Perkins Eastman

International architecture and design firm lays foundation for fast, efficient collaboration using Adobe® Acrobat® Professional software and Adobe PDF

PERKINS EASTMAN
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INDUSTRY
Architecture, Engineering & Construction

CHALLENGES
- Eliminate obstacles to sharing complex design documents
- Prevent document reviewers from altering original content
- Reduce document delivery and management costs

SOLUTION
- Project collaboration

Perkins Eastman standardized on Adobe Acrobat Professional to streamline collaboration on project design documents with clients and partners worldwide.

RESULTS
- Accelerated document review cycles by as much as 95%
- Improved control over core content in documents
- Enhanced security with digital signatures on documents
- Reduced administrative costs for the firm and for clients
- Streamlined collaboration with clients and partners worldwide

Building better business processes

The variety and volume of documents in architecture, design, and urban planning projects can overwhelm even the most efficient organizations. CAD drawings, site plans, budgets, project schedules, photos, building specifications; the list of essential materials for a project can be thousands of documents long. To further complicate the process, dozens of collaborating architects, city planners, and other professionals need to review materials every step of the way.

"At any time, there are stacks of project documents moving across teams of reviewers," says Nick Leahy, principal at Perkins Eastman. "It's a challenge that can be difficult to understand for people outside of design and construction." With so many people reviewing diverse materials, Perkins Eastman needed to ensure that project teams always had fast, reliable access to documents. For the firm, Adobe Acrobat Professional software in combination with the Adobe Creative Suite 2 software offered the ideal solution.

From complex to simple

Perkins Eastman is a world-renowned architecture, urban design, and interior design firm with more than 500 professionals in North America and Asia. The award-winning firm has a portfolio of public- and private-sector clients in many practice areas, including corporate interiors, education, healthcare, housing, senior living, and urban design.

Adopting leading technologies that provide smarter, more efficient ways of working is integral to the firm's success at serving its client base. "Acrobat Professional software is on every employee's desktop," says Aaron Schwarz, FAIA, principal and director at Perkins Eastman. "Converting documents from any format to Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) is simple and enables us to collaborate easily across project teams."

The platform- and application-independent Adobe PDF files are much smaller than CAD drawings in native application files. In addition, staff can combine materials—budgets, drawings, photos, and other items—from multiple applications into a single Adobe PDF file that can be reviewed using free Adobe Reader® software. Given the firm's growing number of international projects, the universal access of Adobe PDF is becoming increasingly important.

A global standard: Adobe PDF

On a recent business trip to China, Perkins Eastman design staff were trying to have project plans in CAD files printed by a local printer. Unfortunately, the print shop owner was not familiar with the format and could not handle the job. "It was doubly frustrating because we were dealing with language issues and file format problems," says Schwarz. Before giving up, Schwarz decided to convert the materials to Adobe PDF. "The owner recognized the format immediately and printed our materials flawlessly," he says.

Often, for Perkins Eastman and its clients, one of the most important uses of Adobe PDF is reviewing files electronically. When architects and designers sketch out project ideas by hand or develop line art using Autodesk AutoCAD, they can convert the materials to Adobe PDF files to share with extended project teams. Using commenting tools in Adobe Acrobat Professional, recipients can add input to plans by electronically highlighting areas, crossing out elements, and placing digital notes on documents.

Adobe

As projects progress, so does the reliance on digital review and collaboration. By converting materials to Adobe PDF, Perkins Eastman staff can communicate project plans to clients, government regulators, and outside contractors. "We can deliver materials in Adobe PDF in seconds, in contrast to the days needed to send documents on paper," says Leahy. "With Acrobat, document review cycles can be completed 95% faster."

Acrobat and Adobe PDF have been particularly beneficial in streamlining the firm's punch list process when reviewing completed buildings. Instead of carrying stacks of paper drawings through hallways as they look for problems in recently completed buildings, employees can store all design plans as compact Adobe PDF files on tablet PCs. If problems with windows, flooring, or any other interior finish are found, they can highlight and note the issues on Adobe PDF files.

Right recipients, right access

Having materials arrive on-time and intact are only two of the benefits of using Acrobat and Adobe PDF. Equally important is the software's integration with the other Adobe Creative Suite 2 applications. In a single step, project team members can convert materials from Adobe Photoshop® CS2, Illustrator® CS2, and InDesign® CS2 to Adobe PDF files for easy, reliable sharing with others.

In addition, Acrobat Professional software provides the ability to prevent recipients from making changes to materials in Adobe PDF. Document security features enable staff to password-protect files, lock file content to prevent changes, and assign document controls such as enabling users to view but not print files. When rapid approvals are required, recipients can apply digital signatures. "We always have to balance the need to share our designs with the need to control access to them," says Leahy. "With Adobe PDF, we can collaborate across project teams, without jeopardizing document content."

Addressing multiple business needs

The firm's success with Acrobat goes far beyond reviewing and approving design documents. The flexibility of Adobe PDF prompted Perkins Eastman to eliminate internal routing of materials received by fax. Today, when faxes are received, they are scanned, converted to PDF, and e-mailed to intended recipients.

Accounting staff also regularly rely on Adobe Acrobat to streamline delivery and review of budgets and invoices. Billing and finance documents and supporting documentation such as expense reports can be combined into one Adobe PDF for delivery to clients. "Effective communication is vital to everything that we do," says Schwarz. "With Acrobat, we remove barriers to communication and collaboration by instantly delivering project materials as secure, easy-to-use Adobe PDF files where and when they're needed."

SYSTEMS AT A GLANCE

- The Adobe Creative Suite 2. Components used include:
  - Adobe Acrobat Professional
  - Adobe InDesign CS2
  - Adobe Photoshop CS2

- Toshiba Portege M200 Tablet PC with Intel® Pentium® M processor
- Sony PCG-GRX600K with Intel Pentium 4 processor
- Motion Computing M1400 Tablet PC, Intel Pentium Pro processor
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Professional
- Microsoft Windows XP Tablet edition
- Microsoft Windows 2000

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