

City of Tecumseh, Michigan

City government saves tens of thousands of dollars annually by distributing information electronically in Adobe PDF files instead of on paper

PROFILE

- One of the first three settlements in the Michigan territory
- Location: Tecumseh, Michigan
- Population: 8,500
- www.downtowntecumseh.com

BENEFITS SUMMARY

- Through paper and labor savings, Tecumseh will achieve return on investment (ROI) in less than a year of its purchase of Adobe Acrobat software and notebook computers.
- Adobe Acrobat and Adobe PDF will save Tecumseh more than \$10,000 annually in paper and copy repair costs.
- By reducing the time required to assemble and distribute city council packets from 120 hours a month to only 10 hours a month, Adobe Acrobat and Adobe PDF free Tecumseh staff to focus on other projects.
- City council members can quickly locate agenda items in fully searchable, bookmarked Adobe PDF files.
- Because Adobe Acrobat runs on any standard PC, the city can leverage its hardware investment for other applications.
- The same Adobe PDF files the city creates for CDs can also be published to the Web without any incremental work.
- Using Acrobat Capture, the city can convert scanned paper documents to Adobe PDF files for electronic delivery.
- City council members can take notes directly on the electronic documents using the commenting tools in Adobe Acrobat.

Tecumseh city employees devoted hours of valuable time and reams of paper to preparing packets of information for bimonthly Tecumseh City Council meetings. These packets, containing up to 200 pages, highlighted current and planned city projects and were distributed manually to elected officials, city department heads, reporters, and interested citizens. Simply printing, copying, and collating the information packets required, on average, 120 hours of valuable employee time each month—time that could have been better spent on other city projects. In addition, monthly paper costs to produce these packets could total as much as \$1,000. Clearly, a more efficient process was needed.

To address the problem, the city of Tecumseh replaced its inefficient paper-based processes with an electronic workflow using Adobe Acrobat and Acrobat Capture software. “With Adobe Acrobat and Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF), one person can accomplish tasks that previously took three people a week or longer to do,” says Laura Caterina, City Clerk for the city of Tecumseh. “The Adobe software enables us to do a lot more in less time and make better use of limited resources.”

High cost of paper

Tecumseh’s seven-member city council meets twice a month to discuss and approve city expenditures. During the two weeks prior to each meeting, City clerk staff spent about 60 hours assembling, photocopying, and collating 35 copies of the packet. The sheer amount of paper required to perform this task concerned the ecology- and cost-conscious city. “We went through almost 200,000 sheets of paper a year,”

says Caterina. “And huge piles of paper were left behind after each meeting.” Copying costs were also a concern. “We’ve run 1.8 million copies on our machine in less than three years,” notes Caterina. “We were literally wearing out the copier—and the staff.”

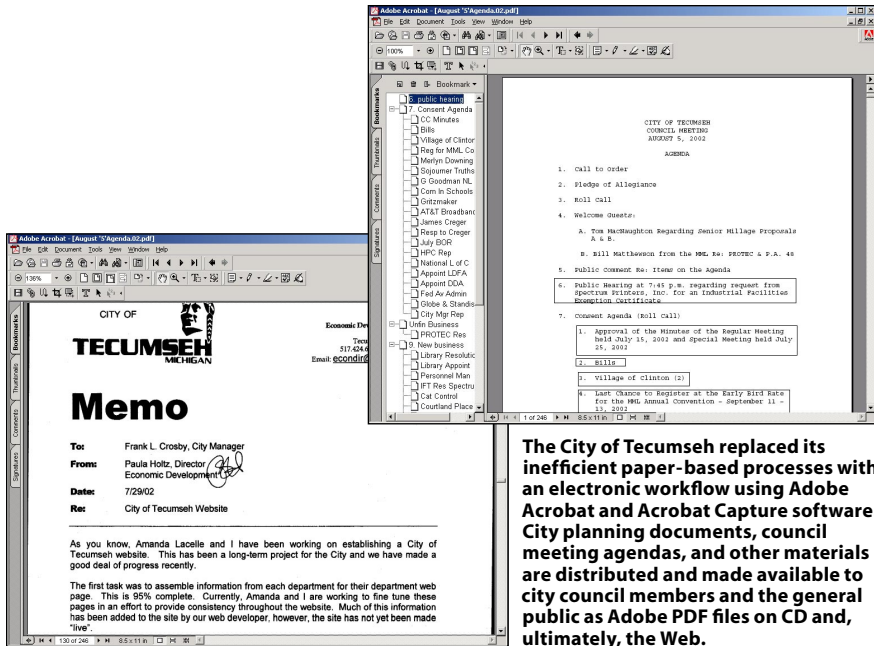
Accessible solution for any citizen

Committed to creating and distributing city council information more effectively, Tecumseh embraced Adobe Acrobat software and Adobe PDF files. By distributing the packets in Adobe PDF on CDs, the city could cut its paper-related costs, free staff for other projects, and provide a more useful tool for elected officials and citizens.

Tecumseh selected Adobe Acrobat software after evaluating a record-keeping system that ran on a proprietary computer. “Adobe Acrobat was the smart investment because it’s an open solution, and the computers we purchased for city council members could also be used for other applications,” says Caterina. “Also, our citizens could view Adobe PDF files on whatever computer they already had, without investing in new software.”

Another key benefit of Adobe Acrobat software for Tecumseh is that Adobe PDF files can be published on the Web, CD, or in print. Therefore, when Tecumseh updates its Web site, it can publish city council agendas in Adobe PDF without any incremental work.

The Paperless Packet Committee, consisting of Caterina, City Assessor Susan Sitterly, and Paul Sullivan, former director of the Tecumseh Civic



The City of Tecumseh replaced its inefficient paper-based processes with an electronic workflow using Adobe Acrobat and Acrobat Capture software. City planning documents, council meeting agendas, and other materials are distributed and made available to city council members and the general public as Adobe PDF files on CD and, ultimately, the Web.

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Laura Caterina
City clerk

Auditorium, met over the period of a year to define a process for gathering packet materials, converting them to Adobe PDF files, and making them available to citizens under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Once the process was established, implementation proceeded rapidly. “Only one person on our committee was especially technical,” notes Caterina. “Yet we found Acrobat easy to implement and use. The transition went smoothly and took only a few weeks.”

Easy to create and navigate

Sullivan trained city staff to use Adobe Acrobat to convert documents, which are usually created with Microsoft Office applications, to Adobe PDF files. The department staff e-mails the compact Adobe PDF files to Caterina, who then links the files to the agenda. When people submit paper documents, Caterina’s staff uses a high-speed scanner and Acrobat Capture software to create Adobe PDF files. The hyperlinked and fully searchable Adobe PDF files are then placed on CDs and distributed to city officials and interested citizens.

When the electronic Tecumseh City Council packet is complete, the city prints one paper copy to comply with state archive laws and

approximately six copies for audience members. “Now, we just need to print a few copies—not 35 copies,” notes Caterina.

To enable city council members to view CDs in the council chambers, the city purchased 12 Compaq Armada notebook computers. During meetings, council members use Adobe Acrobat software to make notes—for example, highlighting key passages. “The council is delighted to receive the packet in electronic form,” Caterina reports. “They especially like the convenient bookmarks, the full-text search feature, and the fact that items are linked to supporting documents. Clicking a link is so much easier than flipping through paper.”

Rapid ROI

Tecumseh is realizing significant savings from Adobe Acrobat software and expects to achieve ROI in less than a year. “The savings in paper, copy machine repairs, and on the cost of two full-time people copying and collating paper cover the purchase of Acrobat software and the notebook computers,” says Caterina.

Another important benefit for Tecumseh is that staff members can now devote more time to other projects that serve citizens. Concludes Caterina, “We have a small staff, and so whenever one task takes too much time, it detracts from other services. By freeing staff from spending all day at the copier, we enable them to respond faster to citizen inquiries, such as questions about utility bills, elections, or licenses.”

TOOLBOX

Adobe Acrobat
Adobe Acrobat Capture
Microsoft Office
PCs
Compaq Armada notebook computers

