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# PDF Creation

Options and Recommendations

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# PDF creation options

## Introduction

This research was carried out for a client in May 2006 and reflects their needs at that time.

The contents have been modified to remove identifying information about the client.

The client has given me permission to publish my research and findings.

Rhonda Bracey  
June 2006

## Aim

The aim of the research was to:

- investigate several PDF creation software applications
- download and test some of these tools to determine how they handled the client's specific requirements.

## Background

The client - a software development company - has some 50 staff scattered across three continents (USA, Australia, South Africa). Some of these staff need to send out long documents, such as responses to RFPs, to customers regularly.

The client has a specific corporate font that is not a standard Windows font, with the result that when customers receive Word documents, they do not look like the document sent, and the pagination later in the document does not match the original pagination. Because Word tries to match the font as closely as possible, and because that match is Word's 'best guess', the result is a document with an unpredictable font that pushes pages as well as section and page breaks onto following pages.

Another issue is that numerous attachments invariably get embedded (using OLE) into these documents. These attachments are often required because of the Tender process.

A single copy of Acrobat Professional 7.0 is owned by the client and installed on the technical writer's computer.

## Requirements

The PDF creation solution therefore has to meet these functional requirements:

- Embed OLE objects – preferably with ability to open them from within the PDF via Acrobat Reader
- Create automatic bookmarks based on Word's Heading styles
- Create clickable links automatically (e.g. TOC)
- Easy to use for staff
- Licensed for 10-12 users
- Cheap - preferably under \$100 US per seat (i.e. not full Acrobat)

## Environment

All testing was done on a Virtual Machine, replicating the client's Windows XP SP2 and Word 2003 environment.

## Documents Tested

Two sample documents were forwarded to me via email.

### ***Features of both documents***

- Length: 20+ pages
- Corporate fonts used throughout
- Contained:
  - embedded OLE objects (PDFs, JPGs, DOCs),
  - a TOC generated from Headings
  - a mix of numbered and un-numbered heading styles
  - diagrams
  - tables

### ***Issues with one or both documents***

- Inconsistent use by staff of heading and other styles.  
This is an issue for any PDF creator with a Word doc as they use Word's heading styles to create a Bookmark panel; it is an education issue for the client's staff, NOT a PDF creation issue.

- The embedded PDFs did NOT open in either Word document; the other embedded objects (DOCs and JPGs) opened fine.
- One document was Letter page size, the other was A4. This caused various problems with some tools during testing but no attempt was made to force the document into another paper size.

## Timeline

I was allocated around 10 hours to do the research, download and test the tools, and come up with some recommendations.

## PDF Creation Tool Options and Recommendations

I tested the following PDF creation tools. Initially, I wasn't going to test Acrobat as the client indicated that they didn't want to pay the cost for that many licenses of Acrobat. However, I needed a baseline for the tests, so eventually tested Acrobat against the client's requirements too.

**Note:** Prices are in US dollars and were valid as at May 30, 2006.

Tool	Cost (USD; pp)	General notes	Recommend?
Adobe Acrobat	Standard: \$299 (this would be sufficient for client's purposes)  Professional: \$449	Very expensive compared to other tools, but most fully featured – as you'd expect	Yes – But price is the biggest deterrent
CutePDF	CutePDF Writer: free  CutePDFPro: \$49.95 pp; \$45 pp (2-14 users)	The Writer creates the PDF; Pro allows you to fiddle with it. Bookmarks and clickable links (such as TOC) have to be created manually in the Pro version AFTER you create the PDF	No – Creating bookmarks and links manually is a showstopper
Jaws	\$73 pp (5-10 users)	Didn't deal with Level 1 headings in Word, so did not recognise Numbered Headings as legitimate; didn't deal with Level 2 or lower headings either; settings indicated that it would create clickable links of things such as TOC entries – it didn't. Bullets not converted correctly.	No – Lack of Bookmarks and clickable links are the showstopper for this one

Tool	Cost (USD; pp)	General notes	Recommend?
NicePDF	\$79.95 pp (10-19 users)	Created a bookmark from a single Heading 1 and ignored all other Word Levels for headings, so no usable bookmark panel. Required restart of machine after installation (no others did). Had to change printer driver settings each time it encountered a different page size; this would be a nuisance for this client as they have offices throughout the world.	No – Incorrect Bookmarks and changing printer driver settings are showstoppers
NitroPDF	\$89.10 pp \$75.06 pp for 10 users (\$82.35 with support)	Crashed Word on first use; continue to have issues with crashing or not working or stalling apps; menu option crashed Word, then when restarted Jaws had taken over the menu option even though it said Nitro. Despite saying it could embed fonts, it spat an error message on the corporate fonts and went for something close. Had to manually set heading styles and levels to get a hierarchical Bookmark panel. Settings were the same as for PDF Create from Nuance – suspect this is a cloned app.	No – Way too many errors; doesn't embed fonts
PDF995 Suite	Std: \$19.95 pp	Need to install 3 apps to get all the features – a conversion tool + PDF995 + PDFedit995. Two step process to create a PDF. Bookmarks and clickable links NOT created automatically; have to do this manually so it can do it as the marketing says, but doing it manually is NOT acceptable.	No – Too many steps and creating bookmarks and links manually is a showstopper
PDF Create	PDF Create: \$49.99 pp (can't get volume licensing for over 5) Converter Pro: \$99.99 (includes PDF Create + PDF Converter + PDF editing functions)	Had to uninstall NitroPDF and its printer driver to install this one; despite saying it could embed fonts, it spat an error message on the corporate fonts and went for something close. Had to manually set heading styles and levels to get a hierarchical Bookmark panel. Same settings/dialog options as Nitro so suspect one is a cloned app of the other.	No – Fonts are the showstopper

Tool	Cost (USD; pp)	General notes	Recommend?
PDF Factory	Std: \$45 pp (10-14 users); Server edition: \$54 pp  Pro: \$90 pp (10-14 users); Server edition: \$108 pp	Had to specify the fonts to embed, but this was once only; got the bookmarks totally wrong – looked as though it was grabbing info from a graphic – definitely not the headings	No – Bookmark issue is a showstopper
Sonic	\$74.95 pp	Have to create bookmarks and clickable links manually. Clumsy to use as create via a printer driver.	No – Creating bookmarks and links manually is a showstopper

## Results of tests

### Features

#### PLEASE NOTE

NONE of the tools – including Acrobat itself – deals with embedded OLE objects. Every tool ignores them and either leaves a picture of the OLE icon, or makes it a solid red square or similar.

**Suggestion:** Instead of embedding documents inside a Word document, create separate PDFs of each and add them to the original document's PDF prior to emailing the doc to the client. Many tools allow this.

Feature	Acrobat	Cute PDF	Jaws	Nice PDF	Nitro PDF	PDF 995 Suite	PDF Create	PDF Factory	Sonic
Auto Bookmarks	Yes	No	No (fails)	No (fails)	No (fails)	No	Yes	No (fails; Pro only)	No
OLE embed.	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Combine docs	Yes	Pro only	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Auto links	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Add/delete pages	Yes	Pro only	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Security options	Yes	Pro only	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Pro only	Yes

Feature	Acrobat	Cute PDF	Jaws	Nice PDF	Nitro PDF	PDF 995 Suite	PDF Create	PDF Factory	Sonic
Embed fonts	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No (fails)	Yes	No (fails)	Yes (set once)	Yes
Word icon	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Word menu	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Printer Driver	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

## File sizes

File sizes were very similar, with the exception of Jaws. However, Jaws' extra file size could be a result of the excessively large watermarking it puts over each page of the test docs.

Smallest sizes for each document are in green; largest in pink.

[All sizes in KB]	Doc 1	Doc 2
ORIGINAL SIZE	2211	1595
Acrobat	236	229
CutePDF	332	299
Jaws	527	551
NicePDF	335	298
NitroPDF	286	282
PDF995 Suite	319	279
PDF Create	287	281
PDF Factory	339	327
Sonic	432	325

## Time taken

The time taken to create a PDF from the same documents using the various tools was very similar (probably less than 1 minute), so specific speed tests were not deemed necessary.

## Tool availability

Tool	Available from	Trial available
Adobe Acrobat	<a href="http://www.adobe.com">http://www.adobe.com</a> (and many resellers)	Yes (I tested using Acrobat 7.0 Professional on my PC)
CutePDF	<a href="http://www.cutepdf.com/Products/CutePDF/pro.asp">http://www.cutepdf.com/Products/CutePDF/pro.asp</a> and <a href="http://www.cutepdf.com/Products/CutePDF/writer.asp">http://www.cutepdf.com/Products/CutePDF/writer.asp</a>	Yes for both
Jaws	<a href="http://www.jawspdf.com/pdf_creator/index.html">http://www.jawspdf.com/pdf_creator/index.html</a>	Yes; watermarked
NicePDF	<a href="http://www.nicepdf.com/">http://www.nicepdf.com/</a>	Yes; limit of 9 document creation runs
NitroPDF	<a href="http://www.nitropdf.com/">http://www.nitropdf.com/</a>	Yes; seemed to be a clone of PDF Create from Nuance
PDF995 Suite	<a href="http://www.pdfedit995.com/">http://www.pdfedit995.com/</a>	Yes – but free version has popup windows for sponsor advertising
PDF Create	<a href="http://www.nuance.com/pdfconverter/">http://www.nuance.com/pdfconverter/</a> (Nuance was ScanSoft); Comparison of apps in bundle: <a href="http://www.nuance.com/pdfconverter/matrix/">http://www.nuance.com/pdfconverter/matrix/</a>	Yes but not from Nuance; found another source on the internet; only tested PDF Create; 15 day trial
PDF Factory	<a href="http://fineprint.com/products/pdfactory/index.html">http://fineprint.com/products/pdfactory/index.html</a>	Yes; watermarked output
Sonic	<a href="http://www.investintech.com/products/sonic/prod_sonic.htm">http://www.investintech.com/products/sonic/prod_sonic.htm</a>	Yes; 7 day evaluation; watermarked output

## References

- *An Embarrassment of Riches: How To Choose a PDF Creation Tool*  
<http://www.pdfzone.com/article2/0,1895,1948810,00.asp>
- *Microsoft to Build PDF Support into Office 12*  
<http://www.pdfzone.com/article2/0,1895,1866492,00.asp> [Microsoft have since announced that they cannot come to an agreement with Adobe and so support for PDF conversion direct from Word - without paying for a PDF creation tool - is unlikely in Office 12; June 2006]