

Swedish law firm Cederquist banks on ID verification technology

Cederquist is one of Sweden's leading full service law firms; not only in the sense that more than 100 lawyers and a prestigious client list makes it a top-ranked firm, but because it is carrying Sweden's legal sector into the future, with the help of DocuSign. Automation of complex agreement processes with online verification of signatories' identities using Swedish BankID eID scheme are all part of Cederquist's innovation roadmap.

Background

The ability to verify a person's identity is central to the way everyday transactions are done in Sweden, and throughout the Nordic region. BankID, an online identity credential guaranteed by the issuing bank, is the most popular means of identifying oneself for online transactions. Under Swedish law, certain transactions or processes require an advanced level of electronic signature in compliance with Europe's eIDAS regulation. This level of signature can be achieved when combining a digital signature with the online Swedish BankID verification.

The problem is, the reality falls far from the ideal for many industries. Paper forms and applications, and in-person verification still reign supreme. This was absolutely the case within many departments of Government. And, it was a point of frustration for Cederquist, whose business on behalf of clients often involved submitting government documentation.

Cederquist harboured a desire to be among Sweden's most progressive law firms. It wanted to create a modern experience for clients, where they could transact smoothly, securely and most importantly, remotely. Equally important to the firm was its central value of sustainability. A combination of these factors inspired Cederquist's decision to lobby for the use of eSignatures and digital ID verification for official Government processes.

“We want to be the best potential partner for our clients...and we want to become part of the change that is ongoing rather than being subject to it.”

Cederquist

Company Profile

Legal

Industry

51-200

Company Size

Sweden

Location

eSignature, Online ID Verification, the DocuSign Agreement Cloud

Use Case

Results



Faster contract turnaround time



Positive change in mindset and attitude towards tech



Staff resources efficiently spent on core tasks

The challenge

How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time, so the metaphor goes. In changing the landscape for the Legal industry, Cederquist focused its attention on eradicating traditional pen and paper processes. An early adopter of eSignatures, it had first integrated DocuSign's electronic signature solution into the business in 2014. Johannes Farje - Head of Digital Services and Innovation - remained a passionate advocate.

The next hurdle was to ensure its acceptance as a technology by Government departments. Government organisations like Bolagsverket, the Swedish Company Registration Office; Finansinspektionen, the Financial Supervisory Authority; and Lantmäteriet, the Land Registration Authority, did not yet recognise eSignatures, insisting instead on printed documents and original copies. Cederquist understood that it would first need to persuade these and other Government bodies of the necessity of operating at digital pace.

An added incentive was the increased mobility and international presence of many of Cederquist's clients, whom while digitally available on their mobiles, were often hard to physically pin down due to their travel schedules. Without finding a way to transact with them remotely, business would cease to move at the fast pace Cederquist had been enjoying for many years.

Furthermore, Cederquist's clients were constantly on the move - without access to printers or scanners. Printing, signing, scanning and even mailing documents back to themselves simply wasn't feasible.

Mounting environmental awareness sealed the case for eSignature. On its website for all prospective clients and employees to read, Cederquist clearly states this as the fourth of its company values:

"We believe in the importance of acting in a sustainable way to ensure the highest quality and value for our clients, through innovative and legal advice at the cutting edge. Sustainability is key in all we do, both in respect of the legal services we supply, and in the way we act at all times and in all contexts."

The reams of paper the firm was printing in order to comply with traditional paper-based processes undermined this value.

The solution

Cederquist embarked on a lobbying campaign to educate and influence the government to digitally transform its processes, essentially overhauling hundreds of years of tradition. It partnered with DocuSign to persuade key bodies within the Swedish Government to adapt their forms to eSignature. Beginning with the Bolagsverket, Cederquist and DocuSign copresented a case for the application of technology for improving legacy procedures. The newly-formed alliance demonstrated how the DocuSign Agreement Cloud would technically enable a robust and secure environment for automating business processes. And, how the outcome would be increased security, alongside huge cost, productivity and environmental benefits.

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The partnership was successful in demonstrating the legal integrity of eSignature technology. Bolagsverket's approval of eSignatures as valid and legally-binding. Cederquist had started the ball rolling on digitisation.

The next step was to combine that new ability to e-sign Government agreements with Cederquist's ability to verify recipients.

For government bodies like the Bolagsverket to accept electronically-signed documents for registering new companies or filing financial documents for example, identity verification with Swedish BankID would be a definite advantage. These government bodies often required advanced eSignature issued by a trust service provider like DocuSign to ensure a higher level of trust in the transaction.

Since that first case, Bolagsverket now accepts eSignatures across an increasing number of processes, and as a result Cederquist has been able to offer faster and smoother services to its clients. Cederquist extends its electronic services to clients via a HighQ platform, within which they can securely and conveniently connect and transact digitally - from anywhere, at anytime.

Internally too, DocuSign is having a noticeable impact on Cederquist's business. The HR team has incorporated the DocuSign Agreement Cloud into its employee engagement process, saving time on traditional candidate onboarding but maintaining a personal contact throughout the process, with the option to meet up for digital in-person signing. Not only is the electronic onboarding experience for new employees above what their peers are offering, it sends a signal that Cederquist is forward-looking, which has a tremendous impact for talent recruitment and retention.

Needless to say, integrating DocuSign eSignature with online ID Verification from the DocuSign Agreement Cloud has given Cederquist an edge in the legal sector. While it has altruistically opened the door for its legal competitors by triggering the digital revolution; it has also stolen a significant lead by virtue of its vision.

Importantly, as DocuSign is entirely mobile-first, Cederquist clients can now sign agreements on the move, and easily identify themselves in a way that is entirely consistent with the current digital age.

The future

The story doesn't finish there. Cederquist, who sat on a select group of customers that worked closely with DocuSign's R&D team to bring DocuSign ID Verification to market, is committed to continuing in its innovation journey, currently exploring new ways to store, manage and extend the application of its clients' securely-collected IDs for even further efficiencies.

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About DocuSign

DocuSign helps organisations 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, more than 537,000 customers and hundreds of millions of users in over 180 countries use DocuSign to accelerate the process of doing business and to simplify people's lives.

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