

# IDC MarketScape: Worldwide eSignature Software 2021 Vendor Assessment

Holly Muscolino

Steve Charbonnier

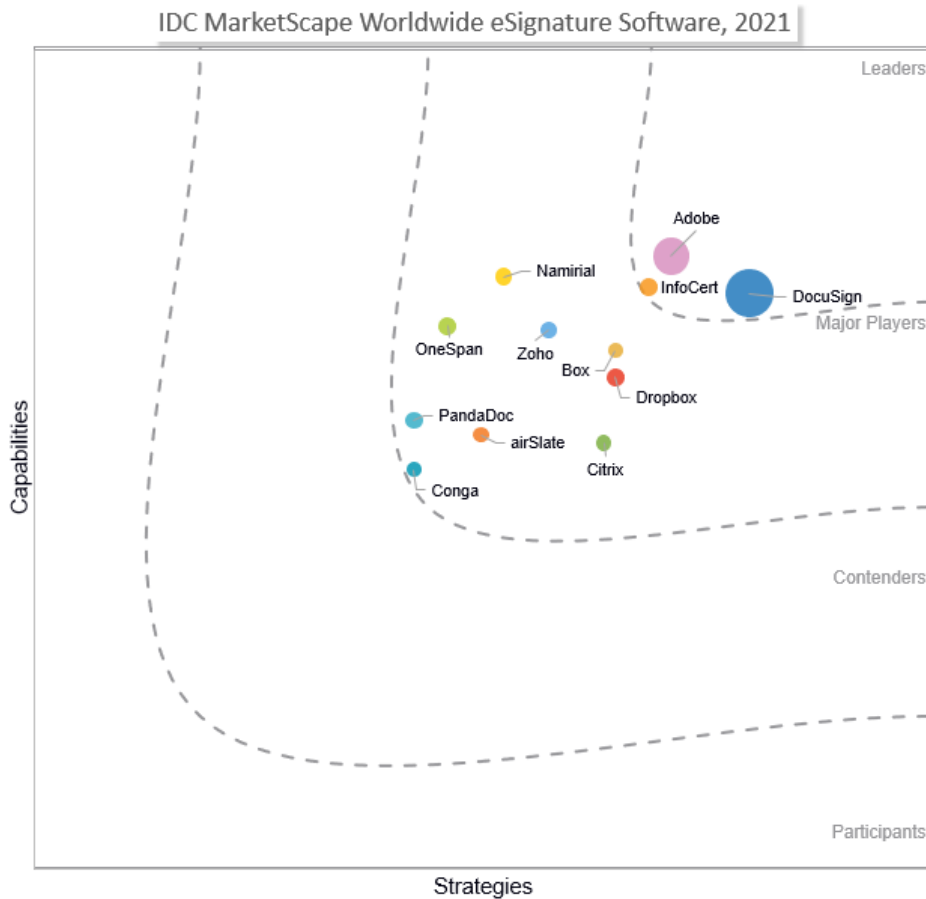
Marci Maddox

**THIS IDC MARKETSCAPE EXCERPT FEATURES ADOBE**

## IDC MARKETSCAPE FIGURE

**FIGURE 1**

### IDC MarketScape Worldwide eSignature Software Vendor Assessment



Source: IDC, 2021

Please see the Appendix for detailed methodology, market definition, and scoring criteria.

## IN THIS EXCERPT

---

The content for this excerpt was taken directly from IDC MarketScape: Worldwide eSignature Software 2021 Vendor Assessment (Doc # US46742320). All or parts of the following sections are included in this excerpt: IDC Opinion, IDC MarketScape Vendor Inclusion Criteria, Essential Guidance, Vendor Summary Profile, Appendix and Learn More. Also included is Figure 1.

## IDC OPINION

---

An electronic signature, also known as esignature, is a legally agreed upon replacement for uniquely identifiable physical acceptance or agreement to a form, document, or other digital source. Digital signatures are an advanced form of esignature that require the signer to authenticate their identity using a digital certificate issued by an independent certificate authority (CA).

eSignature software refers to software and cloud service solutions that:

- Issue an encrypted digital document from a sender requesting a signature.
- Transport the document via a secure communications channel.
- Present the document to one or more signers.
- Capture the electronic equivalent of a handwritten signature.
- Record the signers' actions.
- Re-encrypt the document.
- Return the document to the originator via secured communications.

The software or service may include certain other features or functions, such as workflow automation and analytics, but must, at minimum, meet the aforementioned requirements.

eSignature solutions are an important element in improving both the efficiency and the experience surrounding business-to-business and business-to-consumer content-centric workflows. Frequently, these workflows involve parties outside the organization that are engaged in a business relationship that requires verified contractual consent by either the business, one or more external parties, or both. As an increasing number of documents are "born digital" and organizations continue to digitally transform content-centric workflows, esignature technology has enabled those workflows to remain digital and drives a number of benefits including reduction in transaction time and cost, increased security, and improved employee, supplier, partner, and customer experiences.

The contribution of esignature technology to business continuity became glaringly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. Gaps were exposed in organizations without end-to-end digitally transformed business processes – including when agreements were previously manually routed, faxed, scanned, or printed for signature and remote workers had to seek alternative methods to move the process forward with a less than secure digital signature.

## eSignature Trends

As businesses head into recovery, forward-looking organizations are taking stock. They are reviewing the investments and changes made in the pandemic era and making sure that these are scalable, built using modern architecture, and able to support a broad range of often complex use cases. They are codifying those changes that will endure and making sure that these can not only ensure business resiliency but also lay a foundation for future growth, innovation, and agility. We don't expect most

organizations that accelerated digitization of signing workflows to revert to pre-pandemic manual processes, though the astute business will evaluate current solutions and seek to expand use cases across the enterprise.

There is growing focus on employee experience and sustained focus on customer experience, both of which improve with the adoption of digitized, automated, and transformed signing workflows. Other trends of note are:

- Tighter integration with enterprise applications via connectors and APIs to extend automation and support a broader range of use cases
- Anytime, anywhere, any device access to initiate and participate in signing workflows
- Scalability to support fluctuations in signing requests
- Automated document generation and bidirectional data management (including "smart contracts")
- Flexible deployment models (e.g., on premises, private cloud, public cloud) to support content security and data residency requirements
- Increased awareness of tiered models of authentication and security
- Compliance with global government electronic identification (eID) platforms
- Growing demand for, and regulatory acceptance of, digital signatures that use hosted keys and transient keys, particularly in response to the perceived difficulties of rendering and verifying qualified digital signatures that use persistent keys in the users' absolute possession and control
- Continued development of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, and biometric capabilities to authenticate, verify identity, audit, and provide robust non-repudiation services
- Growth of video signing and use of video as an authentication type (along with ID verification and matching facial features), and by extension, of online notaries

## IDC MARKETSCOPE VENDOR INCLUSION CRITERIA

---

eSignature software refers to software and cloud service solutions that issue an encrypted, signed document from a sender, transport the document via a secure communications channel, present the document to one or more signers, record the signers' actions, re-encrypt the document, and return the document to the originator via secured communications.

Though this IDC MarketScape evaluates esignature software as its own market, the reality is that there are few "pure-play" esignature software vendors, particularly when we consider the larger vendors that met the inclusion criteria for this IDC MarketScape (described in this section). eSignature solutions are frequently a component of a broader portfolio of content or identity services. This makes sense because an electronic signature must be part of a digitized signing workflow, and the more that workflow is truly transformed from its paper-based origins, the more those electronic signatures can be leveraged for efficiency, productivity, and security gains.

eSignature software vendors roughly fall into several broad categories, all of which are represented in this IDC MarketScape:

- Content services (e.g., Adobe, Box, Citrix, DocuSign, Dropbox)

- Authentication and identify services (e.g., InfoCert, Namirial, OneSpan)
- Online notaries (e.g., Notarize)

Any vendor participating in this IDC MarketScape had to showcase that it met the following inclusion criteria:

- Minimum of \$5 million in annual revenue from esignature solutions
- Minimum of 50,000 paid esignature users
- The solution is sold in more than one region (North America, Latin America, Western Europe, CEE, Middle East and Africa, Asia/Pacific)
- The solution offers, as a minimum, "simple or basic electronic signature" (i.e., scanned images and typed names with no cryptographic protection)
- Must be able to provide three customer and two partner references

## ADVICE FOR TECHNOLOGY BUYERS

---

In the resilient enterprise, business-critical signing workflows can operate anytime, anywhere with minimal reliance on print infrastructure and paper, a particular physical location, or specific human resources. Not only does this ensure business continuity and provide optimal employee, customer, and partner experiences but this enables scalability, organizational agility, innovation, and competitive differentiation. eSignature solutions are an essential component of digitally transformed signing workflows.

However, before adopting an esignature solution, organizations should perform an organizational assessment to clearly understand the current state of signing workflows, identify gaps, and develop a plan for moving forward. Other recommendations are:

- Identify specific use cases that can benefit from deploying an esignature solution and develop a pilot program (if you have not already done so). Develop metrics to measure progress including reduced cost, increased productivity, improved security and compliance, and improved customer and employee satisfaction.
- Select technologies that can support a broad number of enterprise use cases and that integrate well with the organization's existing front-office and back-office business applications.
- Seek vendors that are equipped with the necessary solutions and professional services expertise to address business-critical issues around content security, data privacy, and regulatory compliance.
- Note that esignature must be part of a broader strategy for digitizing, automating, and transforming document processes and will be most successful as part of an organization's overall digital transformation initiatives.

## VENDOR SUMMARY PROFILES

---

This section briefly explains IDC's key observations resulting in a vendor's position in the IDC MarketScape. While every vendor is evaluated against each of the criteria outlined in the Appendix, the description here provides a summary of each vendor's strengths and challenges.

## Adobe

Adobe is positioned in the Leaders category in this 2021 IDC MarketScape for esignature software. Adobe is a public company founded in 1982 and headquartered in San Jose, California.

Quick facts about Adobe are as follows:

- **Employees:** 22,516
- **Market coverage:** North America, Europe, Asia/Pacific, Latin America
- **Industry focus:** Financial services, public sector, healthcare/life sciences
- **Ideal customer size:** Midmarket, enterprise
- **Product evaluated:** Adobe Sign
- **Number of esignature customers worldwide:** Over 1 million individual accounts
- **Cloud architecture:** Public cloud multitenant
- **Type of esignatures offered:** Click-to-sign, basic signature, advanced signature, qualified digital signature
- **Pricing models:** Seat based, user based, and signature based
- **Key differentiator:** Adobe Sign provides the ability to automate digital document workflows with integrated esignature and PDF Services APIs, optimized for remote experiences. Adobe's heritage encompasses broad experience and vision around how integrated productivity software (Adobe Acrobat) and digital workflows transform business processes and customer and employee experiences.
- **Interesting fact:** Adobe Sign is Microsoft's preferred esignature solution. Adobe provides more than 35 prebuilt integrations that are embedded directly inside Microsoft's productivity and collaboration applications, making it easier to deploy and use Adobe Sign and Adobe Acrobat. Microsoft, as a customer, is also transitioning all internal use cases for esignatures over to the Adobe Sign platform.

## Strengths

- **Authentication:** Adobe Sign offers a full range of authentication capabilities that supports all types of esignatures. Adobe has partnerships with a large ecosystem of trust service providers across multiple regions. Adobe also announced a partnership with Notarize to provide remote online notarization services integrated with Adobe Sign.
- **Customer success:** Adobe includes full customer life-cycle assistance from migration and up-front launch to onboarding and expansion of new use cases with Adobe Sign implementations. Customers that we spoke with consistently indicated that the Adobe solution provided good value for their investment. All had integrated Adobe Sign with other enterprise applications using Adobe's APIs and were leveraging the solution for a broad number of use cases.
- **Integrations:** Adobe Sign offers embedded integration with a number of enterprise applications at no extra cost, including tight integrations with Microsoft 365, Salesforce, and Workday. Adobe Sign customers can access the solution directly from Microsoft Office applications, including Teams, with no additional application or sign in required.

## Challenges

- **Internal silos:** Adobe is a large company with multiple product lines in multiple business units. In some cases, Adobe customers are not aware of the opportunities to integrate and deploy Adobe Sign with adjacent applications, such as AEM Forms, AEM Sites, Adobe Commerce

(Magento), and Adobe Marketo Engage. Adobe is actively working on breaking down these silos, which will increase the value of Adobe solutions to its customers.

- **Deployment time:** Though customers provided positive feedback regarding deployment of Adobe Sign, all noted that deployment time was over two months.
- **Competition:** From a go-to-market perspective, Adobe is frequently in competition with larger competitors that continue to acquire and develop solutions up and down the signing value chain. Adobe must be nimble and aggressive to gain share in this market.

### *Consider Adobe When*

Consider Adobe if you are looking for a robust, global, enterprise-class signing solution that can be integrated with a broad range of applications and support a large number of use cases. Microsoft users can exploit the tight integration between Adobe Sign and Microsoft 365. Users of other Adobe solutions should look at opportunities to integrate Adobe Sign into existing Adobe workflows.

## APPENDIX

---

### Reading an IDC MarketScape Graph

For the purposes of this analysis, IDC divided potential key measures for success into two primary categories: capabilities and strategies.

Positioning on the y-axis reflects the vendor's current capabilities and menu of services and how well aligned the vendor is to customer needs. The capabilities category focuses on the capabilities of the company and product today, here and now. Under this category, IDC analysts will look at how well a vendor is building/delivering capabilities that enable it to execute its chosen strategy in the market.

Positioning on the x-axis, or strategies axis, indicates how well the vendor's future strategy aligns with what customers will require in three to five years. The strategies category focuses on high-level decisions and underlying assumptions about offerings, customer segments, and business and go-to-market plans for the next three to five years.

The size of the individual vendor markers in the IDC MarketScape represents the market share of each individual vendor within the specific market segment being assessed.

### IDC MarketScape Methodology

IDC MarketScape criteria selection, weightings, and vendor scores represent well-researched IDC judgment about the market and specific vendors. IDC analysts tailor the range of standard characteristics by which vendors are measured through structured discussions, surveys, and interviews with market leaders, participants, and end users. Market weightings are based on user interviews, buyer surveys, and the input of IDC experts in each market. IDC analysts base individual vendor scores, and ultimately vendor positions on the IDC MarketScape, on detailed surveys and interviews with the vendors, publicly available information, and end-user experiences in an effort to provide an accurate and consistent assessment of each vendor's characteristics, behavior, and capability.

## Market Definition

### *eSignature Software*

eSignature software is a submarket of the document applications functional market. Document applications enable users to create, author, edit, and publish content, including text documents, spreadsheets, and presentations. These documents may include embedded images, audio, and/or video.

eSignature software refers to software and cloud service solutions that issue an encrypted, signed document from a sender, transport the document via a secure communications channel, present the document to one or more signers, record the signers' actions, re-encrypt the document, and return the document to the originator via secured communications.

### *Types of eSignatures*

In this IDC MarketScape, we consider four types of esignatures:

- **Click-to-sign (click wrap):** Users "sign" and agree by clicking a button or checking a box.
- **Simple (basic):** Signing is accomplished with scanned images, handwritten and/or typed names with no cryptographic protection. The signature must be applied by the individual associated with the signature, and the signature must be associated with the document that the signer intended to sign.
- **Advanced electronic or digital signature:** In addition to the requirements for the simple signature, advanced signatures must be uniquely linked to, and capable of identifying, the signer and must be linked to the agreement. It must be possible to detect changes to the document after signing.
- **Qualified electronic or digital signature:** This type of signature requires signers to use a certificate-based digital ID issued by a qualified trust service provider. The digital certificate is a secure, personal, and unique electronic identity credential that must be issued to the signer in a form they can keep under their control. The term *qualified esignature* is based on the EU regulation known as eIDAS, but other regions have similar models.

### *eSignature Laws*

The legality and admissibility of electronically signed documents vary both by country and with degrees of authentication of the signer. In 1999, the United States National Conference of Commissioners introduced the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act (UETA). The UETA only acquired authority through the enactment of state legislators, so the legitimacy of electronic signatures depended on the individual states. In 2000, the U.S. Congress adopted the Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce Act (ESIGN), recognizing the significance of electronic transactions and updating many commerce-related regulations. (Some highly regulated transactions are excluded from this legislation.)

A similar directive was established in the European Union (The Electronic Signatures Directive 1999/93/EC); however, this was replaced in 2014 by eIDAS (Electronic Identification, Authentication and Trust Services) and is augmented by advanced electronic signature (AdES) and qualified electronic signature (QES) for digital signatures using qualified certificates.

Similar laws have been enacted in many other regions. A few examples are:

- Canada's Ontario Electronic Commerce Act (ECA) and Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act define electronic signature and its use and acceptance. In 1999, the Australian Parliament passed the Electronic Transactions Act (ETA) 1999, designed to facilitate the development of electronic commerce in Australia.
- Singapore's Electronic Transactions Act 2010 was passed in 1998. The Act provides a legal framework that governs digital services including esignatures. The ETA was amended in 2010 to bring the law in line with the United Nations Convention on the Use of Electronic Communications in International Contracts.
- In Japan, the legislation governing electronic signatures is the Act on Electronic Signatures and Certification Business (2000), also known as the Japan E-signature Law. In Japan and some other Asian countries, a seal or stamp (called hanko) can be used in lieu of signatures in documents. Some esignature solutions support the use of seals.
- In Brazil, the Provisional Executive Act of August 24, 2001, provides for the validity of general electronic agreements signed digitally. Brazil maintains its own public key infrastructure (PKI) for digital certificates called Infraestrutura de Chaves Públicas Brasileira (ICP-Brasil).

## LEARN MORE

---

### Related Research

- *Worldwide eSignature Software Forecast, 2021-2025* (forthcoming)
- *IDC Market Glance: Digital Content Services, 3Q20* (IDC #US45394620, September 2020)
- *Worldwide eSignature Software Forecast, 2020-2024* (IDC #US46756720, August 2020)
- *IDC TechBrief: eSignature Software* (IDC #US46257920, May 2020)

### Synopsis

This IDC study examines various esignature software vendors worldwide. eSignature solutions are an important element in improving both the efficiency and the experience surrounding business-to-business and business-to-consumer content-centric workflows. As an increasing number of documents are "born digital" and organizations continue to digitally transform content-centric workflows, esignature technology has enabled those workflows to remain digital and drive benefits including reduction in transaction time and cost, increased security, and improved employee, supplier, partner, and customer experiences.

"The contribution of esignature technology to business continuity became glaringly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic," says Holly Muscolino, research vice president, Content Strategies and the Future of Work. "Gaps were exposed in organizations without end-to-end digitally transformed business processes, and remote workers had to seek alternative methods to move the process forward."



## About IDC

International Data Corporation (IDC) is the premier global provider of market intelligence, advisory services, and events for the information technology, telecommunications and consumer technology markets. IDC helps IT professionals, business executives, and the investment community make fact-based decisions on technology purchases and business strategy. More than 1,100 IDC analysts provide global, regional, and local expertise on technology and industry opportunities and trends in over 110 countries worldwide. For 50 years, IDC has provided strategic insights to help our clients achieve their key business objectives. IDC is a subsidiary of IDG, the world's leading technology media, research, and events company.

## Global Headquarters

140 Kendrick Street  
Building B  
Needham, MA 02494  
USA  
508.872.8200  
Twitter: @IDC  
blogs.idc.com  
www.idc.com

---

### Copyright and Trademark Notice

This IDC research document was published as part of an IDC continuous intelligence service, providing written research, analyst interactions, telebriefings, and conferences. Visit [www.idc.com](http://www.idc.com) to learn more about IDC subscription and consulting services. To view a list of IDC offices worldwide, visit [www.idc.com/offices](http://www.idc.com/offices). Please contact the IDC Hotline at 800.343.4952, ext. 7988 (or +1.508.988.7988) or [sales@idc.com](mailto:sales@idc.com) for information on applying the price of this document toward the purchase of an IDC service or for information on additional copies or web rights. IDC and IDC MarketScape are trademarks of International Data Group, Inc.

Copyright 2021 IDC. Reproduction is forbidden unless authorized. All rights reserved.

