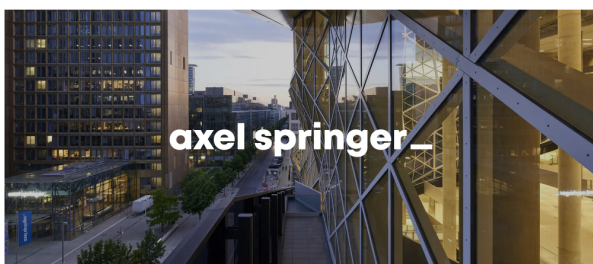


Axel Springer embraces digital signatures to support global media brands



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Every day, millions of readers worldwide open a paper, log onto a website, or glance through a mobile app powered by German publishing house Axel Springer. The company has provided readers with timely news, information, and entertainment for 75 years. Axel Springer Publishing runs dozens of brands including the German national newspaper Die Welt — Stepstone, the leading job portal brand across 25 countries — and Bild, the highest-circulation tabloid newspaper with millions of readers across Europe.

An important element of Axel Springer's success is its embrace of digital technologies. Digital activities currently make up a significant amount of the company's revenue with web portals and mobile apps continuing to grow in popularity. Internally, besides software development, Axel Springer has invested in enterprise technologies from major names such as Salesforce, SAP, Microsoft, and Adobe to keep its more than 15,000 employees worldwide connected through seamless electronic workflows.

Holger Weber, head of contract & license management for finance IT and procurement, was especially interested in using [Adobe Acrobat Sign](#) to streamline contract management for the groups he supported, knowing that electronic signatures could free employees from time-consuming paperwork.

"Much like many of Axel Springer brands have gone digital, it was time to fully digitize our paperwork processes as well," explains Weber. "But many teams still liked the familiarity of working with paper. The COVID-19 pandemic required people to open up to new ways of working. Big parts of our organisation switched to almost entirely electronic signatures within a week, with many other departments across the company jumping on board. The impact has been so great that we don't plan to ever go back to paper and wet signatures."



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Making the move to digital

Before adopting Acrobat Sign, most departments at Axel Springer relied upon stacks of printed paper. Each document needing signature would be placed in a signature folder and carried between offices. Folders might sit on the edge of a desk for three weeks before they were signed and returned.

Once the COVID-19 pandemic required people to work from home, departments only had two choices: courier every document or adopt Acrobat Sign for [electronic signatures](#).

Axel Springer took steps to make the transition to Acrobat Sign as fast and seamless as possible. "We recorded training videos for new users and set up a support portal where people can apply for an Adobe Acrobat Sign license," explains Marc Belohoubek, a CRM engineer at Axel Springer who supports Acrobat Sign users. "Some people had one or two questions, but in general, people were surprised at how intuitive Adobe Acrobat Sign is."

Today, groups across Axel Springer complete several thousands of transactions a quarter through Acrobat Sign. Delivering electronic documents is easy. Users receive an email and click on the link. Signing is just as easy, taking just a few more clicks. Between the easy delivery and signing, the average turnaround time for signatures has been reduced from several weeks to just 25 hours.

The accelerated speed is critical for many teams. For human resources, it means the ability to deliver offer letters to prime candidates as quickly as possible, providing a better experience, making a strong impression, and encouraging candidates to sign with Axel Springer. The corporate law team can get contracts finalized faster, even when dealing with multiple signers working from different locations.

Many departments create and review documents in Microsoft Word before sending the final for signature and approval through Acrobat Sign. Unlike paper contracts, Acrobat Sign comes with tracking capabilities that help teams know exactly whether a document has been received, reviewed, or signed — no more folders sitting on desks. With less time spent following up on documents, the digital law team has seen significant savings in terms of time and labor.

Acrobat Sign also opens the doors for new digital document services. All documents can be stored as searchable PDF documents for better paperless file management. Non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) are no longer printed. Instead, employees can use self-service portals to select the appropriate type of NDA and automatically forward it to any necessary parties. Axel Springer is also hoping to start using integrations with solutions such as Salesforce to further streamline document workflows.

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