Has the Paperless Office Arrived?

Well not yet - but it is rapidly becoming a reality as high-speed internet access has become the norm for business and home office communications. An ink signature has a legal definition of "any mark on a piece of paper that is used to identify agreement by a person". An electronic equivalent of this exists called a digital signature that can have the same legal weight as the paper signature. This white paper looks at the many applications of digital signatures and how business solution integrators and providers can extend their products and services portfolio to meet the growing demand for trust solutions.

Digital Signatures in the paperless office

Organisations today are facing a variety of pressures to provide enhanced security of data, better accountability, traceability and audit to ensure compliance with local legislation, regional directives and market expectations. From commercial, efficiency, cost and risk perspectives there are also strong drivers to replace paper-based processes with secure, electronic ones. Strong user identity and system identity checks as well as digital signature verification and validation can offer significant value in providing trust, traceability and accountability within business processes such as:

Sending documents with digital signatures to external parties:

- ❖ Receipts, Invoices, Quotations
- ❖ Reports - consultancy and project reports,
- ❖ Regulatory data, case notes, next actions etc
- ❖ Approved agreements (Loans, insurance)
- ❖ Government submissions

Sending documents with digital signatures internally:

- ❖ Personnel documentation
- ❖ Internal policy documents
- ❖ Work flow documentation sign off

Verifying received digital signatures:

- ❖ On quotations and tender documents
- ❖ On Orders, Reports, Regulations etc
- ❖ Invoices, Internal policy documents
- ❖ Authorising/approving expense sheets, time, sheets, HR forms, design documents

Document archiving:

- ❖ long term archiving for regulation compliance
- ❖ Signed notary archive of received documentation

Creating Trust

Replacing a paper signature with an electronic signature that can be trusted and verified by an independent third party at some time in the future requires answers to questions such as Who are you? Which trusted entity confirms this? Who signed the data and when?

Trust is created by some or all of the following attributes:

- ❖ Verifiable User Identity – unequivocal proof of a user's national, legal or business status
- ❖ Verifiable Business Identity – unequivocal proof of the legal status of a business
- ❖ Binding verified Identities into unforgeable digital signatures on documents or data
- ❖ Providing certainty that the document or data is signed-off and/or approved
- ❖ Providing traceability of who signed and when - also whether this was trustworthy at the time

The Paperless Office

Trust is essential for reducing time, cost, risk, fraud and errors in business communications:

- ❖ How can recipients determine if the sender is trusted?
- ❖ How can the recipients trust that content is original - and unchanged?
- ❖ How can you be sure that this is the final approved document or data – and prove this?
- ❖ How can document sign-off and one or more approvals be managed, enforced and checked?
- ❖ How can traceability and accountability be clearly provided for audit and compliance.

Ascertia Server and Client Digital Signature Products

Ascertia is a focused software products developer and leader in the provision of digital signing, verification and identity validation solutions that can cut fraud, reduce business risks and costs and provide legal weight evidence. The company has around 40 people engaged in the design and development of infrastructure, enterprise server and desktop products and has a long track-record in the market. Our responsive support services offer fast and flexible working practices to resolve urgent business issues.

Ascertia's products offer comprehensive advanced signing services and are used across the world to reduce fraud, to bind identity to documents with legal weight digital signatures, to prevent changes to signed documents, to reduce business risks by creating undeniable evidence, to enforce traceability and compliance and substantial reduce the costs and risks of paper based processes.

Adding Trust to Business Workflows
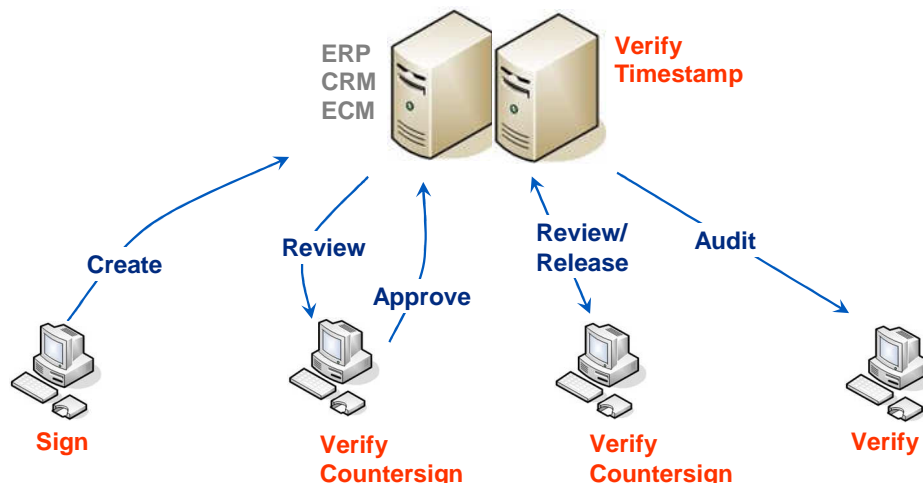
The products deliver advanced trust services for e-business that include:

- ❖ Creating digital signatures on PDF documents, XML data and other file types
- ❖ Verifying signatures on these documents
- ❖ Adding timestamps to documents to confirm when they are accepted
- ❖ Adding certificate chain validity at the time of signing (ETSI long-term signatures)
- ❖ Enabling the historic verification of documents with old signatures
- ❖ Providing detailed transactional evidence for disputes, audits, problem solving
- ❖ Providing an effective, secure and easy to manage security environment

Ascertia's products are suitable for use in multiple vertical markets and jurisdictions. For more information about how Ascertia products can add value to your businesses contact info@ascertia.com

Identity Proven, Trust Delivered