

Adobe Boosts Market Position With Acrobat 8 Capabilities

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Acrobat 8 is Adobe's first attempt to leverage products added through the Macromedia buy, including its Breeze and Flash Player products. The move upgrades Adobe's document handling and real-time collaboration offerings.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Event

On 18 September 2006, Adobe announced that Acrobat 8, comprising several products under the Acrobat brand, would be generally available in November 2006. Moving beyond PDF documents, the Acrobat 8 family will include the Breeze Web conferencing product and the Breeze Central hosted conferencing service, now called Acrobat Connect Professional.

Analysis

Acrobat 8 expands Acrobat's historic role as a creative desktop tool player with an archive format and universal distribution medium via Acrobat, Adobe Reader and PDF. New capabilities underscore Adobe's role in a larger business context, providing a complete value chain from content creation through delivery. While Acrobat Connect Professional only offers limited support for server-based document collaboration, PDF files are now much more interactive, building collaboration into the document. Acrobat 8 advances Adobe's position to compete in the collaborative document assembly and review market with a range of tools suited to professional and casual users. Since PDF files do not require a server or specific platform or operating system to support collaboration and sharing, the Acrobat upgrades are meaningful even in isolation. In concert, they may allow firms to engage partners and customers without expensive infrastructure investments.

Adobe has also augmented its traditional desktop focus with an increasingly robust server architecture that includes some content management capabilities, transformation engines, streaming servers and collaboration hubs. In addition, the new Adobe Reader addresses the concerns of those who use the product to fill out forms — and who have been frustrated by their inability to save filled-in data — by allowing them to save their input in a new copy of the form, using Adobe Reader enabled by Acrobat 8 Professional or Acrobat 3D version 8. In addition, those products enable users to digitally sign documents with Reader.

Adobe is now a full-scale conference service provider. Workers can collaborate in real time using Acrobat Connect Professional, an update of the highly rated Breeze conferencing system, in hosted or installed form. Given the number of project-oriented contexts in which collaborative document review or presentations are shared, this feature is a key enhancement that positions Adobe in the WebEx and LiveMeeting hosted-conferencing market for simplified Web connections that bind people and processes with content.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Enterprises already dependent on Acrobat for design, packaging and delivery of documents should consider this to be a critical upgrade.
- Casual Acrobat users whose primary occupation is creative and who also use Creative Suite may want to wait until 2007, when the new Acrobat will be bundled with Creative Suite 3. Until then, it is also available in Adobe Creative Suite 2.3 Premium (along with Dreamweaver 8).

RECOMMENDED READING

- "Adobe Improves Product Design Collaboration" — Adobe's acquisition of Trade and Technologies France will enable Adobe to accelerate and expand its 3D visualization and collaboration capabilities. **By Thilo Koslowski and Marc Halpern**
- "It's Time to Refocus Your Content Management Efforts" — Develop plans for managing metadata and providing better information access to make content more accessible. **By Toby Bell and Regina Casonato**

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