comes to having to fill out forms and contracts with signatures, initials etc. Although we may yet be several years away from a fully paperless work environment, this tip is aimed at getting businesses take one step closer towards that goal.

Most documents like contracts and forms start their lives as electronic documents created in editing applications like MS Word or Excel. They need to be filled in and signed by another party and are typically sent over as PDF files via emails or fax machines. Once the recipients receive them they are usually printed, filled out, signed and then either scanned and emailed or faxed back. So, the journey of the document

- starts as an electronic document
- it is converted to paper either by the sender or the recipient
- then it is either stored and kept as a paper document
- or converted back into an electronic document

If the document were to stay electronic at all times, that would be a huge step towards getting to a paperless office and even reducing communication costs. The latest versions of Adobe's Acrobat Reader do just that, by allowing users to fill forms by adding text, date, initials and also sign the documents. You can follow the steps below to do this.

1. Install or upgrade to the latest version of Adobe Acrobat Reader
2. Open the PDF document you have to sign using Adobe Acrobat Reader
3. Select the Sign pane
4. Click on "I need to sign", followed by Place Signature
5. There are several methods you can use to create a signature
 - a. Type my signature – you can just type your signature and use one of a few different fonts and styles to personalize it
 - b. Use a webcam – sign your name on a piece of white paper. Hold it up to your webcam that is connected to your computer and position it so that your signature is right on the blue line in image from the webcam and hold still for a few seconds
 - c. Draw my signature – you can use your mouse or track pad to draw you signature
 - d. Use an image – if you already have an image of your signature, you can just load it up and use it on the document
6. Once you have created the signature, you can then place the signature anywhere on the document, any number of times
7. After you are done signing you can save the document and email it out

You only need to create the signature one time. Adobe Acrobat Reader saves that signature for future use, until you want to change it.



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In addition to signature, the Sign pane in Acrobat Reader also allows you to place Check marks in check boxes, Initials where you need to initial, as well as fill forms and add text where you need to place text.

The new features in the latest version of Adobe Acrobat Reader really go a long way towards helping businesses make their office paperless. It makes business document communications easier than ever, especially when these documents have to be shared, filled and signed by people who are geographically dispersed.

About the author and link

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Roochu Shah
TeamLogic IT
5669 Peachtree Pkwy, Suite R1
Norcross, GA 30092
t: 678-694-1286
e: rshah@teamlogicit.com
w: <http://www.teamlogicit.com/norcrossga>

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