

PDF Tips

Few printers would now specify anything other than a *clean* PDF as the file format of choice to receive from their customers, although we all know that a *clean* PDF file is a utopian ideal and the real world situation can be very different. Most customers are open to being educated on the subject although getting them to implement the correct methodology is often a little harder.

To help get the PDF message across, make sure your own house is in order first and that you can clearly explain what the technical issues are when the customer can only provide say an MS Word file. The vast majority of customers will work with you to resolve any difficulties if they have confidence in what you are saying, and you will probably end up with an even stronger client relationship through earning their respect during this process.

So what can you do quickly and easily to help ensure the integrity of your own workflow? The two most common problems come from using the settings from a default install of Adobe Acrobat, which I am sure many of you are aware of already. The third is a compatibility issue between Acrobat 5 and 6.

The first setting to look at is "Use Local Fonts" under the Advanced menu. You might assume that if your customer submits a PDF with all of the fonts correctly embedded, Acrobat will then display the document as anticipated. This is not always the case if this option is turned on since your locally installed fonts will be used to render the document rather than the customer's versions. Turn this option off (fig 1).

The second setting that should be reviewed is "Overprint Preview" which is also under the Advanced menu. Most origination applications automatically apply overprinting and knockout values to items put on a page. Usually, black text will overprint, and white text on a coloured background will knockout the background. To test if the PDF you are viewing has any specific overprint or knockout requirements, check the "Overprint Preview" option (fig 1). You will then see the PDF exactly as it will print, and not the composite screen image that is the default screen view in Acrobat.

Finally, at The Electronic Document Company we are still seeing the same problem from several different customers. PDF files created in Acrobat 5 but opened at our end

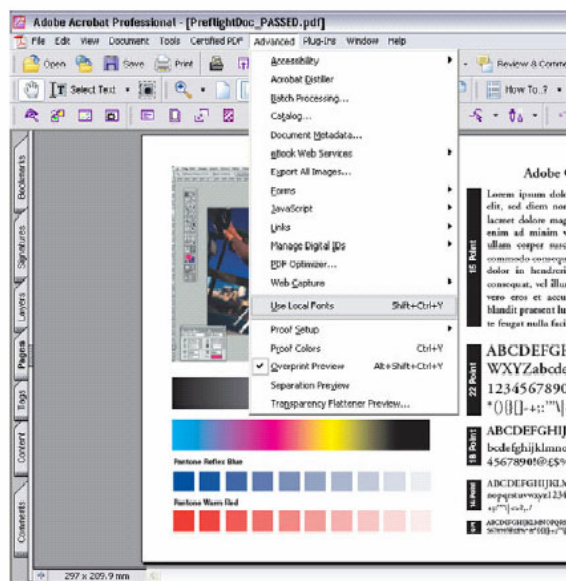


Fig 1

in Acrobat 6, print and display with intermittent font spacing issues. These files have all been put together at the client end from several individual PDF files, each created

by different users on different PC's, with some users having differing versions of the same fonts. The problem seems to stem from Acrobat 6 attempting to consolidate multiple occurrences of the different font versions. Unfortunately, despite various recommendations from Adobe the only practical solution for this problem appears to be to open the file in Acrobat 5. Just to further complicate the issue, you really need a spare PC for this as Adobe don't recommend installing different versions of Acrobat on the same machine!

Next month's article will look at how you can increase your digital print volumes, through offering your customers variable data mixed media campaigns, using both print and email with automated response handling. It sounds tricky but it's inexpensive and relatively easy to set-up something that looks pretty impressive.

Philip Mattimoe is Chief Technical Officer for the Electronic Document Company (winners of this year's BPIF eBusiness of the year award), and works on the development of their award winning DocuPump™ software, as well as providing consultancy services for implementing commercial emailing campaigns with variable data. <http://www.electrodoc.co.uk>