



Holland Railconsult

Leading Dutch engineering firm improves information sharing, collaboration, and archiving using Adobe® Acrobat® and Adobe PDF

Keeping projects on track

Holland Railconsult is an engineering firm that provides capacity, safety, and integration solutions for some of the world's busiest railways. The company began as the in-house engineering department of Dutch Railways and today is an independent market leader with more than 1,300 employees and annual revenues of 132 million euros. The company serves clients across Europe, with offices in the Netherlands, Portugal, Poland, and Germany, and projects in several other countries.

Working on large railway engineering projects, Holland Railconsult can face daunting document management challenges. Every year, staff generates 1.5 million to 2 million technical drawings and specifications using hundreds of CAD and mathematical modeling applications. These materials have to be shared with clients, partners, and subcontractors, and then later archived.

Because the firm's clients and partners generally use a variety of computing applications, it had no way to ensure that project members could open and view the digital files sent to them. To compound the problem, archived engineering drawings were often inaccessible because the programs that created the documents were no longer used. For Holland Railconsult, there was a clear need for project teams to be able to communicate using a common file format and to easily access project files now and in the future.

Adopting an industry standard

Holland Railconsult's largest client, ProRail—the agency responsible for capacity, reliability, and safety on Dutch railways—was also struggling with these problems. To address the challenges, ProRail evaluated options for electronic document sharing and collaboration, determining that Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) provided the best solution. Holland Railconsult was already using Adobe PDF for select projects, but ProRail's recommendation prompted the firm to adopt the technology company-wide.

Holland Railconsult standardised on Adobe Acrobat Professional for several reasons. First, Acrobat made it easy to create PDF files that retained the fidelity of the original materials in CAD, word processing, and other applications. In addition, the software integrated seamlessly into existing business workflows. "We wanted to standardise on software that would consistently create PDF files that looked exactly like original documents in native applications. For that reason, we chose Acrobat software," says René Dorleijn, team leader, Engineering Applications, Business Department, Holland Railconsult.

Additional factors that led Holland Railconsult to select Acrobat and Adobe PDF included Adobe's customer service, the company's commitment to enhancing Acrobat, and the ability of Adobe PDF to support document archiving. "We selected Adobe Acrobat Professional because business continuity is important to us," says Dorleijn. "We need to be able to read documents up to 30 years from now. Plus, we want to work with a company committed to ongoing product development."

Holland Railconsult licensed 1,500 seats of Acrobat software to run on Microsoft® Windows® XP desktops and laptops, and a Windows 2003 Terminal Server environment. "We consider Acrobat a fundamental extension of the operating system," says Peter Dubbelman, IT consultant, IT Department, Holland Railconsult.

Real returns from Acrobat and Adobe PDF

Holland Railconsult has achieved its objectives in deploying Acrobat software. Documents from many applications can be converted easily to Adobe PDF and delivered to clients and partners, who can view the files with free Adobe Reader® software. Complex CAD drawings, spreadsheets, product images, and other materials can be combined into a single Adobe PDF file, greatly improving report presentation and making materials easier to distribute.

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Holland Railconsult

INDUSTRY

Architecture, Engineering & Construction (AEC)

CHALLENGES

- Meet client requirements for delivering reliable, easy-to-access project documents
- Distribute documents without having to provide the applications used to create them
- Adhere to regulations governing archival of project documents
- Improve collaboration among staff and with clients and partners

SOLUTION

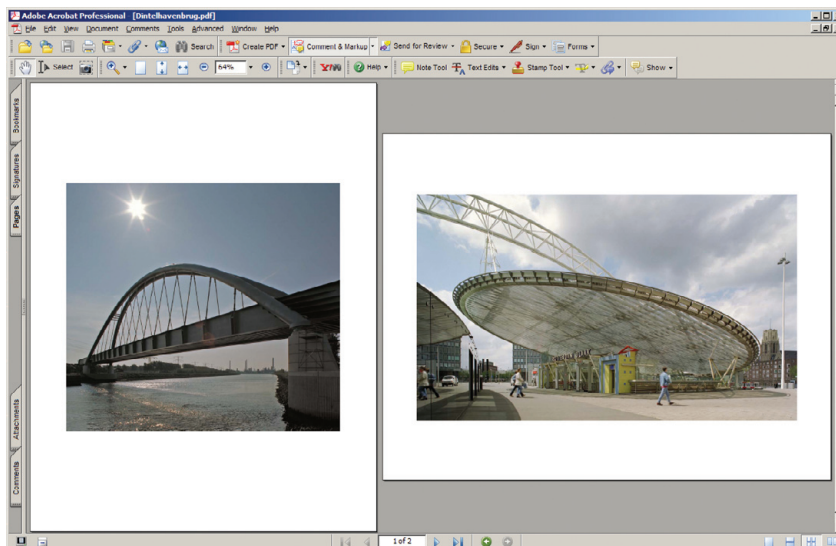
- Document Creation
- Document Collaboration

With Adobe Acrobat software, Holland Railconsult streamlined operations and improved customer satisfaction by delivering project documents in Adobe PDF.

RESULTS

- Enhanced customer satisfaction
- Accelerated review of project materials by combining multiple document types into one compact Adobe PDF file
- Streamlined document archival and retrieval
- Improved business processes by delivering materials in Adobe PDF

Every year, Holland Railconsult staff generates 1.5 million to 2 million technical drawings and specifications using hundreds of CAD and mathematical modeling applications. Working with its largest client, ProRail, Holland Railconsult standardised on Adobe Acrobat and Adobe PDF to share and collaborate on project documents with clients, partners, and subcontractors, and then later archive the materials.



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René Dorleijn, team leader,
Engineering Applications,
Business Department,
Holland Railconsult

SYSTEMS AT A GLANCE

- Adobe Acrobat Professional
- Adobe Reader

- Platform:
Microsoft Windows XP
Microsoft Windows Terminal Server
HP-UX
- Core Applications:
Bespoke In-house
AutoCAD
Microsoft Office
Bentley Microstation
Peoplesoft HR
Baan Financials

Better by Adobe.™

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345 Park Avenue, San Jose, CA 95110-2704 USA
www.adobe.com

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Using capabilities in Adobe Acrobat Professional, the firm can create Adobe PDF files that recipients can comment on electronically using free Adobe Reader. The result is increased customer satisfaction, improved collaboration, and faster review cycles.

An additional advantage of standardising on Acrobat software is that documents in Adobe PDF are backwards-compatible, meaning that a PDF file created using an earlier version of Acrobat can be opened with the newest version of Adobe Reader. This helps ensure that Holland Railconsult’s archiving obligations are met because technical drawings and other project documents can be reliably archived for future reference.

Adopting much-needed standards

Adobe Acrobat helps to standardise processes because staff can use customised presets to convert materials to Adobe PDF. This helps ensure that PDF files are created consistently company-wide, streamlining employee collaboration and enabling the firm to provide clients with dependable, easy-to-open files.

The smooth integration of Acrobat with existing applications is another key benefit for Holland Railconsult. Staff frequently uses word processing software, spreadsheets, CAD tools, and other applications—as well as enterprise applications such as Peoplesoft HR and Baan Financials. All of these applications can output materials to Adobe PDF, providing consistency and standardisation company-wide. “For us, it is important that many applications can generate Adobe PDF files, including off-the-shelf solutions and software that we develop in-house,” says Dubbelman.

Acrobat is used company-wide in Engineering, IT, Marketing, Communications, Finance, Legal, and Human Resources. The Visuals department can use Acrobat to create presentations in Adobe PDF that combine 3D visualisations, text, and technical data. The final, high-quality Adobe PDF files can be printed or made available digitally. “Acrobat is a primary tool for us,” Dubbelman explains. “Engineers use it to present engineering calculations, draughtsmen use it to output drawings to Adobe PDF files to share with clients, and our consultants produce customer reports that combine engineering drawings and visualisations with cost estimates and text.”

The Adobe software is flexible enough to support the many ways in which employees need to work. For example, with Acrobat staff can consolidate web pages from different sites into a single Adobe PDF file that can be shared with other members of a project team. This streamlines information exchange and simplifies saving technical data for later use.

A strong foundation for improved processes

Now that Holland Railconsult has integrated Acrobat into its business, staff are looking forward to using additional software capabilities. For instance, the firm is investigating scanning incoming paper documents and converting them to Adobe PDF to create a more comprehensive, searchable archive. In addition, the ability to archive e-mails in Adobe PDF gives Holland Railconsult an end-to-end process for capturing project knowledge, whether it originates in native application files, on paper, or arrives by e-mail. For the firm, the bottom line is that Acrobat and Adobe PDF provide a strong foundation for supporting reliable, efficient business processes.

