Modernizing Document Workflows to Improve Service and Equity

Electronic document signing is one discrete task in a chain of events that occur within a modern contract life cycle. **Michael (MJ) Jackson,** *vice president and global head of industries for DocuSign, discusses how modernization improves user experience for residents and creates efficiencies and other tangible returns for government agencies.*

How have electronic signatures and modern contract life cycle workflows improved government services since the pandemic began?

In the most basic way, they enabled government agencies to continue their mission-critical operations. The pandemic underscored how reliant many organizations were on manual, outdated, error-prone processes. Besides enabling virtual interactions, modern contract life cycle management includes automating, where possible, document generation and routing. It can also automate tasks that typically occur after document signing, such as payment collection or distribution of new employee packets.

What social barriers should agencies consider when optimizing document signing workflows?

One big challenge is the digital divide. Not everybody has access to a laptop or desktop, but many people have access to a smartphone. With this in mind, organizations can build mobile-first solutions, understanding that many users will apply for benefits, find a job and validate eligibility through a five-inch screen. Organizations can then add a layer of omnichannel experiences. Regardless of the screen size, connection speed or where somebody enters the engagement, organizations must deliver an equally intuitive and immersive experience across all channels. It's also important to prioritize accessibility so individuals with disabilities can access services. The third piece is sustainability and reducing the carbon footprint by transitioning to electronic workflows and legally binding digital signatures.

What are the main components of an empowering customer experience?

The resident experience has a number of components. The first is engagement. Experiences should be immersive and intuitive and on par with user experiences in private sector companies. The second element is efficiency. The experience on the backend should be as functional as it is beautiful, meaning it reduces errors, optimizes workflows, automates processes and quickly delivers tangible value for the agency. The third aspect is effectiveness. Agencies must be able to measure and evaluate, almost in real time, how effectively they are engaging users and realizing a return on investment, and then adjust accordingly. The final component is trust. Organizations must demonstrate that they can protect mission-critical workflows and satisfy rigorous government and industry standards.

How does modern contract/ document life cycle management expedite processes and services once documents have been signed?

Besides providing a repository for millions of signed documents, modern solutions enable agencies to aggregate, analyze and pull insights from signed documents. For example, they can use artificial intelligence to identify trends, assess risks and manage obligations. One of our state government customers — a health authority in the Northwest — improved its contract processing time by 93 percent. That enabled Medicaid agency clients to receive potentially life-saving services more quickly.

What do organizations and residents need to better understand about digital signing?

Digital signing streamlines the document-signing experience and enables residents to do business online. Organizations and residents need to understand that it's secure, legally binding and proven. The E-Sign Act became law in 2000 and has been widely adopted by the public, government organizations and the private sector. Most residents have already encountered digital signing technology if they've recently gone through a home buying process.

What types of use cases are emerging to improve the resident experience?

There are many. One city in Southern California has established a digital city hall. The pandemic essentially forced the city hall as well as all external stakeholders who interacted with it to go fully digital, which enabled a level of resiliency that nobody expected. The city did a study and found that it saved 122,000 staff hours and $3.5 million.

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