



Quick and Fix

Contracts, explanations, descriptions – since time immemorial, people like to record, make permanent, and testify important matters. Millions of documents are still signed on paper every day. How the electronic signature technology DocuSign and digital transaction management services accelerate their own business processes is demonstrated by the example of the documentus business corporation.

COPY — Thomas van Zütphen

All in all, it took 3,000 years. First was the cuneiform, then came papyrus, and much later “real” paper. Virtual documents are faster. A document is signed every 0.3 seconds somewhere in the world using DocuSign electronic signature technology. And it is legally binding. Data management specialist documentus is an example of how quickly the software solution can gain recognition.

The corporate group is Germany’s undisputed market leader in file and data carrier destruction. For this purpose, the company operates a nationwide logistics and site network with 16 exclusive, contractually bound partners who destroy more than 150,000 tons of files and data carriers in Germany each year. The methods comply with stipulations of the Federal Office for Data Security in Information Technology (BSI). The company’s high-performance shredders in Cologne, for example, shred up to 24 tons of file folders, CD-ROMs, magnetic tapes, and computer hard disks per hour into the smallest particles.

Coming from this market position, the spectrum of the documentus business model has gradually expanded in recent years, for example, to include security archives that store kilometer-long filing cabinets or scanning services for the virtual storage of valuable data and documents. As

a result, the company today is considered trend-setting in document management and as the source of ideas for the industry.

FROM WASTE PAPER TO INFORMATION LOGISTICS

“This is how we have become a document shredder as part of the digital revolution,” says Managing Director Walter Passmann. Even though paper plays a critical role for the company as the No. 1 data carrier and it is still introducing a solution with DocuSign that produces no paper whatsoever sounds somewhat strange but has literal existential reasons. “We would rather cannibalize ourselves before others do and then drive the biggest transformation in the company’s history before we are forced to,” says Walter Passmann. “The digital transformation is becoming a matter of survival for us. If we are not paying attention to the changes digitization is causing in our core target markets like financial services, health care, and law, we would eventually be out of a job.”

As a result, the company has decided on a completely new name. “Reisswolf,” the name under which the group operated a year ago, “made clear for decades where we come from and what our core business is,” explains Passmann. “But because customers give us our desire to transform as well as the needed expertise to do so, the brand ‘Reisswolf’ was simply not flexible enough. It did not account for our realignment toward product solution and service combinations following the information logistics approach.” And precisely for this reason, “in the middle of the phase of the company’s transformation, DocuSign became the perfect entry-level model for us,” reports Karsten Vieler, Co-Managing Director of documentus. “A wonderfully lean, cloud-based solution in the information logistics approach, coupled with our realignment and brand change – virtually a reference example for our leap from the analog to the digital world.”

When it comes to contract signings, sign-offs or co-signing, handwritten signatures are so yesterday. Luckily, documentus has been marketing its DocuSign electronic signature technology since last December.



Germany's market leader for document shredding and media destruction changed its name to "documentus" in late summer last year.



Signed, sealed, delivered. documentus has been using the new software since December, mainly externally with its customers. First, the main focus for documentus in Cologne will be digitally signed contracts. In Walter Passmann's view, the outstanding acceptance values are mainly due to two things: "On the one hand, the application is convincingly simple. Above all, however, the fact that we as documentus use them is something of a confidence-building measure. Because data protection and data security – our customers have always known – is our DNA." In fact, data protection, privacy, and an EU residence for the DocuSign Global Trust Network have been crucial for documentus in acquiring the software solution as a driver of its own business processes from T-Systems' cloud service – specifically, from the highly secure data centers of the Deutsche Telekom subsidiary in Frankfurt and Paris. This is how T-Systems guarantees that the data processed via DocuSign will remain in Europe and that, if necessary, the legal venue will be Germany.

80% OF DAILY BUSINESS WITH TEN TEMPLATES

In addition to the revision security of the workflow, documentus and its customers benefit from the new speed. Traditionally, contracts have been made by printing out two copies at once, which

2 Klicks

Significant time savings. Instead of at least five process steps, documentus sales representatives today need only two clicks to sign or release documents. It does not matter whether the signatory sits in the office at a computer or uses the DocuSign mobile app on tablet or smartphone.

were then sealed in an envelope and mailed out. Once the customer had signed both contract copies, they were then sent back. At documentus, both contracts were then counter-signed and a copy returned to the customer. The alternative route for circulating documents goes like this: Create a form, print, sign, scan, send by e-mail – and then the same process by the recipient. documentus contracts typically entail about 18 pages, including an appendix of seven pages on the Federal Data Protection Act. Despite a high degree of individualization of the documents, Karsten Vieler said, "we only had to make minor adjustments." In six months, the Cologne-based company hopes to be ready to handle more than eight to ten templates to process 75 to 80 percent of day-to-day business using DocuSign. "This would be a great achievement and the foundation for gradually rolling out the application to all partner companies and, as a result, our almost 50,000 customers in Germany alone," says Walter Passmann. Since T-Systems and Deutsche Telekom have already been customers," documentus will, in a way, be an ambassador of the DocuSign solution," says Timo Labrenz, Junior Sales Manager at Telekom, who sees another advantage to the partnership.

For Walter Passmann, the company realignment, accompanied by its own introduction of DocuSign, comes at just the right time. After all, the shredding of files or their long-term secure physical archiving account for about 80 percent of their business. "But we can never rule out that the statutory retention periods could be reduced by half at any point in time. Half of our business would be lost in a single moment." Which is why the documentus managing director sees a "great advantage in walking through the door today as a problem solver for the customer, and namely as nothing more than what we were when we originally founded 'Reisswolf,' solely as a shredder."

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