

Addressing Environmental Initiatives with a Digital System of Agreement

The world changed a lot from 2020 to 2021, and so did the way we do business. With global organizations collectively turning their attention to employee health, remote work accelerated at an unprecedented pace. The traditional office environment was replaced with a virtual cloud workspace that blurred the lines between consumer and professional technology to the point of nonexistence.

The new anywhere economy operates with reductions in commuting, business travel and in-office paper waste, causing global emissions to dip significantly. As employees return to brick-and-mortar locations in 2021, a new challenge appears: retaining the productivity benefits of the virtual economy while cementing the sustainability gains.

In many ways, the remote-friendly workflow changes were long overdue. In fact, plenty of companies have announced that staff can either work from home permanently or part-time via a flexible hybrid setup. The environmental gains are similar—long overdue and worth retaining as new baselines are established.

Increasing pressure to commit to environmental goals

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report in October of 2018¹ presented a bleak future without a significant global effort to reduce carbon emissions. Consequently, the demand to make emissions progress permanent is coming from an increasing number of critical business stakeholders—government regulators, third-party ratings agencies, investors, customers and employees.

Executives know that sustainability efforts are gaining importance. According to Deloitte, nearly 60% of businesses feel increased pressure from stakeholders to develop and disclose plans that address climate risk². Natural Capital Partners reports that in 2020, 30% of Fortune Global 500 companies had made a public commitment to carbon neutrality or similar science-based targets³.

For many companies, including those in the software space, supply chain emissions are among the most important emissions sources to address. To date, most companies have been focusing on reducing emissions under their direct operational control and from their purchase of electricity, heat and steam. However, in the new landscape, it's also becoming critical to reduce emissions throughout the company's broader value chain.

31%

of employees desire additional rigor from employers in both taking and communicating meaningful climate action⁴

Nearly 90%

of businesses have recently reviewed or changed their climate risk disclosure procedures and developed plans to address climate-related risks²

¹ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, "Global Warming of 1.5 °C"

² Deloitte Insights, "Deloitte Resources Study 2020"

³ Natural Capital Partners, "Response Required: How the Fortune Global 500 is delivering climate action and the urgent need for more of it"

⁴ Anthesis Group, "Research Reveals Sustainability Is Vital for Employee Attraction and Retention"

Identifying opportunities for environmental improvements

There is a wide range of direct and indirect tactics that modern organizations can adopt to reduce their environmental impact. Here are a few common strategies:

Electricity consumption

The electricity used in operations is a significant driver of overall emissions for most companies. Reducing electricity and switching to renewable energy sources are easy opportunities to reduce emissions.

Commuting and business travel

While new technologies may eventually make air travel less emissions-intensive, the simplest path to reducing present-day emissions is to reduce overall air travel. The rapid shift to virtual meetings in 2020 helped demonstrate that this tactic can be successful. Those tools also offer a productive option for employees working from home.

Supply chain

It's becoming increasingly common for organizations to engage suppliers and collectively set similar emissions goals. Large companies are now including climate-related requirements in vendor contracts and imposing penalties for noncompliance.

How DocuSign helps with sustainability efforts

A modern [system of agreement](#)—the collection of technologies and processes used to prepare, sign, act on and manage agreements—moves business processes to the cloud and replaces wasteful practices with more efficient digital alternatives. The benefits of a virtual workspace are twofold: more efficient individual agreements and a more efficient agreement process at large.

As the world of work shifts to a distributed model, organizations are using their agreement platforms to connect critical systems of record (CRMs, HCMs, ERPs, etc.) and digitize processes that have traditionally been plagued by bottlenecks. These distributed models reduce the need for business travel, employee commuting, office space and on-premises data centers. More robust virtual environments are also likely to improve customer and employee experiences.

At the system level, a cloud-based agreement platform gives organizations the tools they need to enshrine their sustainability efforts in contracts. With the expanded visibility into these documents, a business can monitor compliance standards, keeping buyers, suppliers and even suppliers' suppliers accountable. Using powerful templates, preapproved clause libraries, automated reports and AI, teams can improve visibility into environmental commitments and take action to make the world a healthier place.

Savings from contract digitization:

\$36

saved on average per agreement with electronic signature⁵

70%–80%

of efficiency gains seen by companies that replace manual process with digital technologies⁶

22K work hours

saved annually by companies with e-signature usage⁶

Since 2003, DocuSign technology has saved:*

20B+

sheets of paper

3M+

trees

3B+

gallons of water

167M+

pounds of waste

2.4B+

pounds of additional CO₂

⁵ DocuSign Internal Research

⁶ Forrester, "The State Of E-Signature Implementation"

* Estimates of paper savings are current as of September 2021 and are based on the aggregate number of transactions via DocuSign eSignature since the company was founded in 2003. The model assumes that recipients of a document would print the document once, on average.

DocuSign uses the Paper Calculator from the Environmental Paper Network's Paper Calculator Version 4.0 to estimate the environmental savings from reduced paper usage. Since not all paper comes from virgin tree fiber, the estimate of environmental impact from reduced paper usage assumes a recycled content percentage of 10%, slightly higher and more conservative than the 8% estimate contained in the Environmental Paper Network's 2018 State of the Global Paper Industry Report. The Environmental Paper Network's Paper Calculator uses data from North America. For more information on the Paper Calculator, please visit: <https://c.environmentalpaper.org/about.html>

DocuSign recognizes that its operations create environmental impacts, such as carbon emissions from data centers and employee travel. The environment is a key stakeholder in our business, and we will continue to prioritize activities to reduce the environmental impact of our business, such as emissions from operations, to maximize the benefits of using DocuSign's digital processes over paper-based alternatives.

About DocuSign

DocuSign helps organizations connect and automate how they prepare, sign, act on and manage agreements. As part of the DocuSign Agreement Cloud, DocuSign offers eSignature, the world's #1 way to sign electronically on practically any device, from almost anywhere, at any time. Today, over a million customers and more than a billion users in over 180 countries use the DocuSign Agreement Cloud to accelerate the process of doing business and simplify people's lives.

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