



The Business Value of Adobe Acrobat Sign and Adobe Experience Manager Forms

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BUSINESS VALUE HIGHLIGHTS



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612%

three-year ROI

8 months

to payback

56% lower form

abandonment rate

58% less time

for customers and third parties to complete forms requiring signature

57% less time

for employees to complete forms requiring signature

19% overall efficiencies

in supporting form-related activities

79% faster

to update existing forms

Executive Summary

The recent global health crisis drove organizations to urgently take steps to fully digitize many document-centric business processes that still had manual and/or paper-based steps. Technologies that were previously nice-to-haves suddenly became mission critical to ensure business continuity. As we continue to forge a path forward, organizations must reexamine the reactive solutions deployed during the preliminary stages of the pandemic and evaluate how cloud-enabled digital document and signature technology can be optimally and proactively applied to transform business processes and lay a foundation for future growth, innovation, and agility.

It is critical to understand that simply digitizing documents and/or deploying automation technology is not necessarily transformational. It is possible for an organization to automate broken processes and not take advantage of the efficiencies and digital experiences offered by technological innovation. eSignature software is an example of a capability that was rapidly adopted to ensure business continuity. However, realizing the full benefit of esignature solutions requires organizations to thoughtfully rearchitect the digital experience, including the adoption and integration of technology up and down the value chain.

Electronic forms are a critically important technology for supporting digital documents and signing workflows. Few aspects of digital transformation have as much impact on overall workforce productivity and customer satisfaction as streamlining, simplifying, and automating the design, management, deployment, and tracking of user-provided data. Forms have long been the de facto standard for gathering information from people, whether employees or customers, and many of those forms require signatures.

IDC interviewed organizations that use the combined Adobe Acrobat Sign and Adobe Experience Manager Forms (Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms) solution to understand the impact of digital forms and signatures on their business operations. Study participants reported significantly enhancing the quality and functionality of forms with Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms. This allowed them to provide a better experience for customers, employees, and other parties while providing support for digital forms more efficiently.

Overall, IDC calculated that study participants achieved benefits worth more than seven times their investment costs over three years (612% three-year return on investment [ROI]) by achieving the following gains compared with their pre-Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms environments:

- ▶ **Delivering a more streamlined and robust form experience for customers and third parties**, thereby improving their form-based interactions, and requiring less staff time for support
- ▶ **Requiring less employee time to fill in and submit forms requiring signatures**, which results in time savings for forms related to ongoing job activities as well as one-time forms
- ▶ **Enabling more responsive and cost-effective provisioning of forms**, including delivering new and updated forms faster and reducing spending on paper and shipping related to form submissions

Situation Overview

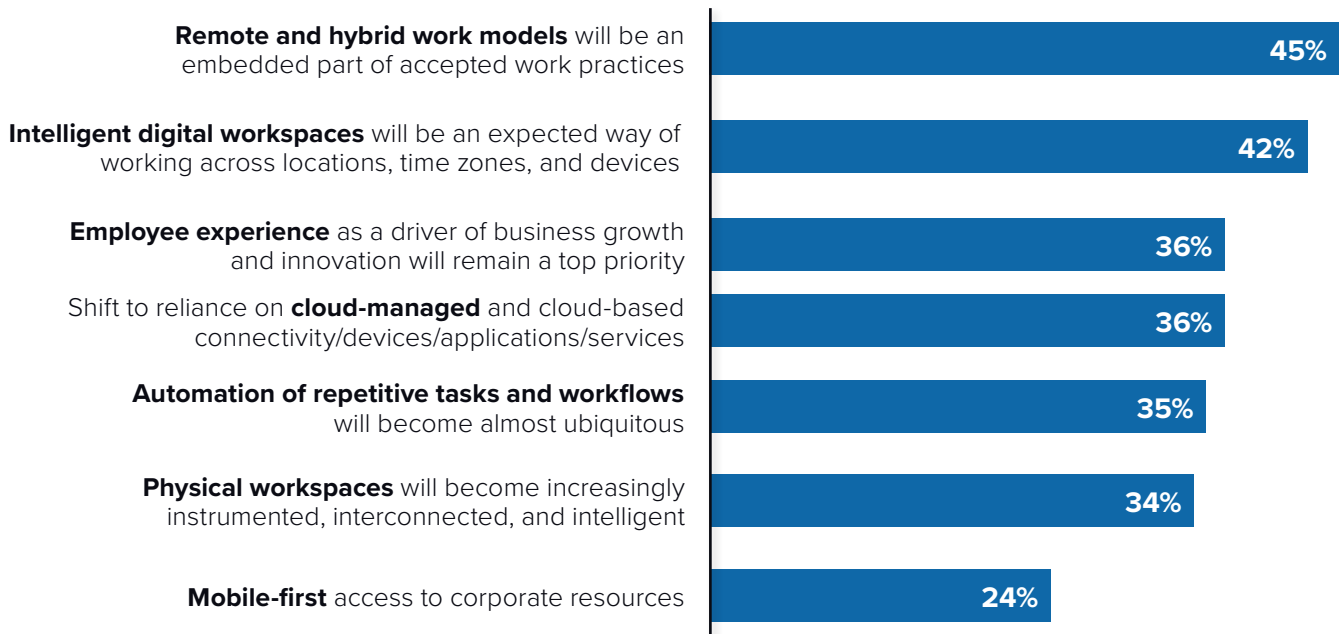
The rapid pace of digital transformation and the realities of global health, climate, and social challenges mean organizations must adopt more dynamic and hybrid ways of working for the future. Hybrid work models require accelerated technology adoption and deployment, new policies, and cross-functional leadership practices to support them. IDC predicts that by 2023, 70% of G2000 organizations will deploy remote or hybrid-first work models, redefine work processes, and engage diverse talent pools.

IDC defines *hybrid work* as a dynamic work model in which workers conduct business at diverse locations: on premises, in the field, at a remote location, or moving between locations (as opposed to a traditional work model where individuals congregate in centralized facilities). In an IDC survey deployed at the end of 2021, 45% of global IT and line-of-business decision makers indicated that remote and hybrid work models will be an embedded part of accepted work practices within their organizations (source: IDC's *Future Enterprise Resiliency and Spending Survey, Wave 11*, December 2021). In that same survey, over one-third of respondents indicated that automation of repetitive tasks and workflows will become almost ubiquitous. And 36% agreed that offering a great employee experience as a driver of business growth and innovation will be a top priority (see **Figure 1**, next page).

FIGURE 1

A New Work Model

(% of respondents)

Q: In your opinion, which work practices and technology advances emerging from the pandemic are most likely to endure within your organization?

n = 858, Source: IDC's Future Enterprise Resiliency and Spending Survey, Wave 11, December 2021

Documents are at the heart of any business. Secure, agile access to all services around the document life cycle is crucial for digital resiliency. Furthermore, document workflows must be automated for operational efficiency. Even before the onset of the health crisis, many organizations were embracing the benefits of digitizing, automating, and transforming document workflows, and we saw this trend accelerate during the past couple of years.

eSignature software is an example of a capability that was rapidly adopted by digitally transforming organizations to ensure business continuity. However, getting the full benefit of esignature solutions requires organizations to thoughtfully rearchitect the digital experience, including adoption and integration of technology beyond sales and finance and into every business unit. One critical technology for signing workflows across multiple functional areas and industries is electronic forms. Few aspects of digital transformation have as much impact on overall workforce productivity and customer satisfaction as streamlining, simplifying, and automating the design, management, deployment, and tracking of user-provided data. Forms have long been the de facto standard for gathering information from people, whether employees or customers, and many of those forms require electronic signatures.

In global research that IDC conducted for Adobe at the end of 2020, 36% of respondents indicated that they used electronic forms when asked about the application categories that their functional area used to create or generate documents that require signing. Similarly, 30% indicated that they had integrated their electronic signature solution with an electronic forms solution (n = 3,544, source: *Global eSignature Opportunity Assessment Survey*, October 2020.)

Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms Combined Solution

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. Acrobat Sign is a robust, global, enterprise-class signing solution that can be integrated with a broad range of applications and support many use cases. Examples include contracts such as employment agreements, vendor agreements, and sales contracts; legal documents such as non-disclosure agreements; and onboarding activities, including onboarding of customers, patient admissions, and student enrollment.

Acrobat Sign offers a full range of authentication capabilities that supports all types of esignatures. Adobe has partnerships with a large ecosystem of trusted service providers across multiple regions. Adobe Acrobat Sign provides the ability to automate digital document workflows with integrated esignature and PDF Services application programming interfaces (APIs), optimized for remote experiences.

AEM Forms is an enterprise form and document management system and is a part of the Adobe Experience Cloud suite of offerings. It provides the core capabilities of form and document design, management, rationalization, reuse, and deployment and, in concert with other Adobe products, offers forms analytics, optimization, and process integration. For example, AEM Forms can generate PDFs and incorporate PDF-compatible digital signatures from Acrobat Sign. With AEM Forms, organizations can author web-and mobile-responsive forms and documents via a create once and publish everywhere experience. AEM Forms is often used to simplify and streamline the complex transactions seen in regulated industries and government services; at the same time, it can be used for simple transaction-based interactions. Typical use cases include customer enrollment and onboarding, employee onboarding, customer service, and customer communications. AEM Forms includes workflow capabilities that support the automated progression of forms-based processes from one individual to another and a field worker mobile app that allows employees to access and complete forms on their mobile devices, as well as capture data in scenarios such as remote enrollment, sales, and service calls without an internet connection. Finally, AEM Forms has robust customer communications management capabilities, including the ability to efficiently output documents to print and web channels by prepopulating communication templates with data.

The combined solution of Adobe Experience Manager Forms and Adobe Acrobat Sign further accelerates the transformation of signing workflows by integrating data collection with signature actions in concert with user permissions to eliminate the need for separate departmentalized solutions, increase automation in launching new forms with required signatures, and improve the employee and customer experience. The combined workflows result in reduced transaction times, faster response times, reduced errors, and overall operational efficiency. With Acrobat Sign incorporated into the AEM Forms workflow, users can view process bottlenecks or audit the time it takes to finalize the signature process.

The Business Value of Adobe Acrobat Sign and Adobe Experience Manager Forms

Study Demographics

IDC conducted research that explored the value and benefits for organizations using Adobe Acrobat Sign and Adobe Experience Manager Forms to enable customers, partners, and employees to complete document transactions requiring signatures. The project included three interviews with organizations that were using AEM Forms and Acrobat Sign. Interviewed managers all had experience with and knowledge of the impact of use and were asked a variety of quantitative and qualitative questions to understand how it has affected their ability to provide, complete, and leverage documents requiring signatures in support of their core business and operational activities.

Table 1 presents the study demographics. The organizations that IDC interviewed had an average of 43,167 employees and annual revenue/operating budgets of \$11.53 billion (medians of 20,000 employees and \$475 million, respectively). The study sample included differing uses of the combined Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms solution, including governmental, higher education, and manufacturing organizations. This mix of industry verticals reflected a variety of use cases for document transactions requiring signatures along with a diverse user base that included employees, students, third-party partners, and direct customer support and interaction.

TABLE 1
Demographics of Interviewed Organizations

	Average	Median
Number of employees	43,167	20,000
Number of customers/students	1.1M	300,000
Revenue per year	\$11.5B	\$475M
Countries	United States (3)	
Industries	Government, higher education, and manufacturing	

n = 3, Source: IDC Business Value Research, February 2022

Choice and Use of Adobe Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms

The organizations that IDC interviewed described their use of Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms and explained their reasons for choosing the platform. In general, they expressed the need for a higher-quality and more robust platform for business transactions and forms requiring signatures to better serve their customers and employees. Interviewed companies desired to ensure that the friction created by legacy manual processes or previous solutions did not impede workflows or have other negative impacts on customer satisfaction, employee productivity, or overall operations.

Study participants cited specific reasons that they chose the combined Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms solution such as the platform's ability to meet their strategic goals for digital transformation, which included broad digitization of forms. They also appreciated having access to PDF-compatible digital signatures to accelerate processes. Another core benefit cited was the ability to consolidate various means of processing forms that were siloed across different business units, which resulted in a cumbersome hodgepodge of standards.

Study participants elaborated on these benefits:

▶ **Signature and form solution to support digital transformation:**

"We decided to adopt Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms to meet our strategic goals for digital transformation. We wanted all forms to be electronic with the ability to provide workflows and digital signatures. Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms met those requirements."

▶ **Speeds up processes; improved ability to react to customers:**

"We chose Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms because it significantly speeds up processes instead of relying on mail and paper Digital signatures became the focus and we embraced Adobe because of their PDF compatibility and other functionalities for things like reducing time waiver processing."

▶ **Consolidation and standardization:**

"One business unit used Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms and then we adopted it for the rest of the business The number 1 reason was standardization—everyone was using their own tools."

Table 2 provides a snapshot of Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms used across interviewed organizations. Companies leverage the Adobe platform to support significant operations, with an average of 96,700 supported customers, 3,800 employees who are active users, and 25,800 total users of forms or documents requiring signatures.

TABLE 2
Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms Use by Interviewed Organizations

	Average	Median
Number of unique forms/documents	650	400
Number of customers supported	96,700	40,000
Number of countries supported	24	1
Number of languages supported	10	1
Number of employees actively using Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms to complete/submit forms	3,800	4,500
Number of total users of forms/documents requiring signature per year	25,800	30,000

n = 3, Source: IDC Business Value Research, February 2022

Business Value and Quantified Benefits of Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms

Interviewed organizations attributed significant staff efficiencies and improved form-related functionalities to their use of the combined Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms solution. They described improving their ability to provide more accessible, robust, and functional forms requiring signatures to customers, third parties, and employees. This resulted in better user experience and business efficiencies through staff time savings in managing and supporting forms.

Interviewed Adobe customers spoke about the most significant impacts of their use:

▶ **Automated data input and fewer errors:**

“The impact of using Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms is digital transformation, taking the legacy forms and improving the quality of the forms. This is important because we autoload a lot of information Because we don’t type in the wrong information, the quality of the data and the quality of the forms are in hand.”

▶ **Better response rates and improved form usability:**

“We get a better response rate for our forms with Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms because it’s easier and more intuitive. Also, because of the analytics we get, we know how we can optimize a form so it will be good to use.”

▶ **Improved form workflows and better user experience:**

“We have converted hundreds of forms with Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms. The impact is huge for us. Our first focus was on student forms and ensuring that students did not experience barriers when accessing needed services on campus We were able to revise the entire withdrawal process with Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms, moving it completely online.”

▶ **Visibility into the status of signatures and form review:**

“Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms keep us updated about the status of a document, telling us who has signed it and who has yet to sign and offering the chance to send reminders to keep things moving.”

IDC’s analysis shows that these benefits of use with Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms created significant value for interviewed organizations. Study participants cited specific and substantial staff time savings, both in completing and in supporting the submission of forms requiring a signature, in addition to form-related platform cost savings and efficiencies.

Overall, based on interviews with these Adobe customers, IDC calculates that they will achieve average annual benefits worth \$2.71 million per organization (\$62,800 per 1,000 employees). For additional details about these benefit calculations, refer to **Table 5** in Appendix B.

Customer and Third-Party Experience with Forms Requiring Signature

As more processes related to customer and employee interaction shift to digital, increasing complexity may be introduced that impairs user-friendly online experiences, especially when those processes involve multiple devices or channels. In addition, end-user expectations are higher than ever. The challenge for organizations is to keep their customers and employees from being overwhelmed by this complexity and to keep customers from abandoning revenue-impacting transactions when processes become too cumbersome, complex, or disjointed.

Study participants reported that the combined Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms solution has helped them address this challenge related to the quality and functionality of digital interactions, improving user experience, optimizing successful completion rates, and increasing associated downstream impacts on an organization’s overall business success.

Study participants called out both general improvements related to use of the combined Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms solution and benefits specific to their industry, such as improved form-related experiences for students requesting needed services.

Participants also noted that users experience fewer errors as the result of a streamlined form submission process:

▶ **Improved form-related experience for students:**

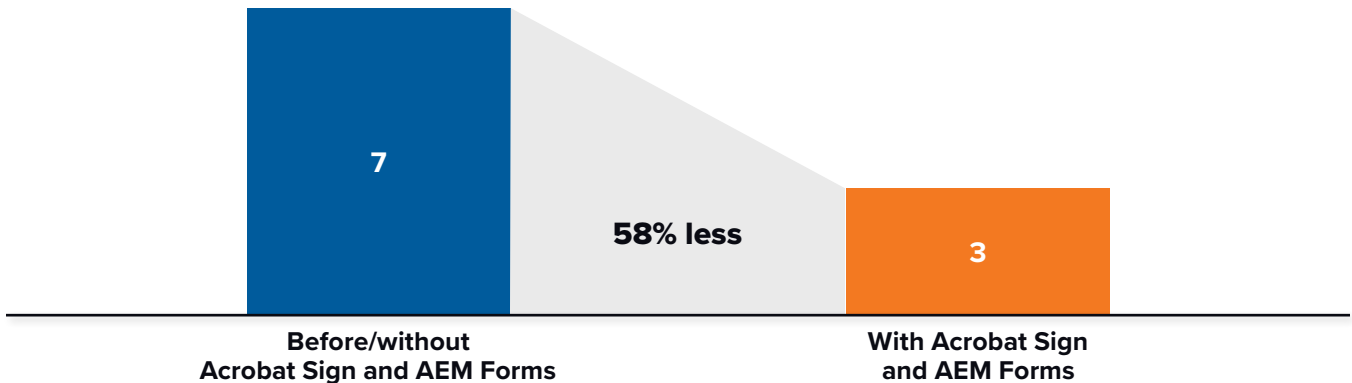
“The use of Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms has made it easier for students to request needed services and has allowed us to remove barriers in withdrawing from a course, requesting changes, late add petitions, and so forth.”

► **Fewer errors and a streamlined form submission process:**

“The frequency of errors is down roughly 50% with Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms Inspector complaints about data capture in forms are now substantially less, and forms are created and corrected much faster now based on inspector input This frees up a lot of people to do more work.”

Study participants confirmed that with Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms in place, users can more readily complete forms requiring signatures because the platform helps users easily identify the correct form and then complete it. IDC evaluated the overall speed of completion as shown in **Figure 2**, with study participants reporting that these form completion and signature activities require 58% less time on average.

FIGURE 2
Time Required per Customer/Third-Party Submitted Form
 (Minutes)



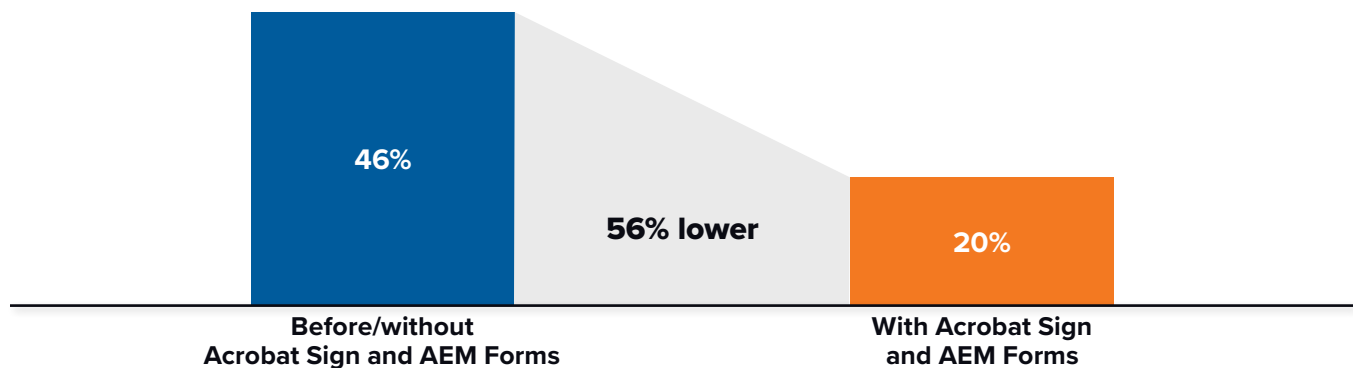
n=3, Source: IDC Business Value Research, February 2022

A significant issue facing organizations in digital document transactions involves end users who abandon form completion. Form abandonment creates levels of frustration for both the business and the party attempting to use the form. Interviewed organizations reported that Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms streamlined efficient and less error-prone transaction functionalities that result in higher rates of form completion.

Lower abandonment rates have positive operational impacts including an improved ability to onboard customers and employees and a lower likelihood of losing existing or prospective customers. As one study participant noted: *“Form abandonment happens because people just don’t understand how to fill it out. It’s better now with Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms. I’d say that abandonment is about 0.5% now, whereas before it used to be about 10%.”* As shown in **Figure 3**, after adopting Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms, interviewed organizations significantly decreased their form abandonment rates (56%). This improvement in form completion rate carries important business and operational gains for study participants, including losing less potential business, minimizing user frustration with form completion, and ensuring a more optimized interaction, whether for first-time customers or repeat customers, third parties, or employees.

FIGURE 3
Form Abandonment Rate

(% of respondents)



n = 3, Source: Business Value Research, February 2022

Employee Experience with Forms Requiring Signature

Interviewed organizations reported that by adopting the combined Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms solution, they provide their employees with a more robust and accessible platform for submitting forms that require signatures. This allows users to complete forms with greater ease, experience less friction in gathering and completing required data, and engage in the transaction more conveniently.

These capabilities resulted in time savings, better digital experiences, and smoother, more frictionless processes. Study participants noted they can create and connect forms much faster and appreciated that form data can be automatically routed and made readily available to employees and other stakeholders. They also cited enhanced mobile access and automatic instantiation of form transaction data for auditing purposes as beneficial.

Study participants elaborated on these benefits:

▶ **Improved access to forms:**

“Forms are created and corrected much faster now with inspector input with Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms. Inspection data is automatically charted and available to customers and other stakeholders All the forms and related tools are used completely throughout our organization and departments, and not just what we are doing with inspections and rails.”

▶ **Streamlined access for completion of forms:**

“Employees no longer go into HR and fill out forms manually for health, training, and so on Everything is electronic, and it goes in your record automatically. That’s the beauty of it, it’s all tied in and trackable. We are always being audited internally, and they are always looking at how efficient we are.”

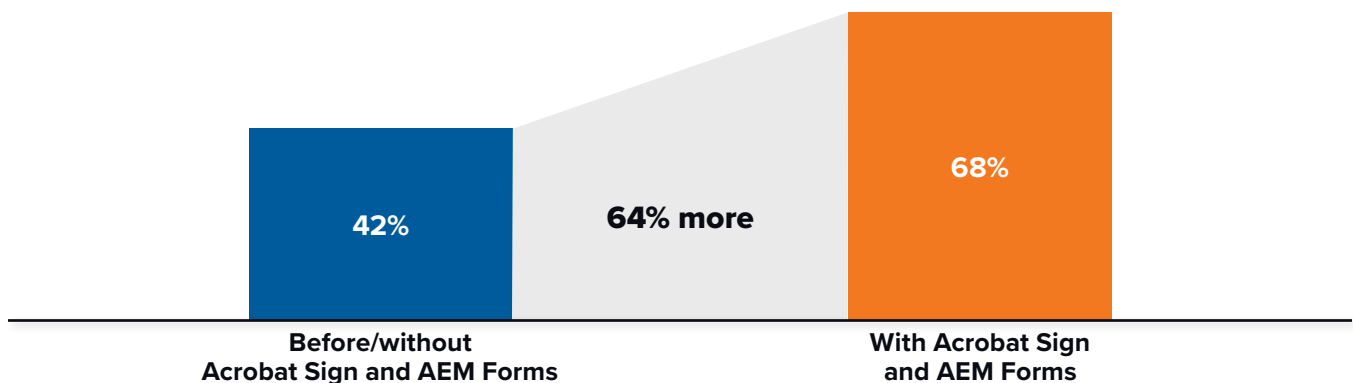
▶ **Improved mobile access and experience:**

“Before Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms, we had mobile access, but the experience was pretty messed up. That is a lot better now, and employees are saving around 10 minutes per month on average.”

Study participants linked improved access to forms with Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms to a significant increase in self-service use to access forms. Self-service not only drives efficiencies in form completion but also reduces the need for support while offering complete flexibility in terms of when and where employees complete forms. As one study participant noted: *“Our students and staff access Adobe Sign to sign documents and launch forms from department websites. The filling of forms is simplified due to the pre-population of data, and this also reduces errors on key data fields needed in our workflow processes.”*

Figure 4 shows measurable benefits relating to self-service access to forms requiring a signature, with 64% more employees and other end users taking advantage of self-service access with Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms.

FIGURE 4
User Self-Service Access to Forms
(% of respondents)

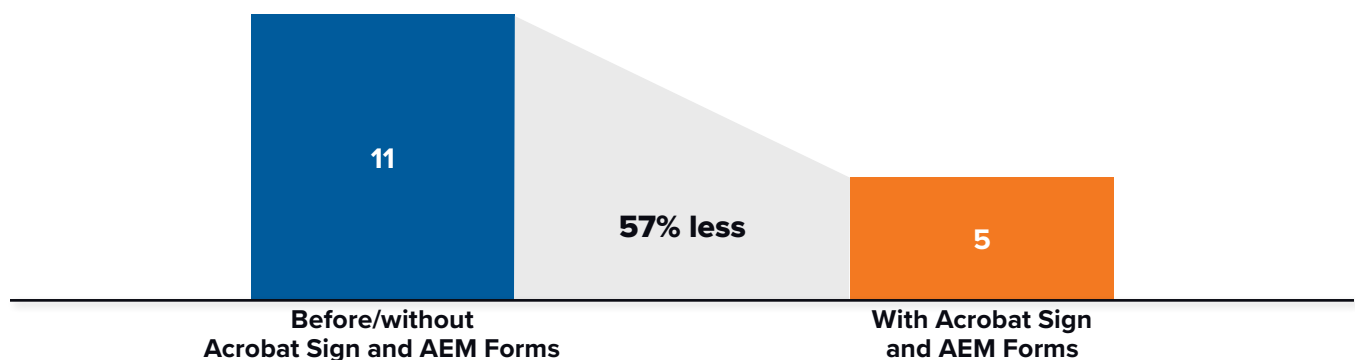


n = 3, Source: IDC Business Value Research, February 2022

For employees, form submissions can consume significant amounts of time better spent on other more productive activities. While the amount of time spent on each form may seem small, time spent gathering information, seeking instruction, and navigating form completion across numerous forms each week, month, or year accumulates rapidly. Thus study participants perceive reducing the overall time that employees spend completing and submitting forms requiring signatures with Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms as a vital component of the combined solution’s value proposition. Commenting on faster form completion for new hires, one study participant noted: “We hire somewhere around 1,000 employees a year. Our staff fills out related forms all the time ... I would say that, instead of an hour or two, new employees are spending 5–10 minutes. In terms of the staff time needed to process those forms, it’s the same thing. It was 4–5 hours and now it’s minutes.”

IDC calculated that each employee who actively leverages the combined Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms platform to complete forms requiring signatures saves approximately 6 hours annually. This 57% reduction in employee time spent accessing, filling in, and completing forms adds up across thousands of employees completing these activities, creating substantial value on a per-organization basis of time savings worth the equivalent of more than 12 full-time equivalents per organization per year (see **Figure 5**) (for more details, refer to **Table 5** in Appendix B).

FIGURE 5
Employee Time Spent on Submitting Forms per Year
 (Hours per year per employee)



n=3. Source: IDC Business Value Research, February 2022 (based on average of 3,800 employees actively using Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms platform)

Staff Efficiencies in Supporting Form-Related Activities

Interviewed organizations cited efficiencies in managing and supporting signature-dependent forms as a significant component of the value that Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms provides to them. Study participants highlighted the benefits of higher quality, prefilled data entries, greater accuracy, and fewer errors. As a result, teams that rely on these types of forms, including sales, HR, and customer/student support, spend much less time directly managing and supporting the input of data and more time acting upon it. **Table 3** (next page) quantifies these benefits showing a 19% reduction in staff time required overall, which generates significant value across an average of 128 FTEs at these organizations for whom managing, supporting, and using forms requiring signature is an integral part of their jobs.

TABLE 3
Staff Time Required to Support Forms

	Before/without Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms	With Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms	Difference	% Benefit
Staff time required to support equivalent form activities (FTEs per organization)	157	128	29	19%
Total value of staff time per year per organization	\$11.0M	\$9.0M	\$2.0M	19%

n = 3, Source: IDC Business Value Research, February 2022

Efficiencies and Cost Savings in Form Creation and Use

Study participants reported being able to create, update, and use forms requiring signature in a more cost-effective, efficient, and timely manner. They described an improved ability to deliver and adjust forms as required to meet changing business requirements.

They noted the advantages of direct department involvement without overreliance on IT and appreciated that it was much faster to create and update forms, as noted in these comments:

▶ **Direct department involvement and improved workflows:**

“Forms are much easier to launch now, especially with Adobe Sign. Most Adobe Sign forms are managed by the departments providing them with the ability to create and manage simple forms AEM Forms still needs IT support, but we have worked with departments on campus and identified all paper forms/processes and most have been converted to online workflows.”

▶ **Much faster to create and update forms:**

“Creating a new form now takes maybe 5–7 minutes with Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms. Before, it took a lot more time — at least 20–30 minutes because of the coding required. It is similar for changes and updates. It now takes a couple of minutes compared with 10 minutes previously.”

IDC quantified this improved ability to deliver and adjust new forms with the combined Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms solution. **Figure 6** (next page) shows that study participants require 79% less time to update forms and 53% less time to create new forms after the adoption of Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms.

FIGURE 6 Impact on Form Creation and Updates

(% improvements)



n = 3, Source: IDC Business Value Research, February 2022

Study participants also cited other cost and staff efficiency advantages of Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms including:

- ▶ Lower overall platform costs with higher functionality
- ▶ Cost savings related to paper supplies and postal shipping
- ▶ Reduced staff time for direct support of form solutions and platforms

One study participant commented on significantly lower costs arrived at for the level of quality achieved: *“It would be more expensive if we tried to do what we are doing with Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms ourselves. To look at all the various aspects, short term, the costs would be higher. Long term, what happens is support costs go really high. So to build new forms would be three times the cost over five years.”* For details of these cost savings and staff efficiencies, refer to **Table 5** in Appendix B.

ROI Summary

Table 4 presents IDC’s return on investment and analysis for study participants’ use of Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms. As shown, IDC projects that they will achieve three-year discounted benefits worth an average of \$6.4 million per organization (\$167,400 per 100 employees actively using Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms) through improved forms-related business transactions, better creation and completion of signature-dependent forms, increased staff productivity, and related cost savings. These benefits compare with total three-year discounted costs of \$0.9 million per organization (\$23,500 per 100 users). IDC projects that these levels of benefits and investment costs will result in an average three-year ROI of 612% and a break-even point in investment occurring in 8 months.

TABLE 4
Three-Year ROI Analysis

	Average per Organization	Average per 100 Employees Using Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms
Benefit (discounted)	\$6.4M	\$167,400
Investment (discounted)	\$0.9M	\$23,500
Net present value (NPV)	\$5.5M	\$143,900
Return on investment (ROI)	612%	612%
Payback period	8 months	8 months
Discount rate	12%	12%

n = 3, Source: IDC Business Value Research, February 2022

Challenges/Opportunities

As organizations mature from manual and print-based processes to digital ones, the value of electronic signature and digital forms for document workflows expands from an individual use case to an enterprisewide opportunity for modernization. In turn, the demand for an easy-to-use solution with the flexibility to adapt to the unique requirements of multiple scenarios will pose challenges for vendor offerings to integrate into siloed and disparate systems and, at the same time, overcome disruption in the employee's hardened way of doing things.

Vendors, including Adobe, must be able to meet those challenges and keep ahead of the shifting requirements of data-driven processes outlined by the business user and the technical advancements defined by IT to minimize overhead in the maintenance of the system. Adobe should leverage its business experience and continuous commitment to innovation in the cloud to manage both Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms in a single supported environment to avoid custom integration challenges or mismatches in feature support or technology stack alignment.

Conclusion

Broader technology trends and recent events have combined to make it imperative for more organizations to ensure business resilience and continuity by fully digitizing document-centric processes that previously were manual and/or paper based in nature. However, organizations must carefully consider their approaches to digitization of these types of business processes, which include document creation, submission, and signature, to ensure integration and a robust digital experience to customers, partners, and employees. For most organizations, the ability to streamline, simplify, and automate the design, management, deployment, and tracking of data submitted through forms has a substantial impact on the success of digital transformation initiatives and business results.

IDC interviewed organizations using the combined Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms from Adobe to address these form-related challenges, with Acrobat Sign providing authentication and end-to-end signing capabilities for all types of esignatures and AEM Forms providing a robust enterprise form and document management system. Study participants linked their use of the combined Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms solution to strong staff efficiencies and improved performance and functionality of forms. They gain from providing customers, third parties, and employees with more accessible and functional forms requiring a signature. As a result, they deliver an enhanced user experience and capture business efficiencies and significant financial value through staff time savings in managing and supporting forms requiring a signature. IDC projects that interviewed Adobe customers will realize value worth more than seven times their investment costs, resulting in a projected average three-year ROI of 612%.

Appendix A: Methodology

IDC's standard Business Value/ROI methodology was utilized for this project. This methodology is based on gathering data from organizations currently using Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms as the foundation for the model.

Based on interviews with organizations using Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms, IDC performed a three-step process to calculate the ROI and payback period:

- 1. Gathered quantitative benefit information during the interviews using a before-and-after assessment of the impact of using Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms.** In this study, the benefits included employee productivity gains, staff time savings, and reduced costs.
- 2. Created a complete investment (three-year total cost analysis) profile based on the interviews.** Investments go beyond the initial and annual costs of using Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms and can include additional costs related to migrations, planning, consulting, and staff or user training.

3. Calculated the ROI and payback period. IDC conducted a depreciated cash flow analysis of the benefits and investments for the organizations' use of Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms over a three-year period. ROI is the ratio of the net present value (NPV) and the discounted investment. The payback period is the point at which cumulative benefits equal the initial investment.

IDC bases the payback period and ROI calculations on several assumptions, which are summarized as follows:

- ▶ Time values are multiplied by burdened salary (salary + 28% for benefits and overhead) to quantify efficiency and manager productivity savings. For purposes of this analysis, based on the geographic locations of the interviewed organizations, IDC has used assumptions of an average fully loaded salary of \$100,000 per year for IT staff members and an average fully loaded salary of \$70,000 per year for non-IT staff members. IDC assumes that employees work 1,880 hours per year (47 weeks x 40 hours).
- ▶ The net present value of the three-year savings is calculated by subtracting the amount that would have been realized by investing the original sum in an instrument yielding a 12% return to allow for the missed opportunity cost. This accounts for both the assumed cost of money and the assumed rate of return.
- ▶ Because IT solutions require a deployment period, the full benefits of Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms are not available during deployment. To capture this reality, IDC prorates the benefit monthly and then subtracts the deployment time from the first-year savings.

Appendix B: Specific Business Value Findings

Table 5 provides details about the quantifiable benefits achieved by interviewed organizations through their use of the combined Acrobat Sign and AEM Forms solution.

TABLE 5
Average Annual Benefits per Organization

	Average Quantitative Benefit	Calculated Average Annual Value*
Staff time savings, supporting customers and third parties, form related	19% efficiency, saving 29 FTEs worth of time — \$70,000 salary	\$1.7M
Employee time savings, completion of forms	57% efficiency, saving 12 FTEs worth of time — \$70,000 salary	\$708,500
Employee time savings, form efficiencies in onboarding	31% efficiency, saving 0.2 FTE worth of time — \$70,000 salary	\$14,200
Staff time savings, supporting new employees	36% efficiency, saving 1 FTEs worth of time — \$70,000 salary	\$82,500
Direct cost savings, paper and shipping costs	\$183,300 in annual savings	\$152,800
Staff efficiencies, platform management	13% efficiency, saving 0.5 FTE worth of time — \$100,000 salary	\$38,000
Total annual benefits	N/A	\$2.7M

n=3, Source: IDC Business Value Research, February 2022 (*Includes 6 months deployment time in year 1)

Note: All numbers in this document may not be exact due to rounding.

About the Analysts



Marci Maddox

Program Vice President, Artificial Intelligence Research, Global AI Research Lead, IDC

Marci Maddox is Research Director for IDC's Digital Experience Management Software program, responsible for research related to content and media assets that drive relevant, personalized, and engaging digital experiences research. Marci's core research coverage will include creative tools, web content management systems, customer communications, digital asset management, and video platform solutions. Leveraging 18 years in content and experience applications, Marci will analyze impact that new technology entrants like AI and mobile have on the way organizations create and deliver persuasive content to improve customer lifetime value and user interaction. She conducts research on a worldwide scale including market sizing and forecasting, ROI models, case studies, multi-client studies, and thought leadership projects.

[More about Marci Maddox](#)



Holly Muscolino

Research Vice President, Content and Process Strategies and the Future of Work, IDC

Holly Muscolino is the Research Vice President, Content and Process Strategies and the Future of Work, responsible for research related to innovation and transformation in content and process solutions, including intelligent process automation and content workflow services. Holly's core coverage also includes the role of technology in driving the Future of Work.

[More about Holly Muscolino](#)



Matthew Marden

Research Vice President, Business Value Strategy Practice, IDC

Matthew is responsible for carrying out custom business value research engagements and consulting projects for clients in a number of technology areas, with a focus on determining the return on investment (ROI) of their use of enterprise technologies. Matthew's research often analyzes how organizations are leveraging investment in digital technology solutions and initiatives to create value through efficiencies and business enablement.

[More about Mathew Marden](#)

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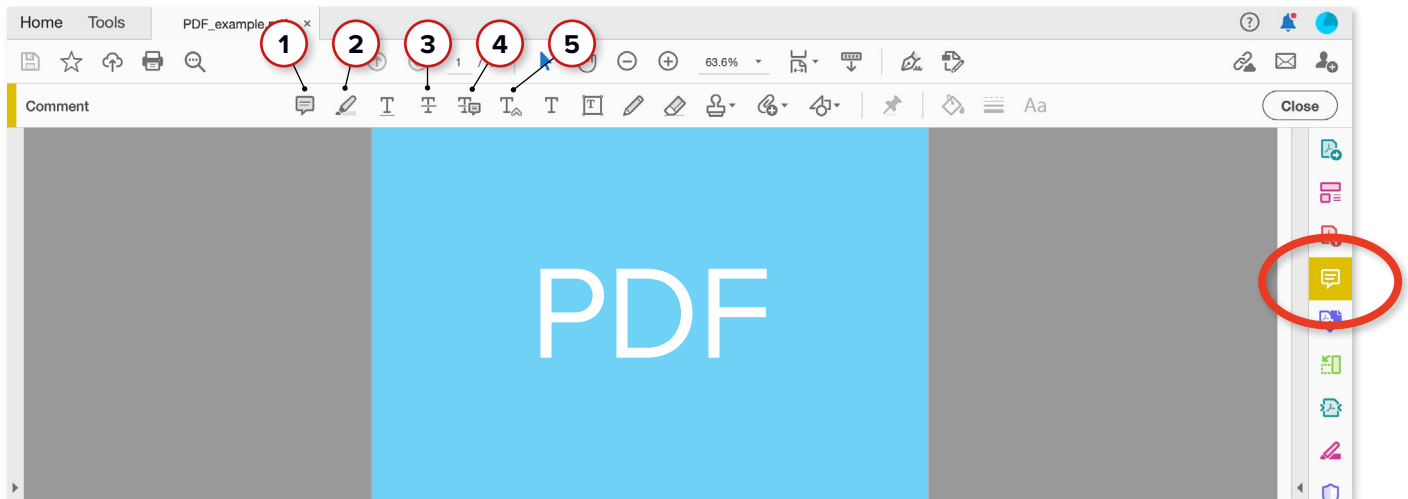
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