

## Digital Signatures Expedite Mailhot's Workflow, Eliminating Paper and Headaches

Just thinking about the task at hand gave Rejean Belanger a migraine. As the IT Manager at Mailhot Industries, an [international manufacturer](#) of hydraulic cylinders with 250 employees, it was Rejean's responsibility to make the organization's vast globe-traversing workflow more contoured and efficient. His goal was to find a way to expedite administrative documentation processes as well as project cycle times and streamline business processes, but it couldn't come at the expense of document authenticity or collaborative capacity. This was no small task for an organization with a wide paper-based workflow that routes between multiple offices throughout North America on a daily basis.



*"CoSign provided us with a standards-based digital signature solution for streamlining our workflow that also guaranteed that external entities will have no problem reading and validating our files."*

- Rejean Belanger, IT Manager,  
Mailhot Industries

### Paper-Based Workflow - The Origins of a Massive Headache

In order to establish where cycle times could be cut and operational costs reduced, Belanger performed an in-depth analysis of the workflow within Mailhot. Through his analysis, he realized that approvals requiring signature authorizations on documents such as expense reports, engineering designs, QA results, and expense reports were crucial to focus on as bottlenecks. Routing these documents between signers and across multiple offices demanded the organization expend time and money for intra-office routing as well as for finding and replacing lost documents.

Belanger figured that each signer in the company signed approximately two documents per workday and that the average associated costs per document worked out to approximately \$6. He further calculated that each signer was costing the organization around \$3,000 (500 signatures per signer multiplied by \$6 per document) a year in printing, manual routing, and archiving fees. With a clearer understanding of the challenge, Belanger explained, "Signature capture is such a simple aspect of a business process, but when a document has to be manually routed within our organization or externally to our partners for signature capture, it exponentially increases project turnaround time and costs." Belanger knew the organization's need to route its documentation was unavoidable, but he was focused on finding a more efficient approach.

### Digital Signatures – The Perfect Prescription

Taking his research to the Internet, Belanger came across a potential solution in digital signatures. Based on the information he found, Belanger understood that deploying a digital signature solution enterprise-wide would enable the organization to maintain an electronic workflow from document creation through its approval (the signing process), finally removing any reliance their overall process had on paper. Since Mailhot Industries employees were already using email, a digital signature

solution would enable the routing of documentation for approvals and signature authorization via a previously accepted work practice at a fraction of the time and costs associated with a paper-based approach. This reality would allow individuals to digitally sign administrative and engineering-related documentation, expedite signature capture by eliminating the need for manual routing of the documents, and alleviate the organization's need to manually archive signed documents and find or replace lost ones. Belanger felt his headache begin to fade.

After it was established that a digital signature solution would reduce the process hurdles and costs associated with their original paper-based process, Belanger set out to define the specific capabilities Mailhot Industries required in a digital signature solution. After consultations with the organization's legal advisor, it was decided that any digital signature solution they deployed needed the ability to assure secure access to system users, notify file recipients of any post-signature alterations, include an audit trail, and provide easy signature verification for third parties. Because of the high level of security it provided, Belanger also insisted that Mailhot Industries deploy a digital signature solution based on standard digital signatures. He understood that standard digital signatures would further secure the electronic documentation that was being routed throughout the organization and its external partners by electronically sealing the files that had been digitally signed, revealing any post-signing alterations.

After a review of the digital signature solutions available, Belanger decided to implement the [CoSign® digital signature solution](#) at Mailhot Industries. A standards-based digital signature solution based on standard PKI technology<sup>1</sup>, CoSign was capable of securing the organization's electronic documents and being verified by anyone, anywhere, without the need to download any complicated proprietary software or plug-ins. Belanger also saw the significant upside in CoSign's centralized approach to a [digital signature solution](#), which securely stores signature keys and credentials on a central server and can be implemented in a single day. By synchronizing with the organization's Microsoft® Active Directory® user management system, CoSign makes adding and revoking a user's signing rights as simple as adding or deleting them from the directory. As Belanger learned more about CoSign, he also discovered that this centralized approach required less dedicated IT staff and reduced IT management needs and therefore provided a low total cost of ownership. The CoSign approach also ensured that only authorized employees have the ability to sign agreements on behalf of the organization. These were key to addressing his fiscal and security concerns.

## CoSign Digital Signature - Sweet Relief

Belanger's initial integration of the CoSign digital signature solution at Mailhot Industries focused on the 25 individuals at the organization that most regularly approve administrative documentation, knowing that he could easily increase the number of users and expand the application to engineering documentation at a later date. With each signer costing Mailhot \$3,000 in paper-related costs each

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<sup>1</sup> The PKI technology in a digital signature is used to establish that the individual signatory is indeed responsible for the signature in the message, and that the signer approves the content of the document. 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. 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.

year, his decision to implement the CoSign digital signature solution saved Mailhot Industries over \$80,000 in its first year alone. In less than two months of use Mailhot had already realized its ROI.

Since the CoSign deployment, documents that once took days looping around the globe for internal and external signatures are now signed and returned in minutes. Belanger's CoSign deployment made Mailhot's signature authorizations intuitive, swift, and secure. The deployment has also replaced the time-consuming and costly process of manually archiving the organization's thousands of documents each month with a simple click at the end of a seamless electronic transaction.

**"CoSign provided us with a standards-based digital signature solution for streamlining our workflow that also guaranteed that external entities will have no problem reading and validating our files,"** explained Rejean. **"CoSign's strong security provisions and its tight integration with Mailhot's network were major factors in our decision."**

Belanger explained that CoSign's ability to guarantee the integrity of Mailhot Industries' signed documentation without complicating the verification process for document recipients was just as important as the financial savings. Since the CoSign digital signature solution leverages a document recipient's built-in standards for signature and document authentication, verifying is as simple as opening the received document. This aptitude, based on CoSign's PKI underpinnings, has allowed Mailhot Industries to easily maintain external communications with third parties despite a transition away from their more expensive and time-consuming paper-based processes. Moreover, just as Belanger expected, the organization has seen such positive results from its administrative use of CoSign that they plan on implementing the solution for digitally signing engineering documentation as well.

By implementing the CoSign digital signature solution, Rejean Belanger was able to increase project turnaround and cut spending at a time when CEO's and CFO's are anxiously searching for ways to stretch their budgets and cut back on spending. Now, Belanger looks back on his original task of making the workflow at Mailhot Industries more contoured and efficient with a smile. **Headache? What headache?**

## 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.

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