

Design Professionals Roundtable Recap: Unlock the Future of Secure Design: Digital Signatures and Seals for Engineers and Architects

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On February 12, 2026, MG+M The Law Firm hosted the first installment of its 2026 Design Professionals Roundtable series, "Unlock the Future of Secure Design: Digital Signatures and Seals for Engineers and Architects." The session was led by Paul Tyrell, Chair of the Massachusetts Board of Registration of Professional Engineers and Professional Land Surveyors, and MG+M Partner Benjamin D. LaFrombois. Together, they examined the legal and regulatory framework governing digital signatures and seals and provided practical guidance for design professionals navigating electronic project delivery across jurisdictions.

Key Takeaways

- + **Legal Framework and State Variability**—Federal laws such as UETA and the E-SIGN Act establish the foundation for electronic signatures, but state-specific licensure regulations ultimately control how digital signatures and seals must be applied. Requirements vary across jurisdictions, making compliance review critical for multi-state and cross-border practice.
- + **Digital Signature Is Not a Scanned Stamp**—A PDF image of a seal and signature placed on documents does not constitute a compliant digital signature and may result in regulatory violations. Proper digital signatures use encryption and hashing technology that "lock" the document at signing and invalidate the certificate if changes are made.
- + **Exclusive Control Is Required**—Digital signatures and seals must remain under the licensee's exclusive control. Delegating application of a seal to administrative staff or third parties may violate board regulations and expose the professional to disciplinary action.
- + **Improper Use Creates Real Liability Risk**—Failure to properly apply or secure digital seals may result in document rejection, project delays, disciplinary proceedings and professional liability exposure. Licensing boards are increasingly addressing complaints involving misuse and fraudulent application of seals.
- + **Seal Reflects Standard of Care, Not Perfection**—Signing and sealing documents confirms that the professional meets licensure requirements and that the work complies with the applicable standard of care. It does not guarantee perfection or absolute code compliance.
- + **Best Practices for Secure Implementation**—Design professionals should use tamper-evident technology, reputable platforms such as DocuSign or Adobe Sign and internal controls to protect intellectual property, maintain document integrity and streamline electronic workflows without compromising compliance.

MG+M attorneys regularly advise design professionals nationwide on liability, insurance and contractual risk. We work with clients to assess regulatory compliance obligations, develop risk management protocols for digital project delivery and implement best practices that protect professional licensure while supporting innovation in design practice.

Remaining 2026 Schedule

MG+M's 2026 Design Professionals Roundtable series continues throughout the year with four additional interactive programs.

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(Continued)

- + April 28 | 8 a.m. ET – Artificial Intelligence (Virtual)
- + June 11 | 12 p.m. ET – Arguing Motions (Virtual)
- + August 5 | 8 a.m. ET – Contracts 201 (Virtual)
- + September 30 | 3 p.m. ET – Alternative Delivery Methods (Hybrid, cocktail reception to follow)

Save the date. Registration details coming soon.

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