

Increasing the Speed of Signature through Technology

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Project Summary

Governor John Kasich has repeatedly stated that Ohio must operate at the speed of business in order to remain competitive: “we need to move quickly in every area, because business moves at the speed of light (state of Ohio, 2011).” The implementation of paperless document processes, particularly digital signatures, is one way to achieve this goal. Digital signatures are “the most effective, secure, and easy-to-implement method of providing accountability while enabling electronic transactions (Entrust, 2003).” Paperless document processes save time and money by:

- Reducing paper handling, including copying, scanning, filing, faxing, and shredding
- Reducing errors associated with common paper related tasks
- Eliminating costs for paper, paper storage, and postage
- Expanding document access
- Streamlining document processing
- Improving service and convenience for state customers and vendors

Project Goal

This paper will provide an explanation of terms relevant to digital signatures, describe the current use of such technology within both the state of Ohio and the federal government, provide case studies of three states that have explored or implemented digital signature technology, and make recommendations should Ohio choose to explore the implementation of digital signatures as one way to achieve the goal of pushing government to operate at the speed of business.

Project Outcome

In order for Ohio to be competitive in the global market, the state must establish an infrastructure that supports digital signatures and paperless processes. This paper has examined the technology, legal environment, and use of digital signatures in Ohio and other states. It recommends that Ohio update its current policies in light of today's security threats and business opportunities. The existing administrative rule governing the use of electronic signatures has not been updated since 2007 and should be reviewed, particularly to determine whether it needs to be amended to eliminate unnecessary paperwork (ORC section 119.032(C)(3)). This paper proposes that a governance group be created to oversee the policies, decision-making, and implementation efforts necessary to establish a PKI for use within the state. It also recommends that the state incorporate the requirements necessary to tie into similar efforts at the federal level (FPKI). Finally, it recommends that the state should actively review the systems accessed through the Ohio Business Gateway to determine if digital signature technology is appropriate.

Project Benefits

With state of Ohio agencies facing a future of shrinking budgets and resources, many are exploring ways to streamline business processes. One way is through the implementation of paperless document processes, including electronic document storage and electronic transaction processing for employees, vendors, and the state at large. For Ohio agencies to fully realize a paperless environment, they must integrate digital signature technology as part of their electronic document processes.

The cost of a handwritten signature is estimated to range between \$5.40 and \$30 (McLaughlin, 2007; Lantsman, n.d.). These costs take into account factors such as length of document, scanning, storage, workflow disruption, and loss/reproduction.

Digital signature technology results in time and cost savings in the following ways:

- Reduced paper handling, including copying, scanning, filing, faxing, and shredding
- Reduced errors associated with common paper related tasks
- Reduced cost for paper, paper storage, and postage
- Streamlined document access
- Faster document processing
- Improved service and greater convenience for state customers and vendors

Project Team

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