

PDF Revealed

The Electronic Document Management Revolution

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What is PDF?

PDF, or Portable Document Format, is a unique, cross-platform file format that allows for precise representation of documents. In plain language, a PDF file will look the same on the screen and in print, regardless of what kind of computer or printer is used and regardless of what software and hardware were originally used to create it.

Benefits of Using PDF

De Facto Standard for document distribution

Because it is a platform-independent format, PDF is rapidly becoming an integral part of today's business document processing. PDF files always retain the original "look and feel" when viewed or printed, affording users full control over the presentation of their data. PDFs can be viewed or printed by anyone with the Adobe® Acrobat Reader®, which is available as a free download. As of October 2002, there have been over 400 million downloads of the Acrobat Reader, as more and more companies, governments, and individuals have switched to using PDFs to standardize their document distribution.

Cross-Platform Compatibility

Unlike most native application files, PDF files are platform-independent. This means they are viewable on any machine, regardless of operating system, through the use of freely available PDF viewer software.

Precise Display and Print Control

With PDF, the typography, images, formatting, and colors used in the original are preserved. On-screen, PDF files allow end users to magnify documents up to 800%, without any loss of clarity in text or graphics. Printed PDFs offer sharp, color-precise printing on almost all printers. In other words, a PDF document is stored as "electronic paper" that is always accurately and consistently reproducible in every working environment.

Content Integrity

Built-in security features offer businesses full control over their documents. PDF files can be secured with encrypted passwords, ensuring that confidential information can only be viewed or edited by authorized users. PDFs can also be configured to disable a user's printing capabilities, in order to protect copyrighted or other sensitive material. Digital signatures can be incorporated to allow PDF documents to meet legal requirements.

And, because of the nature of the code behind the PDF format, files are virtually virus-free.

Portability

Since PDF handles vector and raster information, images, graphics and text can all be embedded directly in the PDF file, effectively creating a highly portable version of the original. Thanks to built-in file compression features, PDFs are generally smaller in file size than the equivalent source files. PDF-generating tools also offer setting options that can further reduce file size, through image down-sampling and text compression. These features significantly reduce the burden of storing and distributing native files, while preserving the visual integrity of the original document.

Manageability of Large, Complex Documents

PDF offers single file delivery of elaborate documents in a compact format. Pages from multiple PDF files can be reassembled to create entirely new documents, affording users the flexibility of paper documents - without the paper. Built-in features of most PDF-generating tools allow users to add devices such as bookmarks and thumbnails, improving navigation in large documents. PDF files originating in disparate applications can be merged together to form sophisticated compound documents. Additionally, PDF files are fully searchable, allowing users to quickly access specific information, without having to weed through pages and pages of text.

PDF is the platform-independent file format that is revolutionizing the way businesses approach electronic document management. Feature-rich and cost-effective, PDF is the ideal solution for hundreds of workflow applications.

Distributing Documents via the Web

PDF files support byte-streaming as a web-optimization feature. Byte-streaming works to quickly load the first page of a multi-page document, while the other pages are loaded in the background. This means the end-user doesn't have to wait for the entire file to download; he or she can begin viewing pages almost instantly.

Unlike HTML, PDF is free from inherent layout restrictions. Essentially, anything that can be designed in a word processor, presentation package, or page-layout software can be committed to PDF, without compromising the intended look and feel. This makes PDF the preferred format for delivering documents via the web, particularly in instances when preserving the formatting of the original is important.

Cost-Effectiveness

The portability of PDF also makes it a highly cost-effective solution to the document distribution dilemma. Consider that a typical 700 MB CD-ROM can store approximately 90,000 PDF pages, and costs approximately \$1 to create (when produced in quantity.) Operating costs for a standard computer printer range from \$0.015 to \$0.03 per page. Therefore, the 90,000 PDF pages that can be stored on CD for \$1 would cost between \$1350 and \$2700 to print once! Obviously, printing multiple copies and distributing them (via fax, interoffice or postal mail) causes these costs to multiply. PDF files can be sent via email, posted to a website or stored on a network, virtually eliminating all document distribution costs.

Improving Business Processes

PDF allows users to easily add interactive devices such as bookmarks, thumbnails, and hyperlinks to improve the usability of business documents. Users can add comments via electronic "sticky notes," highlight sections of importance, and apply digital signatures and digital stamps, making PDF an ideal solution for hundreds of business workflow scenarios.

PDF in Action

The potential applications for using PDF files to share important information are too numerous to list. Virtually anything that can be printed can be converted to PDF including: annual reports, product brochures, presentations, sales contracts, marketing proposals, advertising

graphics, direct mail, event invitations, product literature, market research data, inventory reports, and sales receipts. The following are just a few of the ways PDFs can be applied to facilitate the document distribution process.

- ▶ Post a PDF of the company's annual report to the corporate website and invite shareholders to download it.
 - ▶ Generate a PDF of the company's Employee Handbook, adding bookmarks to facilitate navigation to each section, and post it to an Intranet site.
 - ▶ Distribute PDF versions of high-quality, graphic-intensive product brochures via the web for customers to view, download, or print.
 - ▶ Store a PDF of an interactive product presentation on CD-ROM, for distribution at an industry event.
 - ▶ Merge individual PDF files of a CAD drawing from Engineering, a prototype product photo from Advertising, a forecasting spreadsheet from Sales, and market research data from Marketing into a comprehensive marketing proposal.
 - ▶ Use PDFs of controlled documents in conjunction with an existing document workflow system, allowing reviewers to add comments and apply approval signatures electronically.
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