

E-SIGNATURES 2021: THE FAST-TRACKING OF SECURE E-SIGNING



	Executive summary	3
	Foreword by Adobe	4
	Introduction	5
1	Uptake and usage	7
2	Benefits of e-signatures	11
3	Overcoming challenges	13
	Key takeaways	18
	Appendix – Respondent profiles	19

LONDON RESEARCH

ABOUT LONDON RESEARCH

London Research is focused on producing research-based content for B2B audiences. We are based in London, but our approach and outlook are very much international. We work predominantly, but not exclusively, with marketing technology (martech) vendors and agencies seeking to tell a compelling story based on robust research and insightful data points.

As part of Communitize Ltd, we work closely with our sister companies Digital Doughnut (a global community of more than 1.5 million marketers) and Demand Exchange (a lead generation platform), both to syndicate our research and generate high-quality leads.

For more information, visit
<https://londonresearch.com>



ABOUT ADOBE SIGN

Speed up your business processes with legal, trusted electronic signatures from Adobe Sign. An Adobe Document Cloud solution, Adobe Sign lets you replace paper and ink signature processes with 100% digital experiences across all types of signing workflows – from simple signatures to highly compliant qualified e-signatures in the cloud. With Adobe Sign, you can easily send, sign, track, and manage signature processes anywhere, anytime using a browser or mobile device. And you can use turnkey integrations and APIs to integrate e-signature workflows in enterprise services, systems of record, and the most popular cloud productivity solutions, such as Microsoft, Salesforce, Workday, and Box.

For more information visit:
<https://acrobat.adobe.com/uk/en/sign.html>

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Executive summary

The massive acceleration of digital transformation since the start of 2020 has been an unexpected consequence of Covid-19, with electronic signatures (e-signatures) among the technologies seized upon by businesses to meet the new needs of their customers, employees and partners.

Research published by McKinsey & Company in October 2020 found that companies responded to changing circumstances far more quickly than predicted¹. They were able to increase their use of advanced technology for both operations and decision-making 25 times faster than they expected.

Within this overall acceleration, the operational benefits of e-signatures – including improved internal efficiencies and collaboration, and better experiences and reduced friction for employees and partners – became even more significant as businesses switched to working from home. But the other side of the story – of companies being able to continue supplying customers with services that require a secure, legally valid signature – was just as important. For example, in July, the UK's Land Registry began accepting electronic signatures, making it possible to buy and sell a house entirely digitally².

The London Research/Adobe E-signatures 2021 survey found that almost two-thirds (62%) of responding companies are now using e-signatures in some part of their business, up 15% from just over half (54%) in the 2020 survey.

As significant as the increase in the number of companies using e-signatures is the growth in their use within organisations. Functions such as IT, HR and legal have embraced the technology in around half the responding companies, up from around a third last year. Marketing, digital transformation and procurement departments are not far behind.

Beneath these headline figures, here are some other key findings from our survey of 1,000 companies:

- Growth in e-signature usage is significantly higher among companies with annual revenues of more than £50m. Three-quarters of these larger company respondents (75%) say they now use the technology (up 23%) compared to just over half (56%) of smaller ones (up 8%).
- Levels of integration with other systems and platforms also increased markedly as the proportion of larger companies describing integration as a challenge fell. Integrations with sales/CRM systems and HR/ERP systems are most frequent.

- The most popular method of quantifying the benefits of e-signatures is through the acceleration of the sales cycle (used by 60% of respondents), reflecting the pre-eminence of sales as a user of the technology. The next two most popular measures are increased efficiency (57%) and reduced cost (53%).
- The biggest challenge companies face (or anticipate facing) in adopting e-signatures is getting people to use them. This is followed by verifying their choice of technology meets regulatory requirements, especially international ones, and can deliver secure signatures (i.e. they are generated in such a way that they are difficult to repudiate).
- Companies not planning to adopt the technology are more likely to cite management or organisational issues rather than technological ones as the reason for their decision.

METHODOLOGY

Just under 1,000 companies (957) took part in this global survey which was carried out between November 2020 and January 2021. The survey was promoted by London Research and its sister company Digital Doughnut, and also by Adobe. More than half (57%) of survey respondents were based in Europe, with the remainder spread across other parts of the world. More details about the profile of survey respondents are contained in the report appendix. The survey for the 2020 report was carried out between November 2019 and February 2020, before the global Covid-19 pandemic. There were 1,517 respondents.



¹ <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/how-covid-19-has-pushed-companies-over-the-technology-tipping-point-and-transformed-business-forever>

² <https://www.mortgagesolutions.co.uk/news/2020/07/27/land-registry-launches-electronic-signatures-for-homebuying>

Foreword by Adobe



John Jolliffe
Senior Manager, Strategic Development,
Document Cloud
Adobe

2020 was the year of remote relationships. Suddenly we were all spending our time in virtual meetings, on messaging apps, and on ecommerce sites. It's therefore no surprise to read reports saying that last year digital transformation jumped forward several years in the course of a few months.

And because electronic signatures are now widely seen as an important part of a company's digital transformation strategy, it's also no surprise that the London Research/Adobe E-signatures 2021 survey found the proportion of businesses using the technology has jumped from around a half to almost two-thirds. Companies have embraced the ability of the technology to facilitate greater efficiency and collaboration among a dispersed workforce, and to allow the continuation of business requiring a signature.

However, this increased use has also thrown the spotlight onto the challenges that companies face when trying to understand the practical and legal implications of using different kinds of e-signatures, particularly when used across international borders.

As companies have expanded their use of electronic signatures internationally, so they have started to come to terms with different laws and regulations that apply to e-signatures in different countries. In the process, they are coming to realise that a secure signature is one that is difficult to repudiate because of the way it is generated. Added to all of this, the research also clearly shows that people want secure signing to be made as easy and intuitive as possible.

Breaking down the barriers

Given this upsurge in the use of e-signatures, and in particular secure digital signatures, we at Adobe are looking hard at the challenges organisations are facing as they seek to implement this area of digital transformation. And we're addressing some of the concerns and friction they can face.

Resources such as the [Adobe Sign international legality information pages](#)³ can help you navigate the complex issue of legislation and regulation, allowing you to develop e-signature policies that manage risk effectively, and ultimately make good choices about the type of signature to use in different situations.

Adobe Sign has you covered. Just select the signature workflow you need and manage risk for any type of signing transaction — from a simple e-signature to a highly regulated qualified digital signature in the cloud. Now you can always get the security and authentication you need, from one solution that offers maximum flexibility across the globe.

And for businesses prioritising an intuitive mobile user experience, Adobe Sign is the best tool to use for cloud-based digital signatures as it frees you from having to download a document to your desktop and then plug in a smart card to sign digitally. We're well-placed to support our customers on this journey with our extensive and growing [network of partners](#)⁴, allowing you to choose the best digital IDs, certificates, and other trust services integrated with Adobe Sign based on your unique local, regional, and industry requirements.



Introduction

Early in 2020, as Covid-19 took hold, and lockdowns and other restrictions were introduced around the world, many aspects of people's relationships – with their employers, their banks, their friends – went online. Businesses scrambled to respond and, as a result, according to Futurum Research, the first six months of the pandemic “produced more digital transformation than the last decade, with every transformation effort already under way finding itself accelerated, and at scale⁵.”

Internally, companies adapted to remote working, making sure their employees had online access to the tools, documents and communication methods they needed to keep the business running. Externally, they recognised the needs and requirements created by the new behaviour of their customers, and looked for digital solutions.

One of the key technologies in this period of accelerated change has been e-signatures, which have transitioned from a point solution to an important part of an organisation's digital transformation strategy.

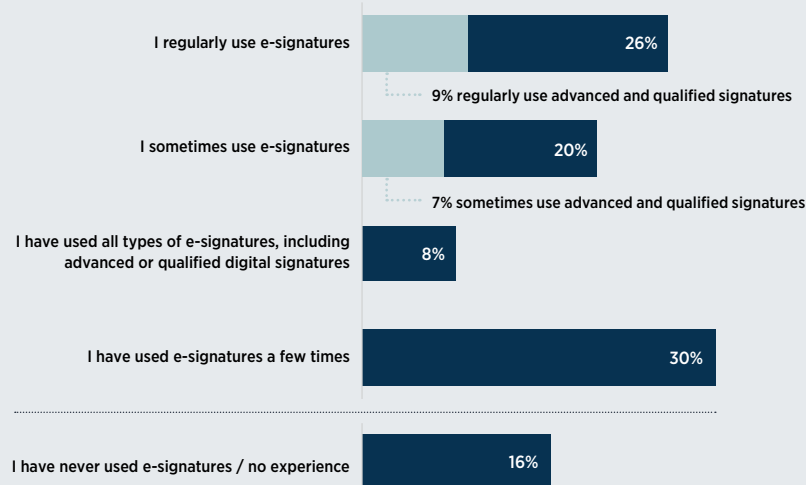
According to the previous London Research/Adobe E-signatures survey⁶, published in early 2020, the main benefits seen by existing users were:

- improved mobile productivity (for example, signing on the move),
- better experiences and reduced friction for customers,
- improved internal efficiencies and collaboration.

The ability to do all this without sacrificing legal validity or security meant their rapid adoption – including that of certificate-based digital signatures – contributed greatly to business continuity in 2020 and continues to do so in 2021 during the pandemic era.

So, at the end of 2020 and start of 2021, London Research carried out a fresh survey of e-signature use to gauge how adoption levels had changed since the previous survey, how they are being used, by which departments, and for what purposes. We also wanted to re-examine their perceived benefits and how these are quantified, as well as the barriers to their take-up. The findings of this survey form the basis of this report.

FIGURE 1
What is your previous experience using e-signatures in your organisation?



The vast majority of survey respondents have previous experience using e-signatures as part of their job roles for their organisations.

What is an electronic signature?

Electronic signatures (or 'e-signatures') are used to indicate acceptance of an agreement or record. An e-signature can be as simple as a name entered in an electronic document but, when backed by a digital certificate, an e-signature allows for increased security because it provides higher assurance of the identity of the signer and so it can be trusted to stand

up to legal scrutiny. E-signatures that are backed by digital certificates are often simply called digital signatures. The 2021 survey questions relate to all types of e-signatures, including digital signatures. *Figure 1* breaks down the use of different types of e-signatures by survey respondents.

How the EU defines e-signatures

E-signatures are widely used throughout the European Union (EU), where their use is regulated by Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 (commonly referred to as the eIDAS Regulation). This regulation draws a distinction between three different kinds of e-signatures:

I. A simple or basic electronic signature

encompasses any data in electronic form which is attached to, or is logically associated with other data in electronic form and which is used by the signatory to sign.

This kind of signature provides basic authentication of the signer's identity, based on their email address and the IP address where they sign.

II. An advanced electronic signature (AdES)

is an e-signature that is:

- uniquely linked to the signatory; and
- capable of identifying the signatory; and
- created using electronic signature creation data that the signatory can, with a high level of confidence, use under his sole control; and
- linked to the data signed in such a way that any subsequent change in the data is detectable.

In Adobe Sign, authentication of the signer's identity is provided through the issuance of a digital certificate by a trusted certificate authority (CA), combined with the usage of multi-factor authentication.

III. A qualified electronic signature (QES)

has the same legal effect as a handwritten signature and is an advanced e-signature that is:

- created by a qualified electronic signature creation device; and
- based on a qualified certificate for electronic signatures.

In Adobe Sign, authentication of the signer's identity is provided through the issuance of a digital certificate by a trusted certificate authority (CA) that is also ISO 15408 accredited in the EU.

More information relating to the [legality of different types of e-signatures](#) in different countries is available from the Adobe website⁷.

1

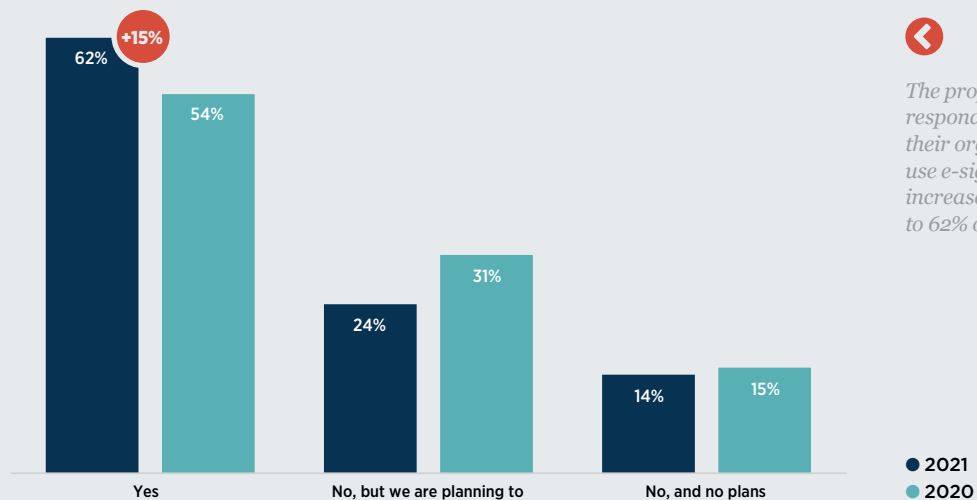
Uptake and usage

The use of e-signature technology has seen strong growth since early 2020, increasing by 15% since last year's survey, from 54% to 62% of companies surveyed (*Figure 2*). In the same period, the percentage of businesses planning to use e-signatures dropped from a third (31%) to a quarter (24%), but the percentage with no plans to adopt the technology stayed almost the same (14% in 2021, compared to 15% in 2020). In other words, growth in the use of e-signatures came from companies putting their pre-existing plans into action.

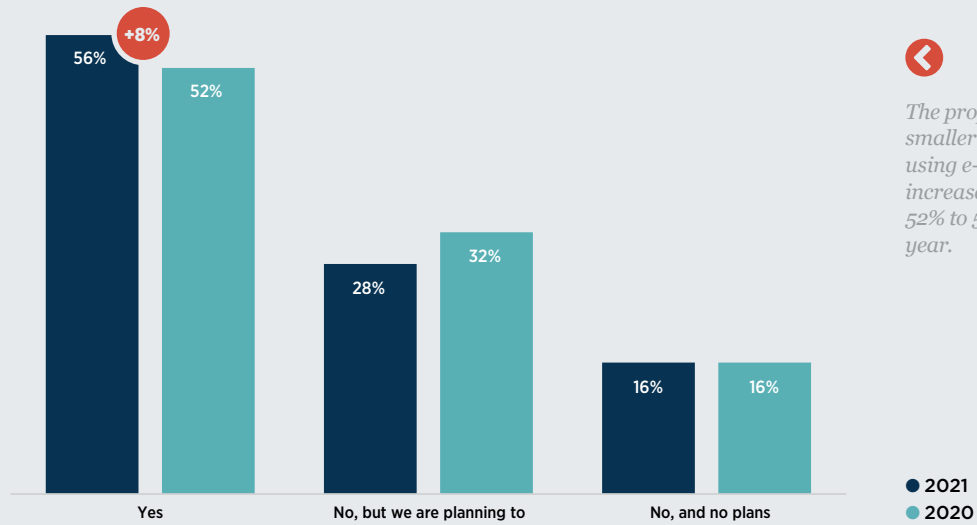
Breaking these figures down by company size reveals an interesting difference. Among smaller companies (those with annual revenues of less than £50m a year), the proportion using e-signatures only rose by 8%, to 56% (*Figure 3*). However, among larger companies (*Figure 4*, those with annual revenues of more than £50m), usage went up by 23%, to 75%.

The most likely explanation is that bigger organisations simply have greater resources to continue modernising and transforming themselves in the face of a pandemic.

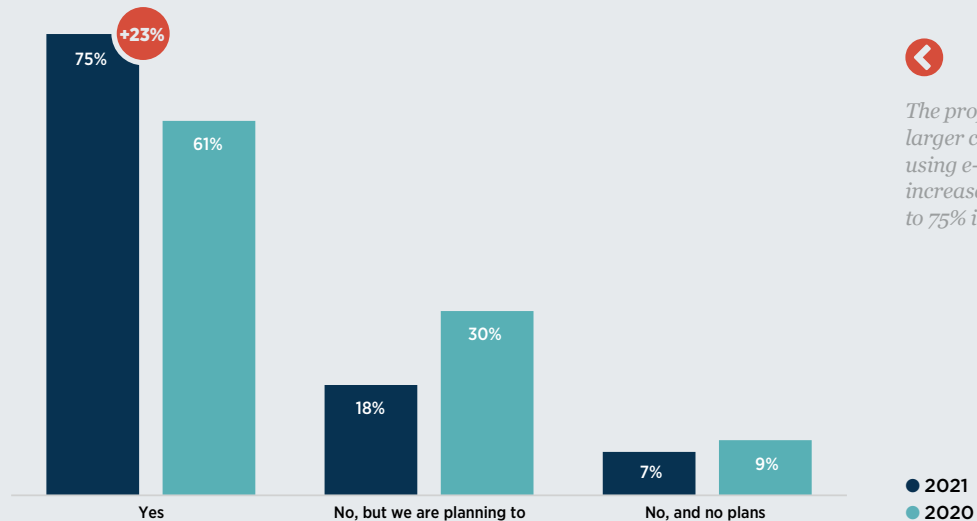
FIGURE 2
Does your organisation use electronic signatures for any aspect of its business?



The proportion of respondents saying their organisations use e-signatures has increased 15% from 54% to 62% over the last year.

SMALL COMPANIESwith annual revenues
of less than £50m**FIGURE 3**
Proportion of
companies using
electronic signatures
for any aspect of
their business.

The proportion of smaller companies using e-signatures has increased by 8% from 52% to 56% in the last year.

LARGE COMPANIESwith annual revenues
of more than £50m**FIGURE 4**
Proportion of
companies using
electronic signatures
for any aspect of
their business.

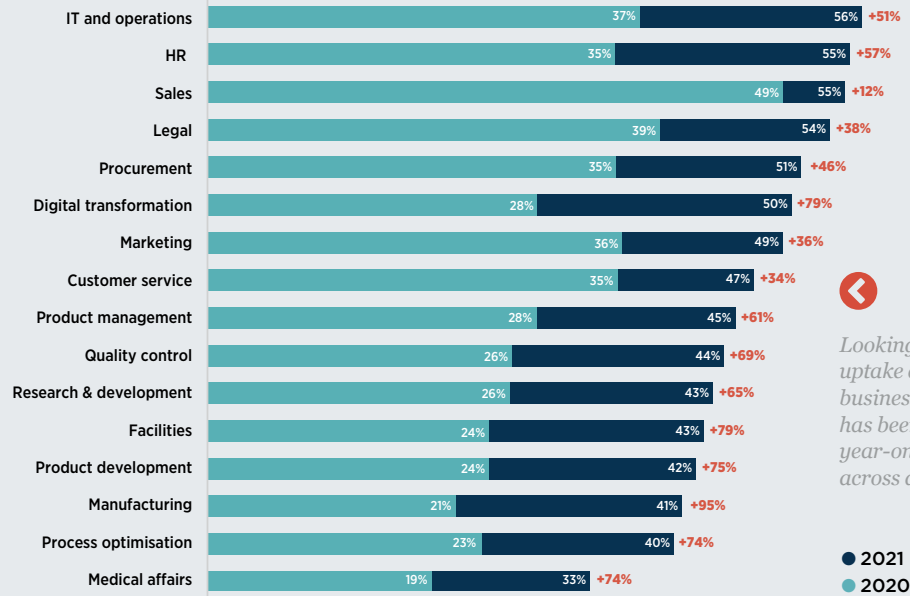
The proportion of larger companies using e-signatures has increased 23% from 61% to 75% in the last year.

Usage levels up across departments

As illustrated in *Figure 5*, last year's research found that sales led all other departments in their use of e-signatures (49%). Legal departments were 10 percentage points further back (39%), followed by IT & operations (37%), marketing (36%), and HR, procurement and customer service (also 35%).

A year later, the 2021 survey found a dramatic levelling up of e-signature usage across all departments. The adoption of e-signatures by IT & ops, HR, and legal departments has shot up to reach similar levels as sales (which itself has risen to 55%). Use by marketing, digital transformation and procurement departments (all around 50%) is not far behind. Even the functions that were among the laggards in their use of e-signatures last year (e.g. manufacturing and product development) have seen dramatic rises – nearly doubling their usage.

FIGURE 5
Proportion of respondents using e-signatures for a range of different business functions (year-on-year change)



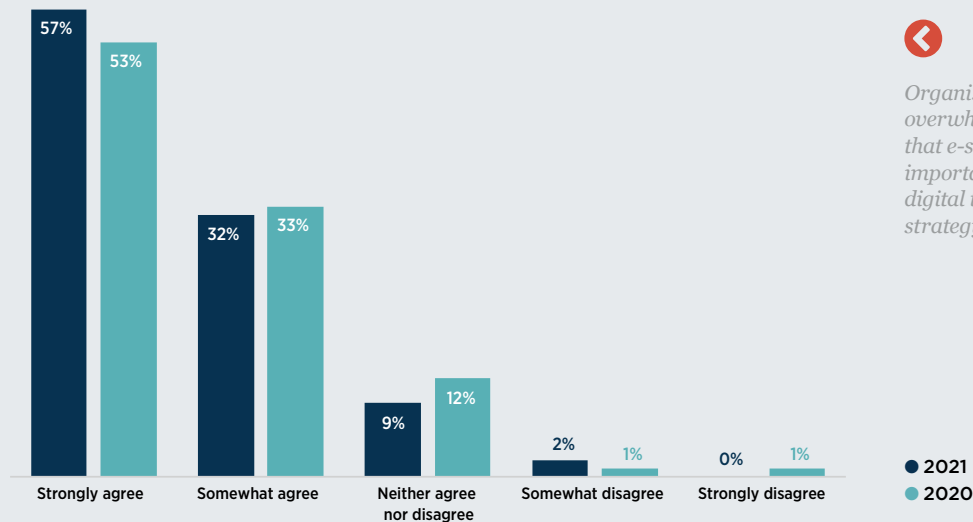
Looking at e-signature uptake across different business functions, there has been a significant year-on-year increase across all departments.

● 2021
● 2020

Anecdotally, by far the most common model for the adoption of electronic signatures has been for one department (often, sales) to start using the technology as a tactical solution, and for the resulting benefits to win advocates in other departments, particularly IT⁸. The small rise in sales department usage, coupled with the much larger rises elsewhere, suggests this process has been at work in the 12 months in-between surveys.

The most interesting rise in this context is the 79% jump in the proportion of digital transformation departments using e-signatures. As Figure 6 shows, companies overwhelmingly agree (89%, either 'strongly' or 'somewhat') that e-signature technology is a key part of a business's digital transformation strategy. The near doubling in the number of digital transformation departments that have adopted e-signature technology in a year suggests that agreement is turning into positive action, resulting in increased e-signature usage across all departments.

FIGURE 6
To what extent do you agree that e-signatures are an important part of your organisation's digital transformation strategy?



Organisations surveyed overwhelmingly agree that e-signatures are an important part of their digital transformation strategy.

● 2021
● 2020

Parallel growth in use cases

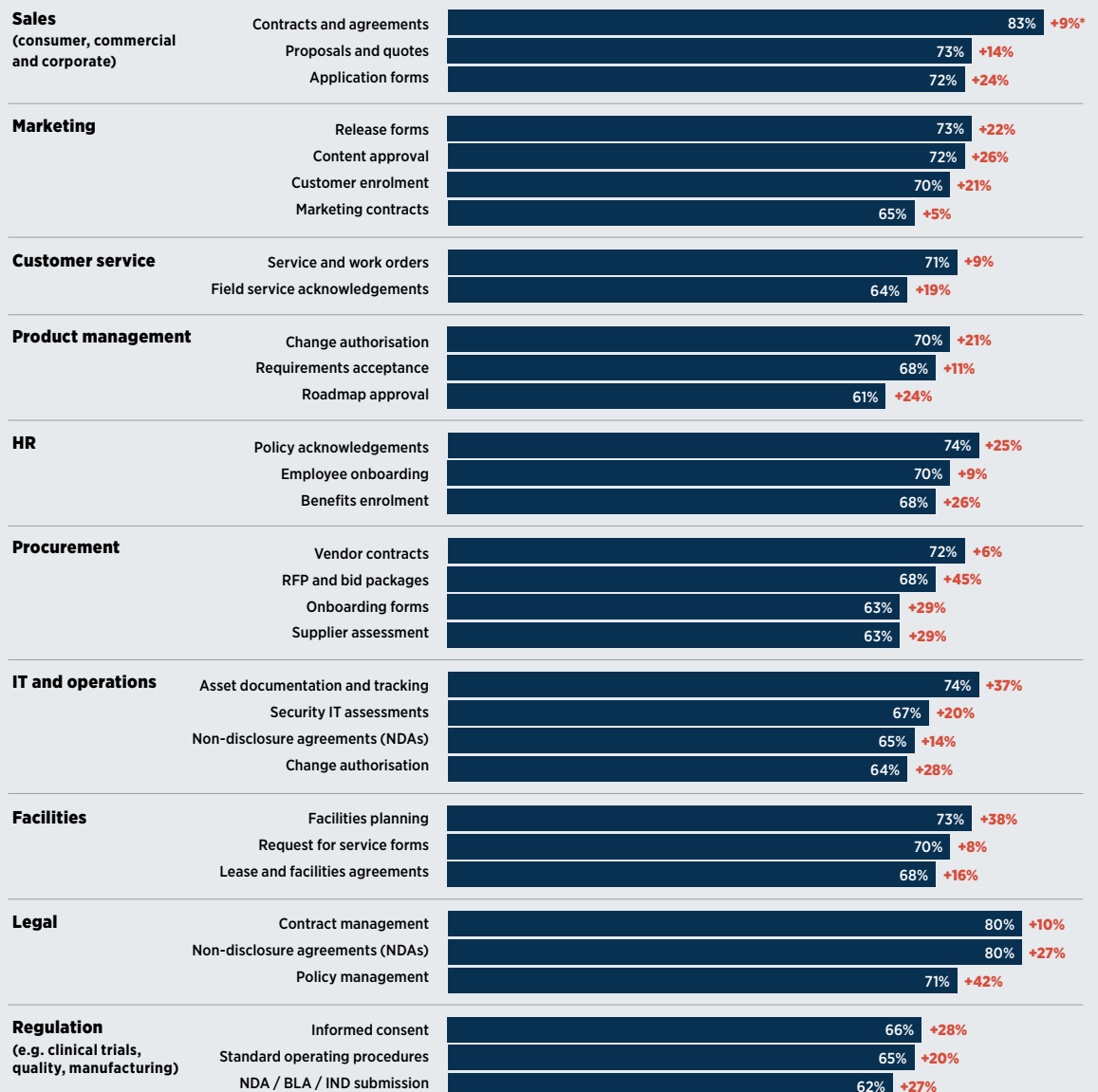
Figure 7 shows the rise in the adoption of e-signatures between 2020 and 2021 for particular use cases within various business functions. Some of the most dramatic increases have naturally been within the business departments where (as we saw in Figure 5) there has been the strongest growth in e-signature uptake.

IT & facilities have both seen steep rises in the use of the technology, up 51% and 79% respectively, Figure 5. For IT and operations the use of an e-signatures platform to expedite asset documentation and tracking has climbed by 37% from 54% in 2020 to 74% in 2021, while for facilities planning, there has been a 38% jump from 53% to 73%.

Although there has been a smaller rise in the number of legal departments using e-signatures (38%), policy management as an e-signature platform use case within this business function has seen an increase of 42%, the second largest in the survey (Figure 7). The largest single jump for a use case has been for procurement RFP and bid packages, up 45% from 47% to 68%.

The overall effect of all this change has been a levelling up of e-signature use. The spread of adoption across the use cases surveyed is now between 83% and 61%, compared to between 76% and 45% in the previous survey.

FIGURE 7
Use of e-signature platform for different use cases (by business function)



*percentage increase since 2020

2

Benefits of e-signatures

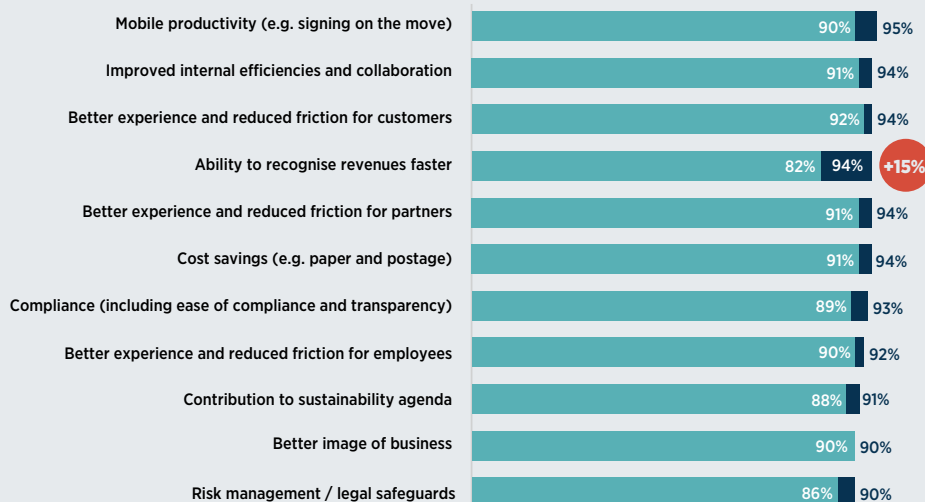
The 2020 survey which, as we've already noted, was conducted before the pandemic locked down the world, found that respondents already had a strong awareness of the benefits of electronic signatures (*Figure 8*).

As with usage levels, the subsequent 12 months have seen an uplift in the appreciation of almost all of these benefits (one benefit, 'better image of business', remained flat at 90%). The proportion of companies rating most of the benefits listed as either 'major' or 'minor' grew by between two and five percentage points.

The notable exception was 'the ability to recognise revenues faster', where recognition grew by 15% to 94%. The most likely explanation for this is simply the length of the sales cycle. While the effect on many other aspects of the business can begin to be measured from day one, measuring whether you are recognising revenues faster will take at least one sales cycle, and even longer to be certain.

Within this near-universal endorsement of the technology, however, some benefits are seen as more important than others (*Figure 9*). Established commercial benefits such as improved productivity and efficiency are significantly more likely to be widely recognised than 'softer' ones like sustainability or improving the image of the business. In between, rated as major benefits by around two-thirds of respondents, are improving the experience for customers, employees or partners, and compliance.

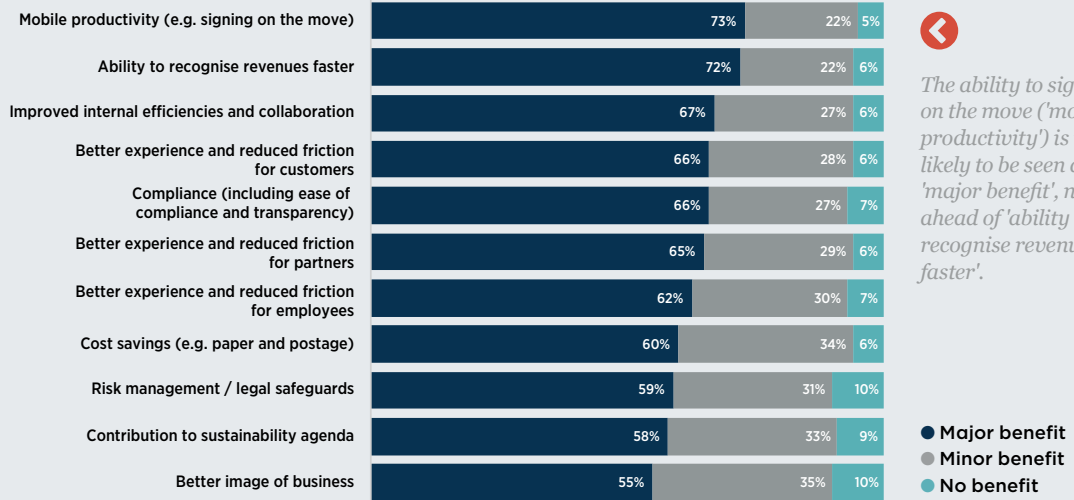
FIGURE 8
Proportion of respondents regarding as benefits of e-signatures (either 'major' or 'minor')



The proportion of companies recognising 'ability to recognise revenues faster' as a benefit of e-signatures has increased by 15%, from 82% to 94%.

● 2021
● 2020

FIGURE 9
To what extent do you regard the following as benefits of e-signatures?



◀ The ability to sign on the move ('mobile productivity') is most likely to be seen as a 'major benefit', narrowly ahead of 'ability to recognise revenues faster'.

● Major benefit
● Minor benefit
● No benefit

Quantifying the benefits

As noted above, recognising the benefits that e-signatures can deliver and being able to quantify them are different things. As Figure 10 shows, the most popular way of quantifying this benefit is through the acceleration of the sales cycle (cited by 60% of respondents), which chimes with the fact that the sales function remains one of the top three users of the technology within organisations.

The next two most popular measures are increased efficiency (57%) and reduced cost (53%). Almost half of respondents (48%) look at improvements to customer and/or partner satisfaction, and slightly fewer than that use some form of risk reduction as a metric.

FIGURE 10
How do you quantify the benefits of e-signatures?



◀ The benefits of e-signatures are most likely to be quantified in terms of faster sales processes, followed by increased workforce efficiency and reduced costs.

3

Overcoming challenges

As with any new technology, companies adopting electronic signatures will have challenges to overcome. For smaller businesses (*Figure 11*), the most significant challenge is simply getting people to use them (cited by 56%, up 17% from 48% last year). This is followed by verifying they meet security or regulatory requirements* (50%), and integrating them with other systems and processes, a challenge for half the smaller businesses surveyed (50%, up 16% from 43%).

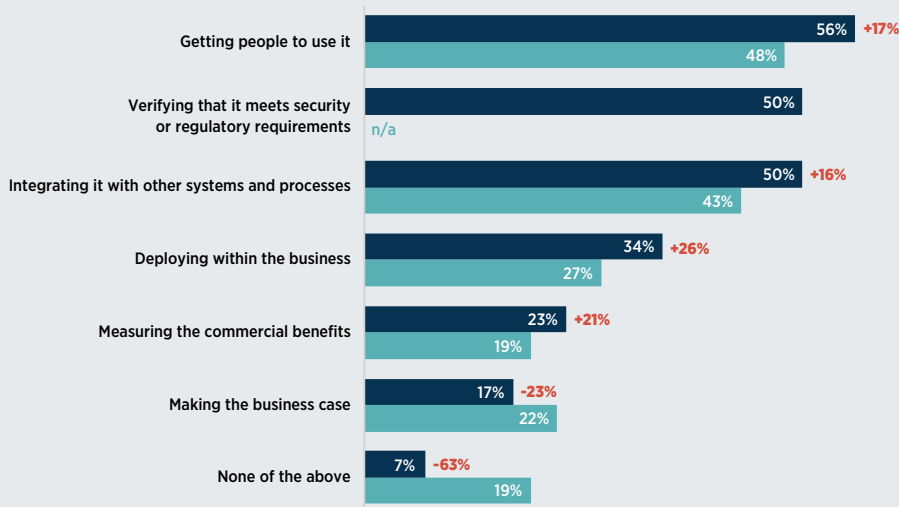
It's worth noting that two aspects of security apply when discussing e-signatures. The first is infrastructure security; the protection of systems and data from cyber attacks. The second – which applies in this case – is the security of the e-signature, ensuring that it is generated in such a way that it is difficult to repudiate.

SMALL COMPANIES

with annual revenues of less than £50m

FIGURE 11
What challenges did or might you encounter when introducing e-signatures into your organisation?

*Methodology note: 'Verifying that it meets security or regulatory requirements' was a new option for this year's survey.



More than half of respondents at smaller organisations (56%) describe adoption ('getting people to use it') as a challenge when e-signature platforms are introduced within an organisation.

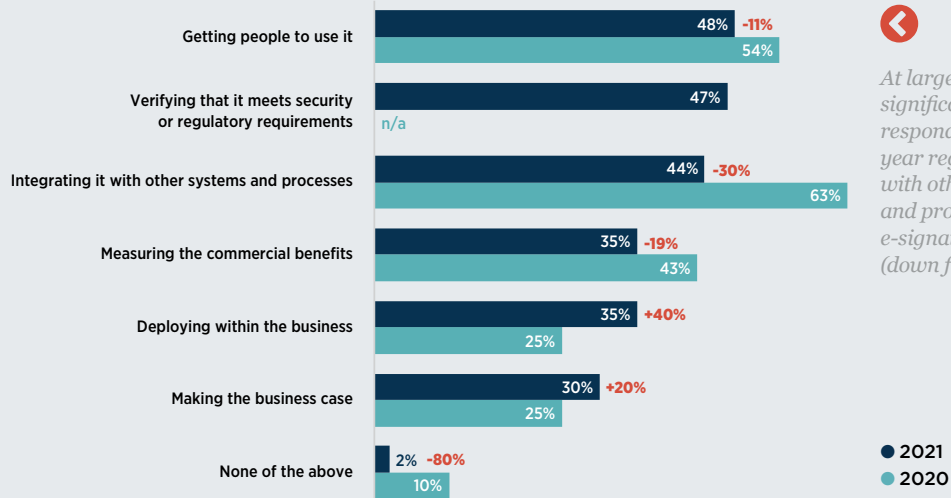
● 2021
● 2020

LARGE COMPANIES

with annual revenues of more than £50m

FIGURE 12
What challenges did or might you encounter when introducing e-signatures into your organisation?

**Methodology note: 'Verifying that it meets security or regulatory requirements' was a new option for this year's survey.*



At larger organisations, significantly fewer respondents than last year regard integration with other systems and processes as an e-signature challenge (down from 63% to 44%).

Next, we look at the challenges encountered by larger companies as they introduce e-signatures in their organisations. *Figure 12* shows that, while larger companies identify the same top three challenges as their smaller counterparts, a lower percentage regard each of them as a problem. For example, 'getting people to use it' is the most common challenge cited by both groups, but it is cited by only 48% of the larger companies and by 56% of smaller companies.

Larger companies also seem to be making more progress in addressing their biggest challenges than do smaller companies. Only 48% of larger companies now see getting people to use e-signatures as a challenge (down 11% from 54% in the 2020 survey), while 44% picked integrating them with other systems and processes as a challenge (down 30% from 63% last year). This is quite the opposite of what happened with smaller companies: there, 56% now cite getting people to use e-signatures (up 17% from 48% in 2020) and 50% now cite integrating them with other systems (up 16% from 43% in 2020).

This adds weight to the idea that the past year has seen the 'expand' phase of land-and-expand adoption at work in many companies. The fact that fewer large companies are experiencing the top three problems suggests that these were addressed in the pioneering implementations, and that roll-out has been made easier as a result.

The difference between large and small companies may be explained by differing levels of available resource. It seems likely that larger companies will have more experience carrying out due diligence on new technologies, and more people to do it. Similarly, they are more likely to have the IT expertise required to make integration less of a problem, particularly at a time when accelerated digital transformation is placing so many other demands on the IT department's time.

The reduced number of large companies reporting integration as a pain point also reflects technology improvements which mean that integration between systems is easier to achieve.

Interestingly, smaller companies are significantly less concerned about the difficulty of measuring the commercial benefits of e-signatures (23% compare to 35% of larger companies). They also regard making the business case for the technology as less of a challenge than their larger peers (17% compared to 30%). Smaller companies' perceived advantage in these latter two areas may be accounted for by their simpler reporting and accounting structures making it easier to access the numbers required.

International expansion and legal validity

Now that we have identified the challenges encountered by large and small companies to introducing e-signatures in their organisations, we turn to discussing the features that they are looking for in an e-signature solution.

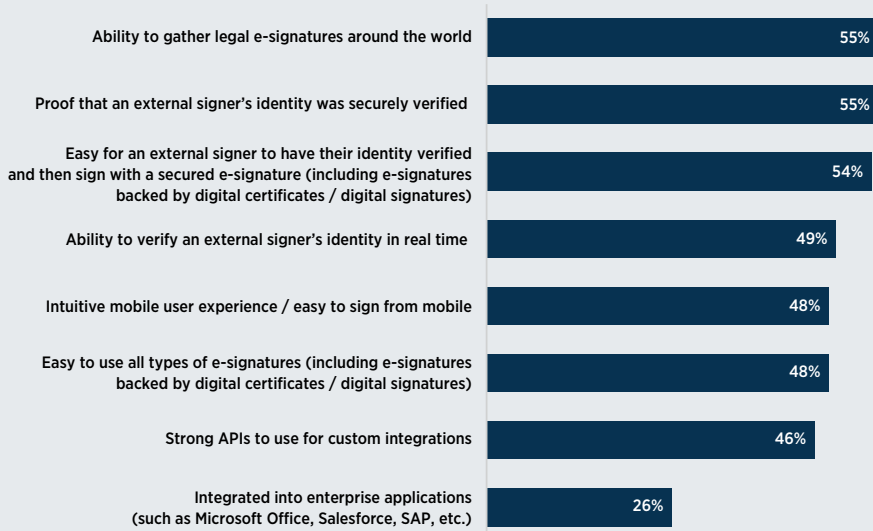
Companies clearly see the benefit of expanding their use of e-signatures internationally, but the fact that half of those surveyed also found verifying that their e-signature solution meets security or regulatory requirements a challenge (Figures 11 and 12) shows the need for reliable advice on e-signature legality in all jurisdictions is top of mind.

Beyond that, the strong demand for proof that the signer’s identity has been verified (chosen by 55% of respondents) as a key feature of an e-signature solution (Figure 13) heralds a significant shift towards secure certificate-backed digital signatures. However, factors like the need to ensure that external signers can easily be identified (54%), that the verification can occur in real time (49%), that the e-signatures themselves are simple to use (48%), and that mobile signing is intuitive and easy-to-use (also 48%), collectively indicate that users first and foremost require frictionless technology that makes their lives as easy as possible when deploying these secure signatures.

Those using e-signature platforms with in-built features that provide solutions in these areas benefit from greater peace of mind and reduced risk, offering those previously reluctant to use e-signatures an even greater incentive to do so.

The advent of cloud-based digital signing, which can liberate signers from smartcards and USB keys tethered to specific devices, is already addressing the need for mobility. And the emergence of a network of new identity providers and technologies should radically simplify the user experience in this area and overcome deployment hurdles.

FIGURE 13
Please select your top five features for an e-signature solution.



The most important features for an e-signature platform relate to their international legality and verification of the signer's identity.

Integration increases, particularly with sales/CRM and HR/ERP systems

In this section we will look at the integration of e-signatures in more detail, first for smaller companies (Figure 14) and then for larger companies (Figure 15).

For smaller companies, across the board, e-signature technology is now integrated at a higher rate with all six business systems listed in the survey in 2021 than in 2020. Conversely, the percentage of respondents who said 'none of the above' dropped to 19% this year from 30% in 2020 – another clear indication of greater integration.

Almost half the smaller companies surveyed (48%) integrate their e-signature platform with sales/CRM systems, followed by just over a third (35%) that have integrations with HR/enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems. Just under a third integrate e-signatures with collaboration/productivity systems (29%), contract lifecycle management/configure, price, quote software (also 29%), and with content management/experience management systems (27%).

This latter integration is the one that has seen the greatest increase among smaller companies since the 2020 survey, up 108%. While the proportion of smaller companies making most of the other integrations has increased by single-figure percentage points, integrations with content management/experience management systems have more than doubled (from 13% to 27%). Another integration showing standout growth among smaller companies is with HR/ERP systems, where the level of integration increased by 67% to 35%.

Turning now to larger companies (Figure 15), we see a similar trend: across the board, e-signature is now integrated at a higher rate with all six business systems listed in the survey in 2021 than in 2020. Conversely, the percent of respondents who said 'none of the above' dropped to 5% this year from 13% in 2020 – another clear indication of greater integration.

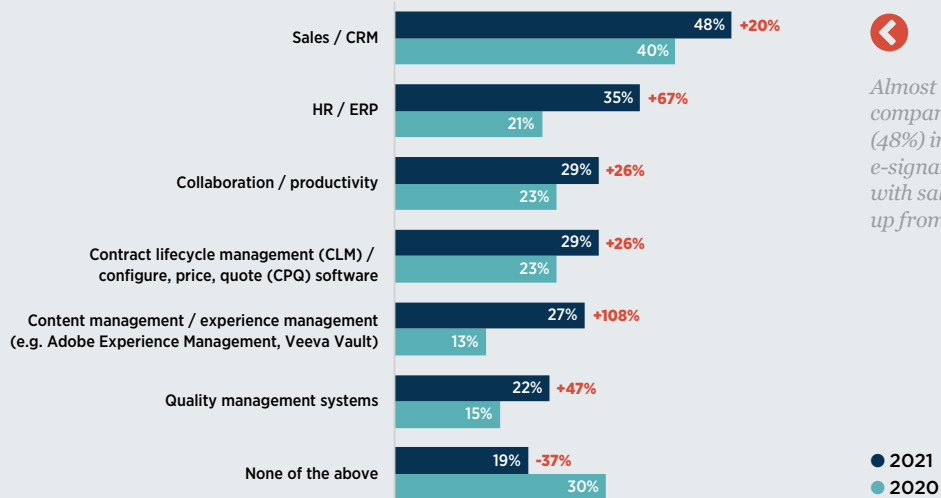
In contrast to the smaller companies, the most popular integration of e-signatures for larger companies is with their HR/ERP systems (50%), followed by sales/CRM (46%). Separate research by Aberdeen commissioned by Adobe found that by integrating e-signatures with key systems like Microsoft Dynamics and SharePoint, businesses are 80% more likely to have high customer satisfaction and 28% more likely to see increased revenue⁹.

According to our research, the biggest increases for e-signature integration with other business systems for larger companies from 2020 to 2021 have been for quality management systems, which have more than doubled (from 18% to 40% of respondents), and with content management/experience management systems (up 86% from 21% to 39%).

SMALL COMPANIES

with annual revenues of less than £50m

FIGURE 14
With which other business systems does your e-signature solution integrate?



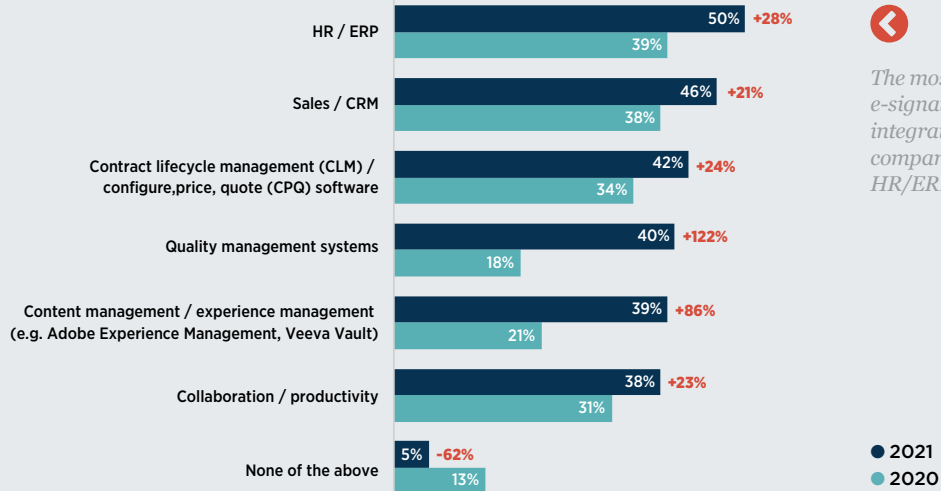
Almost half the smaller companies surveyed (48%) integrate their e-signature platform with sales/CRM systems, up from 40% in 2020.

⁹ <https://esign.adobe.com/esignatures-accelerate-transformation-ebook-EN.html>

LARGE COMPANIES

with annual revenues of more than £50m

FIGURE 15
With which other business systems does your e-signature solution integrate?



The most popular e-signature platform integration for larger companies is with their HR/ERP systems (50%).

Company culture and legal questions remain barriers to adoption

Finally, the survey looked at the reasoning behind companies' decisions not to adopt electronic signatures (Figure 16). Almost a fifth of those companies (18%) said the main barrier for them remains uncertainty around the legal validity of e-signatures. This is followed by a lack of understanding about benefits (13%), and company culture (also 13%). Grouping similar concerns together, management/organisational issues account for two-thirds (69%) of barriers, while technology issues account for about a third.

All this suggests that understanding of e-signature technology continues to grow, even among companies with no current plans to embrace it, and that the main barriers to adoption are more at a management level.

FIGURE 16
What is the main barrier to the adoption of an e-signatures solution? (Companies not currently using e-signatures)



For companies without an e-signature solution, the main barrier to their adoption is uncertainty around their legal validity.

Key takeaways

1

The number of companies using e-signatures continues to grow. There is increased appetite among both larger and smaller organisations for secure and legally valid e-signing solutions, both for external customer needs and internal efficiency requirements.

2

Use of e-signatures within companies has increased markedly across all business functions. Adoption by IT & ops, HR and legal departments is now at the same level as that by sales, long established as the early adopter of the technology. Other departments – procurement, digital transformation, marketing – are not far behind.

3

E-signatures are now all but universally agreed to be an important part of a digital transformation strategy. The doubling in their use by digital transformation departments or teams over the past year suggests this agreement is now being turned into action, as does the rapid increase in integration with other systems.

4

The main challenges in adopting e-signatures remain getting people to use them, verifying they meet security or regulatory requirements, and integrating them with other systems and processes. However, the proportion of large companies, in particular, admitting concern about these challenges has fallen, paving the way to further uptake in the coming months.

Appendix

Respondent profiles

FIGURE 17
In which region are you based?

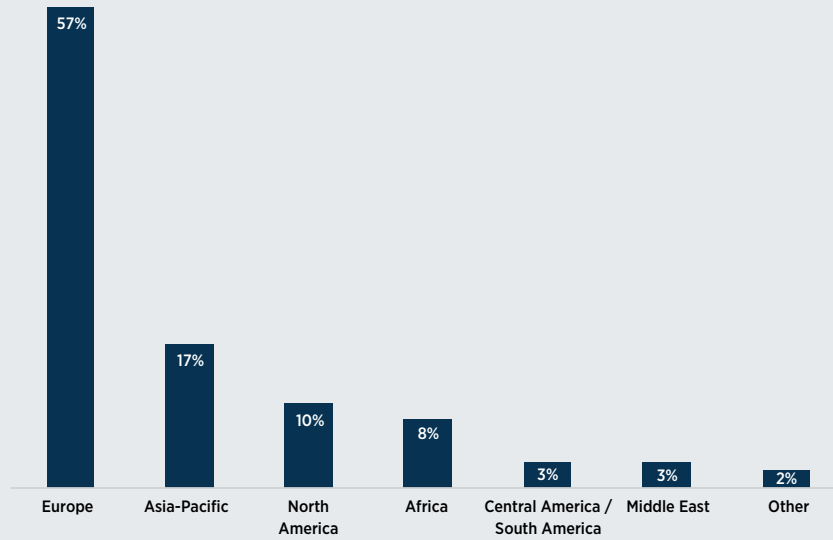


FIGURE 18
What were your company's annual revenues in the last financial year?

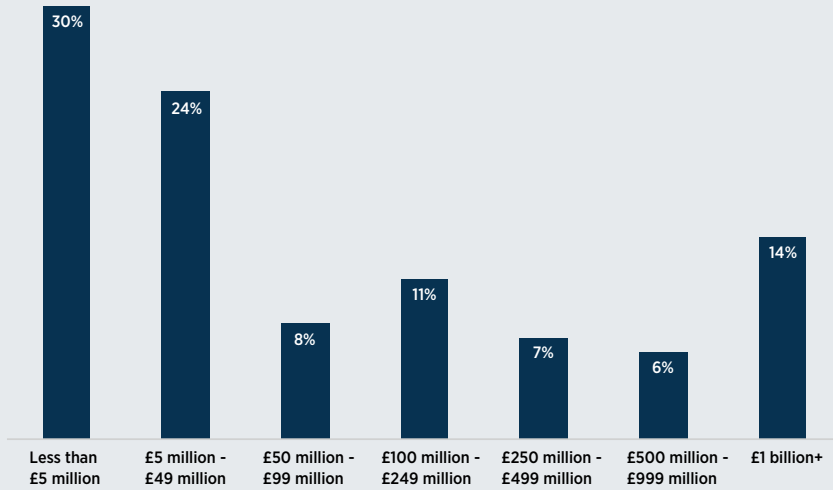


FIGURE 19
Which business sector does your company primarily operate?

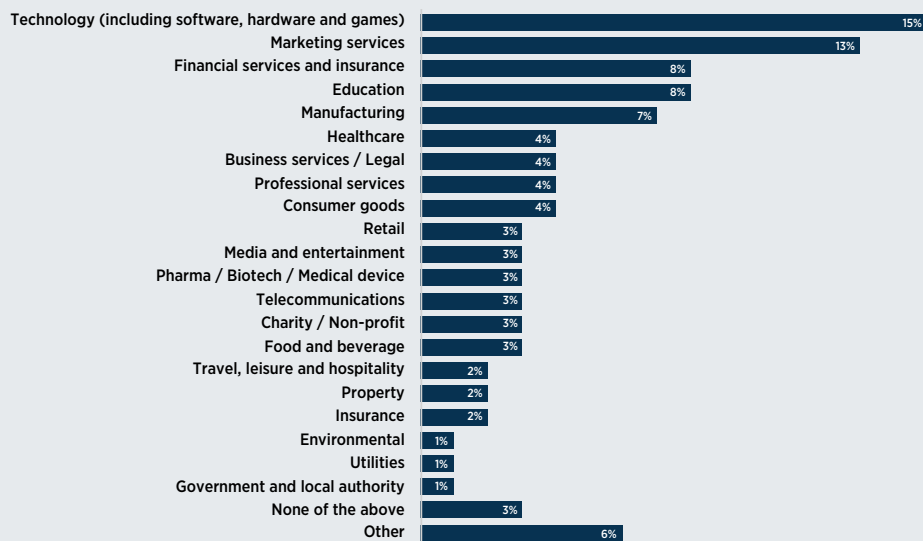
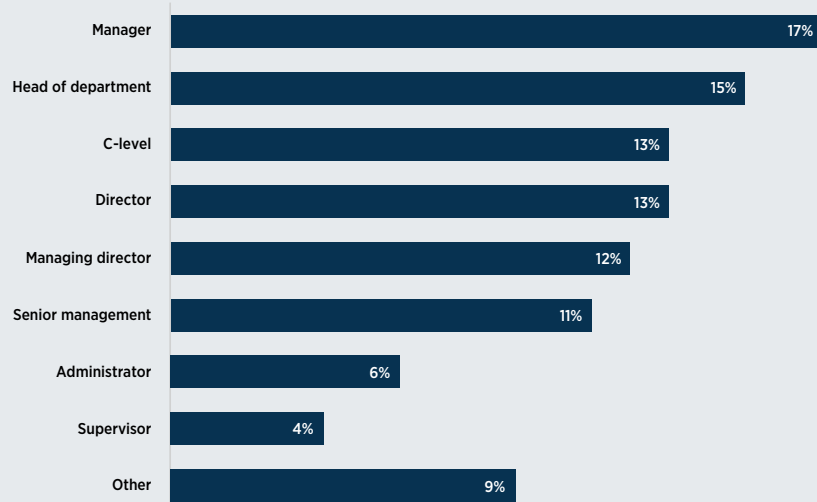
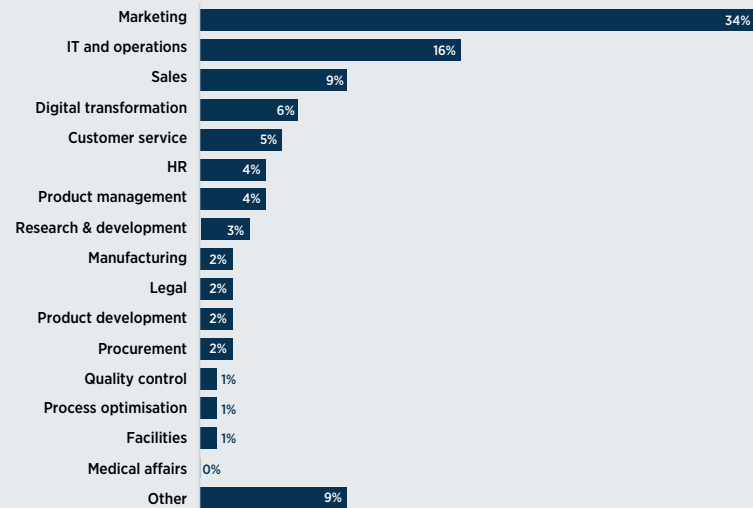


FIGURE 20

What is your level of seniority within the business?

**FIGURE 21**

Which business function do you work in?



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