

# Digital Signature Solution Empowers GVL's Compliant and Paperless SaaS Model

## Executive Summary

GlobalVetLink, L.C. (GLV), an innovator of the national standardized method for secure and web-based animal health certification, wanted to offer a Software as a Service (SaaS) that enabled its customers to transform the paper-based process of signing OCVI (Official Certificate of Veterinary Inspection) and EIA (Equine Infectious Anemia) documentation into an electronic one, accessible via the internet. The deployment of the CoSign digital signature solution at GVL provided the organization with a digital signature they could utilize in their SaaS for signing online certification and testing processes. Incorporating a digital signature into their electronic process allowed GVL to cut costs, expedite processing, satisfy industry-related regulations, and prepare for audits. GVL used this as a competitive advantage and has since become the clear market leader in its field.



GlobalVetLink

*"CoSign ensures we stay in compliance while helping improve efficiency in all aspects of animal health and movement records."*

- Kevin Maher, President

- » Country - USA
- » Industry - Life Sciences
- » Applications - SaaS (Software as a Service)

## Expediting Approvals and Advancing Processes

GlobalVetLink, headquartered in Ames, Iowa, was founded in 1999 with the vision of replacing an archaic paper-based animal health regulatory process with real-time connectivity across the U.S. As the business advanced, it began to provide cutting-edge expertise for online animal health regulatory applications.

GVL provides online health certificate services to veterinary practices in states across the US. During 2001, the company launched its on-line application that allowed practitioners, state authorities, diagnostic laboratories and other health officials to build, access, and monitor animal movement documents via the click of a mouse by using the organization's SaaS. With the processing of over 85 million animals through GVL's applications within 9 years of the company's creation, paper certificates such as OCVIs and EIA forms are destined to become obsolete. In line with this prediction, as of August 2010, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the FDA offices in each of the 50 U.S. states approve electronic issuance of veterinary health certificates through GlobalVetLink's online system.

In order to maintain FDA compliance, which requires digital signature usage with open systems<sup>1</sup>, GVL needed to provide a digital signature capability with their SaaS. By implementing the CoSign digital signature solution, GVL was able to acquire approval for its processes by both the USDA and the FDA, the two main federal bodies tasked with regulating the industry they work within.

<sup>1</sup> Computer systems that provide some combination of interoperability, portability, and open software standards.

## Requirements of an Improved Business Model

GVL had three main business needs:

- » An electronic signing solution that enabled the organization's customers to maintain a fully electronic workflow for their online animal health regulatory applications.
- » The ability to improve its customer's ease of use as it related to their interactions submitting animal health certification.
- » Creating a cost-effective solution that enabled back office savings.

## Obstacles to Success

The most significant challenge that GVL encountered during their solution search and deployment was the organization's need to satisfy compliance issues. While the USDA does not have any specific regulations pertaining to electronic forms and signatures, it does implicitly call for the use of Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) technology. Additionally, the [FDA's 21 CFR Part 11](#) explicitly directs that organizations use digital signatures to ensure authenticity, integrity, and confidentiality when open systems are utilized. As such, GVL had to find a solution that satisfied the standards set by both regulating bodies.

## Digital Signatures Provide the Answer

A digital signature solution based on [PKI technology](#) fulfilled the regulatory requirements of the USDA and FDA. PKI technology is well established, with over 30 years of industry use, and is accepted as the only standard method capable of guaranteeing an electronic document has not been altered. The PKI technology in the signature is used to establish that the signatory is indeed responsible for the signature and that the signer actually approves the content of the document. Any changes made to the document after it is signed invalidate the digital signature, thereby protecting against forgery, ensuring non-repudiation, and securing the documentation. Due to an extensive track record of successful deployments throughout the [life sciences](#) industry and utilization of standards-based technology, GVL decided to implement the CoSign digital signature solution. By utilizing standards-based technology, the CoSign digital signature solution supports the signing of all common file formats such as Microsoft® Word, Excel®, Outlook®, PDF, TIFF, AutoCAD®, Bentley MicroStation®, InfoPath® and many more, without requiring any plug-ins or software downloads for signature verification purposes.

## Creating a Market Leader with Competitive Advantages

GVL's implementation of the CoSign digital signature solution enabled the company to migrate the traditionally paper-based process of OCVI and EIA certificate signing, to a fully electronic method offered via their online portal and accepted across the United States. GVL's system allows up to 50 Doctors of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) to log into the portal, access the certificates, and digitally sign and submit them. The signed certificate can be routed electronically to the DVM, the animal owner, and the proper animal health authorities. In addition, the signed certificate and all of the data entered on the form are saved into the GVL database, eliminating the need to physically archive the certificates. CoSign digital signatures have enabled GVL's SaaS to turn a multiple day process into one



that provides instantaneous results. GVL used the digital signature capability as a competitive advantage both in terms of turnaround time for the customers and reduced back office costs. This competitive advantage has helped GVL become the market leader in its field.

## Lessons Learned

CoSign's implementation at GlobalVetLink focuses on several important aspects of a digital signature solution including competitive advantages, compliance, transportability, and simple implementation. A more detailed explanation is presented below.

- » Providing digital signatures as part of a SaaS model in a regulated industry can lead to a competitive advantage for customer-facing ease-of-use, project turnaround, and back office efficiency and cost savings.
- » A key reason behind GVL's decision to utilize a digital signature solution was the need to maintain compliance with the regulations established by the bodies that govern the veterinary industry. While an electronic signature would have provided a signing option for their electronic certifications, it would not have been sufficient for audit purposes, nor would a basic electronic signature have satisfied the regulatory call for PKI-based technology usage. CoSign provided GVL with a fully compliant way for their clientele to sign their electronic documentation.
- » With multiple parties involved in GVL's online documentation processes (veterinarians and government health organizations) it was vital for their signature solution to be transportable. A document created by proprietary software that couldn't be verified by a third party or partner without access to that software would have been an irrelevant solution. With CoSign, signed documents become self-contained, portable, and sustainable electronic records that are maintained in a non-proprietary format. Like PDF, the CoSign PSF™ (Portable Signature Format) is based on established standards endorsed by the US and EU governments and several independent standards bodies, guaranteeing that digitally signed electronic records will be human readable and verifiable for decades into the future.
- » Installing a new software system can be a lengthy and resource-intensive process. GVL made it clear that they required a digital signature solution that would not require extensive customization or require a separate help desk to support the signature application. CoSign, fully functional after a deployment of a few hours, was able to provide them with a comprehensive solution that worked intuitively with their user management system.



## About GVL

GlobalVetLink is a leading developer of digital health data and document solutions for veterinarians and animal owners. For more information, please visit <http://www.globalvetlink.com>.

## About CoSign Digital Signatures

ARX (Algorithmic Research) is a global provider of cost-efficient digital signature solutions for industries such as life sciences, healthcare, government, engineering, and energy. ARX's CoSign digital signature solution automates approvals affordably in a compliant manner, allowing organizations to go paperless, expedite business processes and save costs. CoSign is the only digital signature solution that is seamlessly integrated with Microsoft SharePoint and other popular DM/ECM solutions. CoSign signatures are globally accepted by external partners without the need for proprietary-validation software. CoSign is also centrally managed through the organization's user directory for reliable control of signature privileges, and ease of use and administration. Learn more about the CoSign [digital signature](#) solution.

---

CoSign is a registered trademark of Algorithmic Research, Ltd. All other trade names and trademarks are the property of their respective holders.