



# Instacart Fuels Growth Through Automation

Grocery delivery service implements the HelloSign eSignature API to ensure scalability and improve the onboarding experience.

Launched in mid-2012, rapidly-growing Instacart provides an expert shopping service that delivers groceries in the San Francisco Bay Area, New York City, Chicago, Boston, Washington D.C., Philadelphia and Los Angeles. The service offers 100,000 products on its site ([www.instacart.com](http://www.instacart.com)) and items include fresh produce curated by trained expert shoppers to life's little necessities like laundry detergent. Items are delivered as soon as one hour after placing an order, depending on a customer's urgency. Expert Personal Shoppers select your items from local stores including Whole Foods and Costco.

## CHALLENGE

Instacart offers a highly personalized service to meet the individual needs of each of its customers. Shopping for individual grocery lists by hand and then delivering those items in an hour across seven cities presents some logistical challenges. Before Instacart can make good on its brand promise it has to have an army of expert personal shoppers recruited and properly onboarded.

In the early days Instacart relied on traditional pen-and-paper signatures in its sign up flow. Each new Personal Shopper would complete an individualized onboarding packet that then had to be scanned for electronic delivery, printed out upon return, and finally filed at the Instacart office. It was a labor-intensive process that didn't scale well and proved to be an early bottleneck for recruiting new Shoppers as the service quickly caught on and grew to new cities.

"In the beginning we had staff in the office that would scan all of the documents as well as manage the process of getting the paperwork complete. It wasn't a sustainable model as we looked to scale out the business," said Instacart Co-Founder Max Mullen.

The sign up process itself was awkward as new Shoppers signed up online but then had to complete the process using traditional offline paperwork. When competing for Shoppers, the backbone of the online service, Instacart recognized that any friction in the process could lead to attrition. The competition for labor is fierce and Instacart had to make sure it was well positioned to win the attention of great candidates. Lastly, Instacart needed to ensure that each new Shopper contract was legally-binding and fully auditable for insurance purposes. Paper contracts offered this protection and any alternative would have to at least do the same.

## SOLUTION

It was clear early on that traditional paperwork workflows didn't fit the Instacart business model. The solution to all three of these challenges was to make it digital so they could automate their Shopper onboarding process. They started by looking at the onboarding process as a whole and quickly realized there were a number of friction points that could be improved on. The solution would take the Shopper information provided during the sign up process and use it to automatically populate all the necessary paperwork, generate a set of personalized PDFs and then send out the finished documents for the Shopper to sign. This would allow Instacart to scale efficiently by adding a large number of Shoppers without the labor-intensive process of paperwork handling. This would also make the onboarding process seamless with the initial sign up experience and allow Instacart to quickly add new Shoppers as needed.

Right from the start Instacart recognized how critical a business function the onboarding process was and turned a critical eye to selecting the right eSignature API.

"We wanted an API built by a team that valued user experience as much as we do. At the end of the day we chose HelloSign because it was the best combination of these features, price and user experience."

**Max Mullen**  
CO-FOUNDER, INSTACART

As Max explains, “We knew exactly what we were looking for in an eSignature API. First, it needed to be a clean and modern API. So many of the eSignature APIs available today are antiquated and just wouldn’t work for us. Second, we needed to be able to seamlessly integrate the API into our product to keep the user experience as close to our brand as possible.”

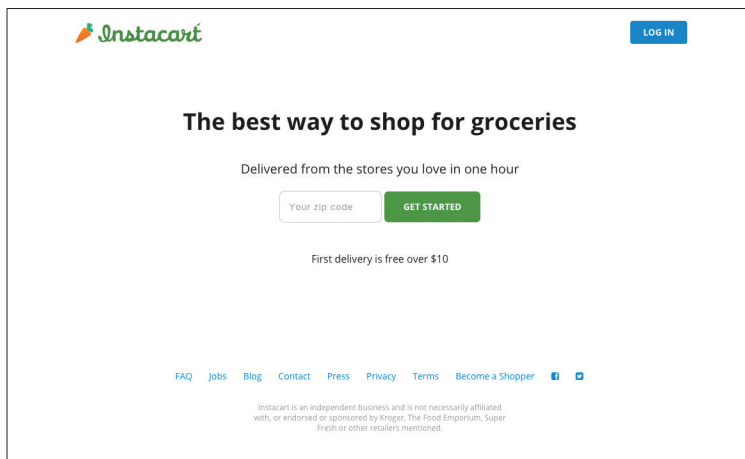
Choosing a modern API with clean documentation and self-service-sign up helped Instacart get up and running quickly. Instacart found that coding and implementation with the HelloSign API was extremely easy. “The project was conceived and launched in less than a week. It took one developer less than two days of work to integrate the API,” said Max.

## RESULTS

Automating the new Shopper onboarding experience has lifted one of the key constraints to growth for Instacart. Instead of the print, sign, scan and fax workflow - everything is now completed online. “We don’t like dealing with paper documents. That was part of the motivation to go towards HelloSign eSignatures. There certainly is no chance of us going back to paper or doing anything other than using the HelloSign API to get everything signed,” said Max.

User experience has greatly improved as new Shoppers can quickly sign up, receive personalized paperwork to get started and sign the documents all online. Instacart can rest easy knowing that each document is legally-binding with a digital tamper proof audit trail including the IP address of the signer, date and time stamp and more. This is an improvement over traditional signing where no verification or audit trail is possible.

“The HelloSign API is an important enabler for our business. If we couldn’t collect eSignatures we couldn’t be in this business. It would just be too cumbersome at scale,” said Max.



*Instacart offers grocery shopping and 1 hour delivery to 15 cities in the country.*