



Fillable interactive PDF e-forms for productivity sake

All productivity-oriented organizations should be making a special effort to reduce their reliance on paper forms to conduct business activities. The most popular and effective direction towards a paperless-form strategy is to institute [fillable interactive PDF e-forms](#) as part of their business practices. The message and choice is simple: “Paper-forms augment costs. E-forms augment value”. This powerful and extremely flexible WYSIWYG alternative to paper forms is largely made possible because Adobe PDF e-forms can be easily designed and custom programmed. Once published, they may be readily viewed and filled by anyone using a free downloadable Adobe Reader and then submitted electronically for automated data-captured and processing.

Paper forms and e-forms coexistence

Unfortunately, there are still particular cases where it may be necessary to print and mail the e-form after filling it. This is typically due to legal or compliancy directives requiring the need for a wet signature on the completed paper form so as to be recognized as “official”. This may be an inconvenient and costly reality until electronic signatures (a feature of PDF e-forms) becomes a more widely accepted practice. Regardless, it is very important to note that even when the paper version remains part of the process, it is still possible to take advantage of automated data-capture if the e-form is submitted electronically for processing. Therefore it is always beneficial to make provisions for submitting the captured data, regardless of whether the filled form must be printed or not. When the printed paper version is received, it should be immediately scanned prior to processing and [OCR technology](#) can be used to bind the resulting scanned image with the e-form data that was submitted electronically.

Good planning improves e-form data capture quality

In order to get optimal benefit from interactive e-forms, the forms must be designed and planned diligently so that they are easy to fill and that the chance of filling-errors is minimized (ideally eliminated). If the form designer/creator knows exactly what information must be filled, it is a simple matter of providing instructions so that a professional form developer can program the form to respect the preset rules. The rules may be relating to formula-based calculations, date validations, inputs as defined by dropdown lists, input format validations, etc... The end result is that the individual that fills the e-form will have very little choice but to fill it properly. This renders the information that has been filled more accurate and reliable and thus increasing the efficiency of processing the form and thereby reducing the overall processing time and cost. For more details on e-form planning, you may request a free copy of the [“Guide for Planning Interactive PDF e-Forms”](#).

The benefits

If a fillable interactive e-form has been properly designed, programmed, and published, there will be both financial and operational benefits that could be realized by the organization and the individuals filling the forms. Although most types of e-forms share some core benefits, the all-inclusive list of benefits described below especially apply to [interactive](#) e-forms. For a better understanding of the differences between interactive and other types of e-forms, you may visit [eform designs](#).

1. A more pleasant and easier form-filling experience.
2. Reduction or elimination of form-filling errors.
3. More efficient workflow through the electronic submission of captured data.
4. Reduced manual data input and cost at the processing level.
5. Ability to improve and update a form at anytime.
6. No cost for paper printing, distribution and handling.
7. Environmentally friendly initiative by less paper-printing.
8. Ability to post e-forms on the web for easier accessibility.
9. Improved customer service through faster processing times.
10. Option to print if and when wet signature is required.

About the author: Vincent Santaguida is the CEO and founder of MultiCIM Technologies Inc. He has over 30 years of experience in providing business process automation solutions. He is a strong proponent of paperless office practices and also promotes increasing productivity in paper-intensive processes by using automated data capture.

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