FORRESTER®

Use Digital Document Solutions To Advance Your Future Fit Technology Strategy

Executive Summary

New organizational challenges have been introduced by emerging customer preferences, work's redistributed future, and shifting market dynamics.[1] Change will continue to accelerate post-pandemic, and in this new world, success will go to those who adapt the fastest. Future fit technology strategies that enable companies to meet future customer/ employee needs, with adaptability, creativity, and resilience, have come to the forefront.[2]

Documents are key to connecting business systems and processes. And those organizations that embed digital documents within their future fit technology strategies will be positioned to unlock superior customer/ employee experiences today and tomorrow.

Adobe commissioned Forrester Consulting to examine the role of digital document process solutions and tools in organizations' future fit technology strategies.[3] To explore this topic, Forrester conducted an online survey with 250 senior IT and business decision-makers who are based in either North America or Western Europe and have responsibility for digital document processing at their organization.
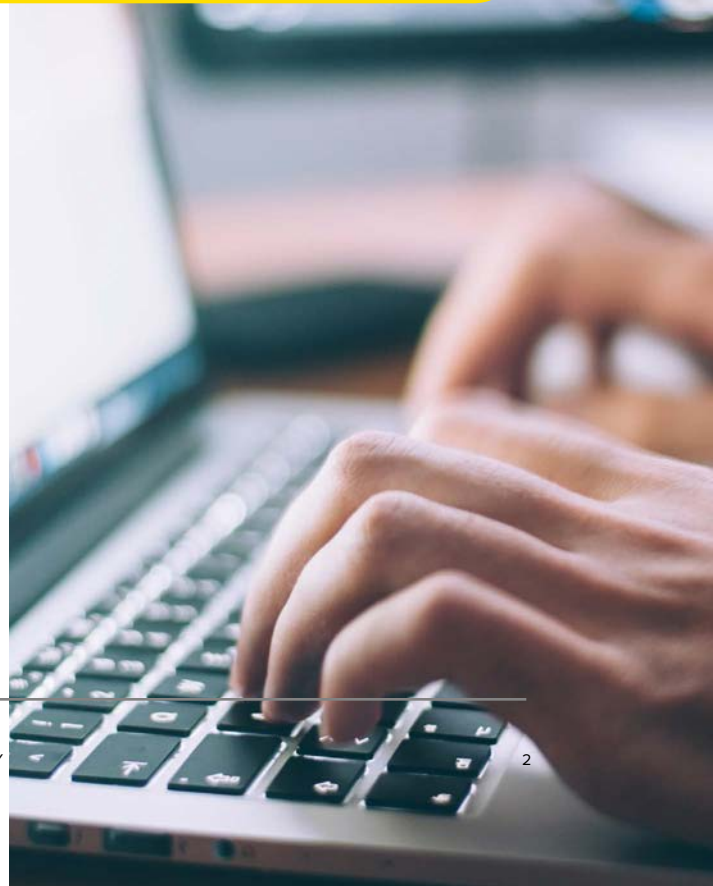
Key Findings

Organizations are increasing investment in digital document solutions. Digital document solutions play a key role in accelerating and connecting business processes, and decision-makers have recognized this. Over the 12 months from our study, North American and Western European decision-makers expected to increase their investment in digital document solutions by an average 60% and 57%, respectively.

Digital document solutions provide better customer and employee experiences. Documents are a core component of most, if not all critical business processes. Investing in digital document solutions will help organizations streamline and enhance existing systems and processes, realizing positive effects to their customer experiences, employee engagement, and operational efficiency. And these effects are key to driving competitive advantage.

Leading organizations will advance their digital document capabilities. It will be critical for organizations to invest in the following capability sets: document data analytics and insights, document workflow automation, and document data integration. To build the case for change, leading organizations will prioritize capabilities based on organizational pain points that are aligned to capability gaps.

Organizations Are Building Adaptive Capabilities To Become Future Fit

Organizations need to be ready to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow. In order to ensure long-term success throughout the coming decade of disruption, leading organizations have leaned into future fit technology strategies. Our study found that:

- **Future fit organizations are adopting technology platforms to accelerate and connect processes.** Technology investments of the 2010s started out strong with many organizations yielding notable productivity gains. Yet by 2019, progress stalled as organizations were weighed down by disconnected digital investments and rising technical debt. Today, North American (85%) and Western European (83%) decision-makers are prioritizing upgrading, replacing, or consolidating their legacy business applications/ systems. Additionally, North American (81%) and Western European (78%) decision-makers are prioritizing the development of a coherent business platform framework over the next 12 months.[4]

- **And they are prioritizing adaptive capabilities.** Organizations must be able to sense and react to change. As such, most organizations are investing in analytics and automation capabilities with North American (87%) and Western European (85%) decision-makers prioritizing the improved use of data and analytics. Additionally, North American (76%) and Western European (75%) decision-makers are prioritizing the increased use of AI and machine learning capabilities across their organization over the next 12 months.[5]

- **Digital documents are a continued priority for organizations, keeping business processes flowing and empowering adaptability.** As leading organizations deploy future fit technology strategies, digital documents will continue to be foundational to connecting and accelerating business processes. Organizations that have already replaced manual and/or paper-based processes with digital document solutions have

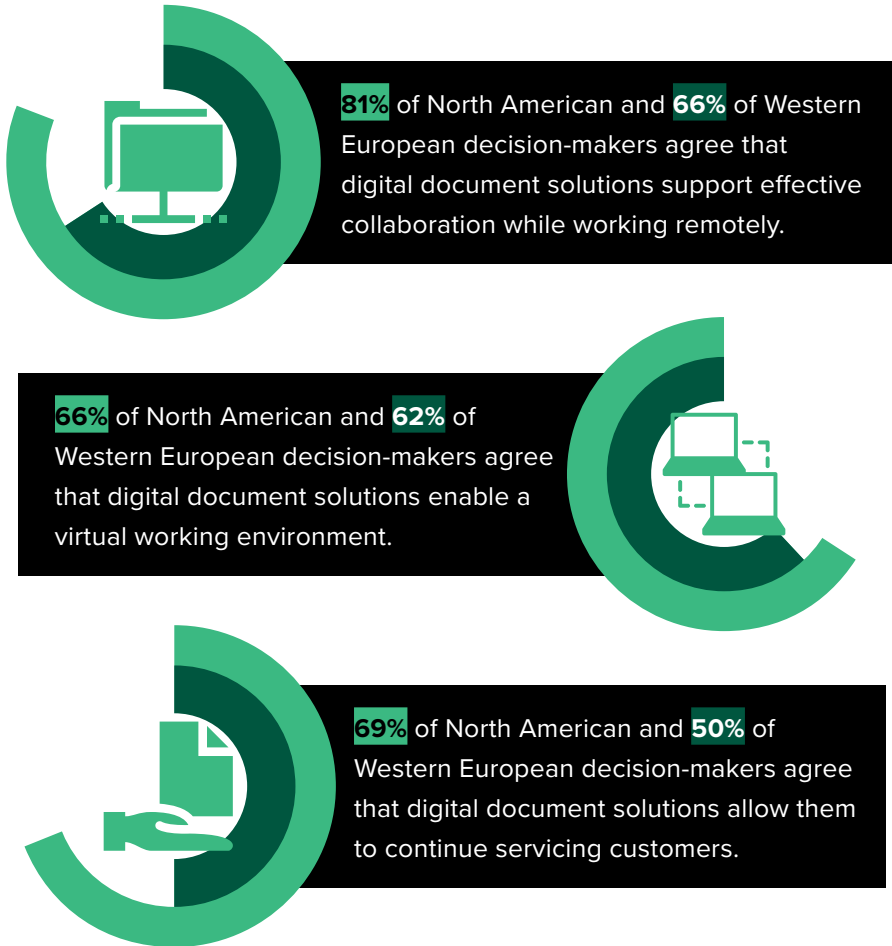"[Digital documents] enable us to keep our documents secure while also being scalable, robust, and easy to administer."

Vice president of IT at a higher education institution, USA

saved time and streamlined workflows, realizing stronger customer outcomes, improved employee collaboration, and improved virtual work efficacy (see Figure 1). As such, organizations continue to invest in digital document solutions with North American and Western European decision-makers planning to increase spend on digital document process solutions and tools by an average 60% and 57% respectively over the 12 months from survey fielding.

Figure 1

"What is the role played by digital document solutions (e.g., PDF editing and sharing, e-signature, etc.) in supporting your organization's business continuity?"

(Showing selected answers)

81% of North American and **66%** of Western European decision-makers agree that digital document solutions support effective collaboration while working remotely.

66% of North American and **62%** of Western European decision-makers agree that digital document solutions enable a virtual working environment.

69% of North American and **50%** of Western European decision-makers agree that digital document solutions allow them to continue servicing customers.

Base: 125 North American and 125 Western European senior IT and business decision-makers with responsibilities for digital document processing at their organization
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Adobe, June 2020

Organizations Grow Faster With Digital Document Solutions

Alongside the critical nature of connecting existing systems and processes, those organizations that continue to elevate their documents strategy with digital document solutions benefit from:

- **Accelerated growth and a competitive edge.** Forrester Research finds that organizations with future fit technology strategies grow close to three times faster than their industry average.[6] Decision-makers recognize the role of digital documents in this, with 87% of North American and 73% of Western European respondents agreeing that digital document processes help them better compete in their industry.

- **Higher employee engagement.** Forrester's Employee Experience Index (EXi) shows that 90% of highly engaged employees are satisfied with their organization's collaboration technology, as opposed to 29% of lowly engaged employees.[7] As hybrid work becomes the norm, decision-makers have realized that digital documents are critical to enabling collaboration and fostering communication, feedback, and ideation, with 70% of North American and Western European respondents agreeing that digital document processes improve employee collaboration while working remotely.

- **Stronger customer experiences.** Along with engaged employees driving stronger customer experiences, organizations investing in digital documents will continue to facilitate end-to-end digital experiences,

"Despite working remotely, [digital document] technologies are critical in maximizing organizational efficiency, adaptability, and the customer experience, all while reducing costs."

Director of IT at a travel and hospitality company, UK

meeting growing customer demands for seamless and engaging end-to-end digital journeys. In our study, 86% of North American and 63% of Western European decision-makers agree that digital document processes will help them better serve and meet customer needs/ expectations.

- **Operational improvements.** Eliminating manual and/or paper-based tasks and adopting fully digital document processes can help organizations save time and reduce errors. Previously, in a commissioned case study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Adobe, it was found that a composite organization, which is based on three customer interviews, was able to save users up to 65 hours per year working on documents by employing a digital document process solution.[8] Additionally, in a separate commissioned case study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Adobe, it was found that a separate composite organization, being based on six customer interviews, was able to save an average 1.5 hours per transaction by deploying e-signatures.[9]

Leading organizations will embed digital document solutions within their future fit technology strategies. Beyond simply digitizing manual and/ or paper-based steps within processes, these organizations will use advanced digital document capabilities to elevate their digital document processes. However, in order to build an effective case for change, decision-makers must prioritize investments based on existing pain points aligned to capability gaps.

By identifying the gap between the importance and satisfaction of today's digital document capabilities, our study found that (see Figure 2):

> "[Digital document] collaboration saves time and money while also supporting innovation and quality. By sharing data, resources, and tasks, we are able to learn from each other."
>
> **Senior operations manager at a higher education institution, USA**

- **Leveraging document data analytics and insights is the leading priority.** Documents house a wealth of data on both customers and employees. Unlocking document data will inform business processes across the organization while simultaneously allowing rapid and targeted changes to existing processes. This will be a powerful lever for organizations in delivering superior customer and employee experiences today and tomorrow.

- **E-signature and document collaboration capabilities continue to be a priority.** In a post-pandemic world, these continue to be foundational capabilities serving both the front and back office. E-signatures are critical to meeting growing customer demands for end-to-end digital journeys. And together with real-time document collaboration capabilities, this combination will remove impediments to productivity and collaboration affecting a distributed workforce.

- **Organizations have a growing need for document workflow automation and document data integration capabilities.** Process automation reduces costs and supports business strategy. Automating document workflows will help organizations realize significant time savings and reduce errors, while boosting their ability to react quickly

and effectively to change. While integrating document data with critical business systems reduces data errors and duplication tasks, helping organizations streamline back-office operations. This will support the unification of customer experiences and improve employee collaboration, while simultaneously strengthening document analytics, document automation, and security capabilities.
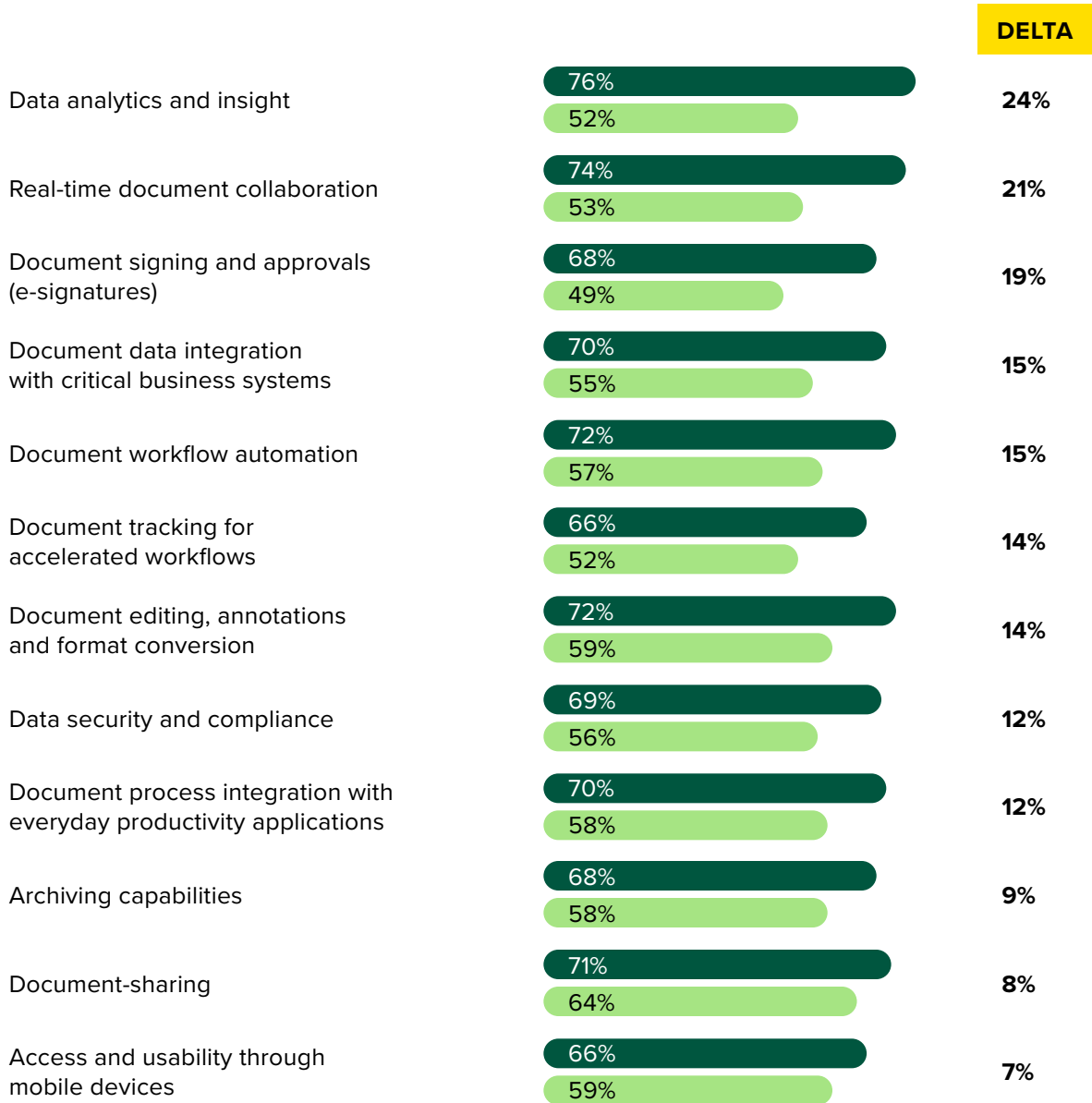
- **Document security must become a high priority.** Most organizations tend to be reactive towards security. However, as they digitize their business processes, security must come to the forefront. Customers value data privacy, and documentation contains significant amounts of sensitive information; information leaks can thus have significant ramifications on customer trust and business. Leading organizations will adopt digital document processes that are secure and compliant by design to digitize their business processes (e.g., identity and authentication in the case of document actions like e-signatures) and ensure that customer data is protected. Additionally, these organizations will also ensure adaptability as they navigate continually evolving data protection and privacy laws.

By 2027, Forrester Research predicts major shifts in how digital documents will be used and designed.[10] For example, Forrester anticipates that structured data will surround content to make it easier for document recipients to pull and use data from documents at scale. This, alongside other shifts in how documents will be used and designed, will change documents from being author-centric to audience-centric. Organizations that continue to invest in their digital document solutions as part of their future fit technology strategies will be ready to act on these fundamental changes.

Figure 2

"In your opinion, which of the following features provided by digital document processes and tools are the most important in supporting your organization's business continuity and agility?"

"How satisfied are you with the following features provided by digital document processes and tools in supporting your organization's business agility and continuity?"

Feature	Importance	Satisfaction	DELTA
Data analytics and insight	76%	52%	**24%**
Real-time document collaboration	74%	53%	**21%**
Document signing and approvals (e-signatures)	68%	49%	**19%**
Document data integration with critical business systems	70%	55%	**15%**
Document workflow automation	72%	57%	**15%**
Document tracking for accelerated workflows	66%	52%	**14%**
Document editing, annotations and format conversion	72%	59%	**14%**
Data security and compliance	69%	56%	**12%**
Document process integration with everyday productivity applications	70%	58%	**12%**
Archiving capabilities	68%	58%	**9%**
Document-sharing	71%	64%	**8%**
Access and usability through mobile devices	66%	59%	**7%**

Base: 125 North American and 125 Western European senior IT and business decision-makers with responsibilities for digital document processing at their organization
Note: Some values have been rounded.
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Adobe, June 2020

Key Recommendations

The world is rapidly evolving, and organizations have been forced to become more adaptive. As organizations develop their future fit technology strategies, decision-makers must be cognizant of the ongoing importance of digital document processes in either enabling or hindering their ability to survive and thrive.

In this context, Forrester's in-depth survey of 250 senior IT and business decision-makers based in North America or Western Europe yielded several important recommendations:

Recognize the importance of digital document processes for accelerating business growth and better serving customers.

Digital document processes are foundational tools that are cost-effective and quick to implement. As your organization grows increasingly digital, manual and/or paper-based processes or steps within otherwise digital processes become accentuated pain points. Your organization must continue digitizing processes with digital documents that are also secure and compliant by design to meet growing customer demands for digital experiences while continuing to protect customer data.

Advance your digital document capabilities to support your future fit technology strategy.

Now is the time to take your document capabilities to the next level. Unlocking document data and automating document processes will empower your organization to become more digital and intelligent by streamlining operations and enabling you to deliver superior customer and employee experiences.

Continue adopting and integrating digital document capabilities across key business processes.

Manual and/or paper-based processes and disconnected systems slow business and generate unwanted errors. Future fit organizations need to ensure that key processes are optimized and integrated to remove inefficiencies and build adaptiveness. Digital document capabilities like real-time document collaboration and e-signatures will be critical to achieving these outcomes.

Find a partner with the relevant expertise.

Your organization needs a digital document partner — not just a provider — that can help you meet your growth ambitions. Documents form the backbone of most, if not all critical business processes today. A digital document partner that is creative and ready for the future of documents can energize your business and identify opportunities to delight your customers with rich document experiences. But a partner that is also curious and entrepreneurial about the challenges of today will challenge and empower your organization to rethink its priorities and innovate. This will be critical for organizations' survival and growth through the challenges of today and tomorrow.[11]

Appendix A: Methodology

In this study, Forrester conducted an online survey of 450 senior IT and business decision-makers based in North America, Western Europe, or APAC with responsibilities for digital document processing at their organizations. Of these decision-makers, we focused this study on the 250 that were from North America or Western Europe. The study began in May 2020 and was completed in June 2020.

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Leon Zhang,
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Contributing Research:
Forrester's CIO research group

Appendix B: Demographics

INDUSTRIES	
Life sciences	**22%**
Financial services and/or insurance	**20%**
Higher education	**20%**
Other	**20%**
Local or national government	**10%**
State government	**8%**

COMPANY SIZE	
20,000 or more employees	**10%**
5,000 to 19,999 employees	**30%**
1,000 to 4,999 employees	**39%**
500 to 999 employees	**14%**
100 to 499 employees	**4%**
2 to 99 employees	**3%**

GEOGRAPHIES	
France	**10%**
Germany	**20%**
United Kingdom	**20%**
Canada	**10%**
United States	**40%**

RESPONDENT DEPARTMENT	
Finance/accounting	**16%**
Human resources/training	**6%**
IT	**33%**
Marketing/advertising	**11%**
Operations	**15%**
Sales	**7%**
Legal	**6%**
Product development and tech	**5%**

Appendix C: Supplemental Material

RELATED FORRESTER RESEARCH

"The 10 Core Competencies You Need To Be Future Fit," Forrester Research, Inc., April 6, 2021

"Beyond Agility — Adaptive Enterprises Hold The Winning Hand," Forrester Research, Inc., May 7, 2019

"Transform IT To Deliver A Future Fit Tech Strategy," Forrester Research, Inc., February 1, 2021

"Creativity Feeds The Future Of Work," Forrester Research, Inc., August 2, 2021

Appendix D: Endnotes

[1] Source: "Your Future Fit Technology Strategy: Adaptive, Creative, And Resilient," Forrester Research, Inc., October 14, 2020.

[2] Forrester defines a future fit technology strategy as a customer-obsessed approach to technology that enables a company to quickly reconfigure business structures and capabilities to meet future customer and employee needs with adaptivity, creativity, and resilience.

[3] For this study, we define digital document process solutions and tools as any solution or tool that supports the creation, collaboration, distribution, and/or storage of digital documents and records within the guardrails of corporate policies. This includes solutions that allow for reading, editing, signing, and editing of PDFs and other documents.

[4] Source: Forrester Analytics Business Technographics® Priorities And Journey Survey, 2021.

[5] Source: Ibid.

[6] Source: "Future Fit Firms Outpace The Competition," Forrester Research, Inc., April 6, 2021.

[7] Source: "Forrester's EX Index: A Deeper Look At The Data," Forrester Research, Inc., March 4, 2020.

[8] Source: "The Total Economic Impact™ Of Adobe Acrobat DC," a commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Adobe, August 2019.

[9] Source: "The Total Economic Impact™ Of Adobe Sign," a commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Adobe, August 2019.

[10] Source: "The Future Of Documents," Forrester Research, Inc., December 9, 2020.

[11] Source: "Creativity Catalyzes A Growth Mindset," Forrester Research, Inc., April 20, 2021.

ABOUT FORRESTER CONSULTING

Forrester Consulting provides independent and objective research-based consulting to help leaders succeed in their organizations. Ranging in scope from a short strategy session to custom projects, Forrester's Consulting services connect you directly with research analysts who apply expert insight to your specific business challenges. For more information, visit forrester.com/consulting.