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Adobe PDF: The Universal Document Exchange Standard for the New Millennium

As momentum builds in the move from traditional, paper-based publishing processes to those that involve online content creation and mass distribution over the Internet, today's businesses face the challenge of ensuring quicker, more reliable, and more secure methods of sharing information. Even the rare organizations in which standardized hardware platforms and software applications make in-house document exchange easy can encounter problems when they send documents to customers, clients, and partners across town—or around the globe. Documents containing sensitive information, such as legal briefs, medical records, and financial statements, must retain their original formatting when converted from paper to an electronic form and when output to any type of printer. And visually rich documents, such as marketing brochures and presentations, could lose their impact if they're not reproduced exactly as the designer intended.

Adobe's response to this enterprise-wide problem was to use its expertise in providing graphics and publishing solutions to engineer a compact, manageable, and versatile tool for the online exchange of fixed-form documents. Introduced in 1993, Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) is now one of the primary document formats on the World Wide Web and has streamlined the process of sharing information across all major computing platforms. Adobe Acrobat software reliably captures a document's elements—fonts, graphics, images, color, and layout—and preserves them in PDF. By enabling cross-platform transmission, PDF has been adopted worldwide as a de facto standard for online document distribution. As increasing numbers of businesses deliver more types of documents via the Internet, and as they involve more people, platforms, and applications in the publishing process, the value of PDF continues to grow.

Meeting the challenges of changing technology

The Web has sparked a fundamental transformation in the way businesses operate. With so much more information so readily accessible, a company's success depends more and more on its ability to meet customers' expectations of quick, easy access to information. And since the range of documents involved in conducting business has grown to include those created in a variety of applications and formats, efficiency in document management and reliability in document exchange have become paramount. Document archiving has also become an issue. Ever-changing computing standards within organizations necessitate the adoption of new storage media and file system formats. And as businesses upgrade their systems, application-specific file formats become obsolete. Therefore, organizations need a reliable, standardized format in which to preserve their "legacy" files.

Although simplification and standardization of its own computing environment might be an organization's goal, the potential audience for a company's information—such as outside collaborators, partners, and customers—continues to become more technologically diverse. People work on a variety of platforms, Microsoft® Windows versions abound, the market for mainframe and client-server solutions continues to grow, and a variety of handheld devices proliferates in the modern workplace. The heterogeneous nature of today's computing environment complicates the process of exchanging information. True, the Internet and

e-mail make quick work of transmitting documents, but there is no guarantee that the recipients will be successful in accessing those documents. Incompatible platforms, varying applications and software versions, and missing fonts often wreak havoc on a document's original design, which can cause problems when a company's image and branding must be properly conveyed, or when the file is a legal document that should not be altered in any way. Finally, software and printer limitations can make accurate, reliable printing hard to guarantee. All of these factors have driven up the value of a common file exchange format.

What can Adobe Acrobat 4.0 and PDF do for you?

Based on the Adobe imaging model, which is the core technology of the Adobe PostScript® language, PDF ensures that your electronic documents can be viewed and printed exactly as you intended—regardless of the recipient's hardware and software. Adobe Acrobat 4.0 software delivers all the tools you need for the creation and collaborative review of PDF files in your choice of 14 languages. With Acrobat, you can convert any document from any application to PDF. Thus, you can create a sales proposal or marketing plan using text and tables from Microsoft Word and spreadsheets from Microsoft Excel, and you can save your work—with the click of a mouse—as a PDF file. Acrobat also lets you enhance your PDF files with bookmarks, cross-document links, Web links, security features, digital signatures,* and interactive forms; and all PDF files, even those created from scanned documents, are fully searchable. Any enhancements you add, and all the fonts, formatting, colors, tables, and charts from each of the source documents, are preserved in one compact PDF file. Deliver compact PDF documents on your network server, posted on your Web site or intranet, attached to e-mail, or in a Lotus Notes database.

Using the free Acrobat Reader software (which can be downloaded from the Adobe Web site at www.adobe.com/acrobat), recipients of a PDF file can view, navigate, and print the file. And regardless of which applications or fonts your recipients have installed, the file's design and content appear exactly as they were created. PDF files are much smaller than their source files, and because they download a page at a time, they offer fast display on the Web.

Acrobat 4.0 also provides electronic mark-up and security features that streamline and safeguard the document review process. When used by both your workgroup and outside collaborators, Acrobat 4.0 software facilitates a less time-consuming document-review cycle by offering a comprehensive set of PDF review and mark-up tools, including electronic sticky notes, the Highlight Text and Strikethrough Text tools, and more. Any reader can easily contribute comments, and because these comments sit on a separate document layer, they do not alter your original document in any way. A digital signature feature ensures highly controlled document review by allowing readers to digitally "sign" document versions for reliable authentication.* Such annotations and security features—in addition to links, bookmarks, and other enhancements—stay intact when delivered to any medium. And PDF files include all the fonts, formatting, and image data required to print the document just as you intended.

PDF—The clear choice now and for the future

PDF has clearly become a preferred document exchange standard. Worldwide, Acrobat Reader has been downloaded more than 50 million times. The United States government and a significant number of large corporations—including members of the financial and publishing industries—have chosen to invest in the long-term viability of Acrobat and PDF. The following section highlights some of those organizations and the many advantages they have gained from using PDF. To find out more about other organizations that use Adobe Acrobat, visit the Adobe Web site at www.adobe.com/acrobat.

*Support for digital signatures is included only with Acrobat 4.0 for Windows.

- **U.S. Courts:** Federal courts handle a large number of bankruptcy and other U.S. District cases, and appellate courts review trial records from the lower courts as well as additional briefs. The amount of paper used for these cases has traditionally been enormous, and as mandated by law, every document must be stored at the courthouse and be made available as part of the public record. Prompted by the difficulty of accessing and manipulating these paper documents, in recent years some courts have begun to use the Internet, databases, Web server technology, and full-text search engines to ensure that as much document processing as possible is done electronically. The cornerstone of this electronic case-filing project is PDF, now a proposed standard for documents being stored by the judiciary for its own and the public's review. The Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts has recommended that legal professionals produce documents using a PDF tool such as Adobe Acrobat and attach each resulting PDF file to an electronic Web form that contains information used to "docket" each document in case folders—all via the Internet. In addition, several U.S. courts have implemented the use of PDF for an electronic bankruptcy and civil litigation case-filing system in a pilot project in nine districts.
- **The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA):** The FAA's team of 2,400 inspectors is charged with the task of ensuring that all airplanes—from crop dusters to 747s—meet stringent safety requirements before they leave the ground. Among its most valuable on-the-job resources are the Aviation Safety Inspector handbooks, three manuals totaling more than 6,000 pages. Until recently, the handbooks were distributed solely on paper, but this costly, three-month process is being replaced by an electronic document-delivery solution based on Adobe Acrobat software and PDF. The compact file size and widespread acceptance of PDF have helped shorten the FAA's production cycle so that PDF copies of the handbooks, which retain the precise look of the originals, can be produced and distributed in a matter of days.
- **National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC):** Usually before an insurance company can change a form, rate, or even an advertisement, the state insurance regulatory agency must authorize the change. This massive approval process involves thousands of annual filings, and until recently, each filing took an average of three months to complete. Now, however, approval time has dropped by as much as 75 percent, thanks to a solution developed by the NAIC and based on PDF and Lotus Notes. Insurance companies now convert their rate and form filings—legal documents that must retain exact fidelity to the original word processing documents—to PDF and transmit the compact files over the Internet using Lotus Notes. With the resulting quick approvals, insurance companies achieve faster time to market and significantly reduce postage and paper storage costs.
- **First Union Corporation:** The sixth largest bank-holding company in the U.S., with more than \$220 billion in assets, First Union Corporation has built its success on a highly skilled, well-informed workforce. In the past, keeping its employees up to date on new services and regulations meant that each week the bank had to route thousands of documents to branch managers, loan officers, and other executives. But this time-consuming and costly process was streamlined when First Union took advantage of Adobe Acrobat and Adobe Acrobat Capture® software to develop an electronic library: Now, 12,000 employees on a variety of computer platforms nationwide regularly access the system for updates. By putting just two documents online in PDF, the commercial credit and real estate loan manuals, First Union reduced its printing and distribution costs by \$400,000 a year.
- **AlphaGraphics, Inc.:** Though long accustomed to receiving its customers' designs in a variety of native file formats, this leading provider of print and digital publishing services for businesses found that, due to missing files, missing fonts, and corrupt graphics, only 30 to 40 percent of such jobs printed correctly on the first try. As an alternative, the company has begun to encourage its customers to submit their jobs as PDF files—90 percent of which print correctly the first time. The small size of PDF files also helps facilitate a faster print workflow, as does the fact that AlphaGraphics stores are beginning to allow customers to proof jobs on-screen in PDF. All these factors contribute to improved customer service and increased cost savings.

- **Amcor Fibre Packaging:** One of the world's leading integrated packaging and paper companies, this Australia-based company designs packaging materials in accordance with strict client requirements and specifications. In the past, development and approval for each packaging project involved multiple mail deliveries and faxes—a time-consuming, costly, and ultimately inefficient process. In 1995, the company began using Acrobat software to submit its packaging artwork to clients as PDF files. The time and cost savings were immediate. Now, Amcor provides clients with an Acrobat mark-up template to further speed review cycles and avoid miscommunication, and the company is putting in place a system to deliver package designs and specifications to the factory floor via PDF.

In addition to these organizations, many more are investing in the power of Adobe PDF. Lucent Technologies, Inc. uses PDF to publish more than 54,000 documents on CD-ROM and on its corporate intranet site. Bloomberg Financial Markets in Australia uses Adobe Acrobat and PDF to transfer more than 300 daily press releases to its subscription news service, giving more than 250,000 investors direct access to important financial updates. Cisco Systems has realized significant print and distribution cost savings by offering more than 4 million PDF pages of product documentation on its Web site each month. Two major U.S. Air Force bases—Minot and Edwards—are making extensive use of Adobe Acrobat in their information-handling efforts, and the Electronic Commerce division of the Government Standards Association is using PDF to post standard government forms to the Web. Kinko's Incorporated, Fujitsu Network Communications, the Tandem Division of Compaq Computer Corporation, and the U.S. Internal Revenue Service are other large organizations that use Adobe Acrobat and PDF to meet their business goals.

Adobe is currently working with the U.S. Department of Defense and Lockheed Martin on a project to develop archiving standards in conjunction with the National Archives and Records Administration. This last effort—further proof of the growing stature of PDF with government agencies and technology trendsetters alike—could well lead to the adoption of PDF as a national archiving standard.

Adobe Document Solutions: Making the most of your information

As they grow, large organizations are transferring more documents electronically. To do so, they need tools and solutions so they can update and replace inefficient, paper-based processes, such as traditional document distribution, review, and archiving. Offering universal access to virtually any document through PDF, Adobe Acrobat 4.0 software is the perfect choice for organizations that want to increase the efficiency and productivity of information exchange as computer systems and applications proliferate, change, or become obsolete. Adobe Acrobat 4.0 is ready to meet the growing, changing needs of today's enterprise workgroups, making it the reliable, long-term document-exchange solution.

Ensuring the long-term preservation and usefulness of documents is only part of the Acrobat story. Together, Adobe Acrobat and PDF form the foundation of Adobe Document Solutions—an integrated way of creating, sharing, and reviewing documents that helps organizations make the most of their information. Innovative technologies such as Adobe Acrobat Capture and Adobe PostScript 3™ software complement Acrobat software and PDF to provide a powerful solution that enables enterprises to see the greatest return on their information assets.

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