



Do More with Documents

The IT Leader's Guide to PDF Creation

Reducing Tool Sprawl and Streamlining
Document Workflows

A strategic guide for IT decision-makers managing
document creation across the enterprise



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PDF remains the universal standard for business documents. Contracts, invoices, reports, proposals, compliance records, and customer-facing materials are created, shared, and archived as PDFs every day across every industry. The format's cross-platform consistency, professional presentation, and security capabilities make it indispensable.

Yet most organizations lack a unified approach to PDF creation. Employees across departments use whatever tool is most convenient: built-in print functions, free online converters, mobile apps, browser extensions, or standalone software. This fragmentation creates inconsistent document quality, duplicated licensing costs, and—most critically—security gaps that IT cannot see or control.

The risk is not hypothetical. When employees upload sensitive documents to free online PDF converters, they are transmitting company data to unknown third parties with unclear privacy practices and no accountability. Contracts, financial statements, HR records, and customer information pass through servers operated by companies that may store, analyze, or monetize that data in ways that violate compliance requirements.

This white paper is designed for IT decision-makers and operations leaders who need to understand the risks of unmanaged PDF creation and the benefits of standardization. You will learn why PDF remains the standard, how organizations create PDFs today, what to look for when evaluating solutions, and how consolidating on a trusted platform reduces cost, improves security, and streamlines document workflows.

The goal is straightforward: help you take control of document creation so your organization can work faster, safer, and with greater confidence.

The Problem: PDF Creation Is Everywhere, But Rarely Managed



Every department in your organization creates PDFs. Finance generates invoices and financial reports. Legal produces contracts and compliance documentation. HR creates offer letters, policy manuals, and employee records. Marketing builds proposals, case studies, and sales collateral. Operations documents procedures and training materials.

And almost all of them do it differently.

Some employees use the print-to-PDF function built into their operating system. Others export directly from Microsoft Word or Google Docs. Some search for free online converters whenever they need to turn a file into a PDF. A few have access to dedicated PDF software, while others make do with whatever mobile app they downloaded years ago.

This fragmentation creates problems that compound over time:

- ✘ **Inconsistent document quality:** PDFs created with different tools look different. Fonts don't match, layouts shift, and the organization's documents lack a unified professional appearance.
- ✘ **Security risks:** Free online tools and unvetted converters may store, analyze, or expose the documents employees upload. IT has no visibility into this data flow.
- ✘ **No central governance:** Without a standard tool, there's no way to enforce document policies, track usage, or ensure compliance with industry regulations.
- ✘ **Tool sprawl and wasted spend:** Multiple teams purchasing multiple solutions—or worse, paying for capabilities they already have elsewhere—drives up costs without improving outcomes.
- ✘ **Support burden:** IT fields requests about a dozen different PDF tools instead of supporting one standard platform.

IT leaders are held accountable for document security and compliance. But when PDF creation happens through a patchwork of tools—many of which IT never approved or even knows about—that accountability becomes impossible to fulfill. You cannot secure what you cannot see.

The Hidden Risk of "Just Google It"



When an employee needs to convert a file to PDF, the path of least resistance is a quick web search. "Convert Word to PDF free." "Online PDF maker." "JPG to PDF." Dozens of results appear—free tools promising instant conversion with no registration required.

The employee uploads the file, clicks convert, downloads the result, and moves on with their day. The task took thirty seconds. No friction, no cost, no IT involvement.

But that convenience comes with risks most employees never consider.

What Happens to Your Data?

When a document is uploaded to an online converter, it travels to a server owned and operated by someone else. For most free tools, users have no idea:

- ✂ **Where the file is being sent.** What country hosts the server? What jurisdiction governs data handling? Is the connection encrypted?
- ✂ **What happens after conversion.** Is the file deleted immediately? Stored for hours, days, or indefinitely? Backed up to other systems?

Each upload creates potential exposure. There is no audit trail, no accountability, and no recourse if data is compromised. For organizations in regulated industries—healthcare, finance, legal, government—these uploads may constitute compliance violations with serious consequences.

Some free tools are worse than careless—they are actively malicious. Services exist that harvest uploaded documents for data mining, inject malware into converted files, or retain copies for purposes users never agreed to.

The Shadow IT Problem

IT security professionals understand that they cannot protect assets they don't know exist. When employees use random online tools to process company documents, they create blind spots in the organization's security posture.

This is shadow IT in its most common and overlooked form. Not a rogue server or an unauthorized SaaS subscription—just an employee trying to get their work done, unknowingly sending sensitive data to an unknown third party. Convenience is not worth the risk when dealing with business documents. Organizations need trusted tools from established vendors with clear security practices and enterprise accountability.

Why PDF Remains the Standard



Despite the proliferation of document formats and collaboration platforms, PDF remains the dominant format for business documents. This is not inertia—it reflects real advantages that no other format has fully replicated.

Cross-Platform Consistency

A PDF looks the same on any device, operating system, or application. A contract created on Windows displays identically on a Mac, an iPad, or an Android phone. This consistency is essential when documents are shared across organizations, reviewed by external parties, or archived for future reference.

Professional Presentation

PDF preserves fonts, layout, images, and formatting exactly as intended. Unlike word processing documents that may render differently depending on the viewer's installed fonts or software version, a PDF maintains its designed appearance. This makes it the standard for customer-facing documents, formal communications, and published materials.

Security Capabilities

PDF supports robust security features: password protection, encryption, permission controls that restrict printing or editing, and redaction for permanently removing sensitive

content. Digital signatures provide authentication and tamper evidence. These capabilities make PDF the format of choice for contracts, legal documents, and regulated records.

Archival and Compliance

PDF/A, the archival variant of the format, is designed for long-term preservation. It embeds all fonts and content, ensuring documents remain readable decades from now regardless of software availability. Many industries require PDF/A for compliance records, and the format supports audit trails that document when and how files were created or modified.

Universal Accessibility

Anyone can view a PDF. Free readers are available for every platform, and most web browsers can display PDFs directly. Recipients don't need to purchase or install specialized software to access the documents you send them.

PDF is not going away. The question is not whether your organization will create PDFs—it's whether you're creating them strategically and securely, or haphazardly and at risk.

What Is a PDF Maker?



A PDF maker is any application, service, or built-in tool that creates or converts files into PDF format. It captures the content, layout, fonts, and images from a source and produces a standardized document that displays consistently across devices and operating systems.

PDF creation tools fall into several categories:

- ✦ **Built-in OS features:** Windows and macOS include print-to-PDF functionality that works from any application.
- ✦ **Office application integrations:** Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Google Docs can export directly to PDF.
- ✦ **Online converters:** Browser-based tools that convert uploaded files to PDF—convenient, but with the caveats discussed earlier.
- ✦ **Dedicated PDF editors:** Full-featured applications that create, edit, secure, and manage PDFs throughout the document lifecycle.
- ✦ **Mobile apps:** Applications for scanning documents, converting images, and creating PDFs on smartphones and tablets.

Not all PDF makers are equal. Basic conversion tools turn a file into a PDF and nothing more. Comprehensive PDF solutions support the full range of document creation, editing, security, and collaboration tasks that organizations require.

The tool you choose matters—not just for functionality, but for security, reliability, and long-term support. A PDF maker from an established vendor with enterprise customers offers accountability that free tools from unknown sources cannot provide.

Methods of PDF Creation



PDFs are created in many ways depending on the source material, the device, and the tools available. Understanding these methods helps organizations identify where standardization can improve efficiency and security.

Desktop Creation

On desktop computers, PDFs can be created through several approaches. Windows and macOS both include print-to-PDF functionality—any application that can print can create a PDF by selecting the PDF printer option. Microsoft Office applications and Google Docs support direct PDF export. Dedicated PDF software like Foxit PDF Editor provides full creation capabilities, including the ability to build documents from scratch with text, images, and form fields.



Mobile Creation

Mobile devices include built-in options to create PDFs. On iPhone and iPad, users can create a PDF from almost any file using the Share menu and Print option, then saving the preview as a PDF. Android devices offer similar functionality through system print options. Mobile PDF apps extend these capabilities with document scanning, image conversion, and OCR to make scanned content searchable.



Online Creation

Browser-based PDF tools allow users to convert files without installing software. These tools can be convenient for quick, low-stakes conversions—but as discussed earlier, users should carefully consider the source before uploading sensitive business documents. Established vendors like Foxit offer online PDF tools with the security practices and accountability that free converters lack.



AI-Generated PDFs

AI platforms have introduced new methods for PDF creation. AI tools can generate documents directly—reports, proposals, summaries, and formatted content output as PDFs. AI-powered translation can create new language versions of existing documents. AI-assisted form generation and template creation are emerging use cases that accelerate document production.



However, AI-generated PDFs introduce their own considerations. When employees use external AI platforms to create documents containing company information, that data may be transmitted to third-party servers, retained for model training, or stored in ways that violate compliance requirements. The same caution that applies to free online converters applies to AI tools: know where your data is going.

AI is a powerful tool for document creation, but it should be integrated into trusted workflows—not used as an unmanaged workaround.

Creating PDFs from Scratch

Comprehensive PDF editors allow users to build documents from a blank canvas. This is useful for creating forms, branded templates, reports, and other documents designed specifically as PDFs. Users can add text, images, headers, footers, form fields, and interactive elements without starting from another file format.



Creating PDFs from Existing Files

The most common PDF creation method is conversion from existing files: Word documents, Excel spreadsheets, PowerPoint presentations, images, and web pages. Scanning paper documents creates image-based PDFs that can be enhanced with OCR to make the content searchable and editable.



Beyond Conversion: The Full PDF Lifecycle



PDF creation is just the starting point. Documents don't exist in isolation—they are edited, reviewed, combined, secured, signed, and archived. A complete PDF solution supports the entire document lifecycle, not just the initial conversion.

- ✂ **Create:** Build PDFs from scratch, convert from files, scan paper documents, or capture web pages.
- ✂ **Edit:** Modify text, images, and layout directly in the PDF without converting back to the source format.
- ✂ **Combine:** Merge multiple documents into a single PDF for easier sharing, review, or storage.
- ✂ **Split:** Extract pages or break apart large documents into manageable sections.
- ✂ **Annotate:** Add comments, highlights, and markups for collaborative review.
- ✂ **Secure:** Apply encryption, password protection, permission controls, and redaction for sensitive content.
- ✂ **Sign:** Add digital signatures or route documents through eSign workflows for legally binding execution.
- ✂ **Archive:** Convert to PDF/A for long-term preservation and regulatory compliance.

Organizations that treat PDF creation as isolated from the rest of the workflow end up with more tools, more cost, and more friction. A document created in one application, edited in another, signed in a third, and archived in a fourth creates unnecessary complexity. When these capabilities live in a single platform, teams work faster with fewer handoffs and fewer opportunities for error or data exposure.

Evaluating PDF Creation Solutions: What IT Leaders Should Look For



When selecting a PDF creation solution for enterprise use, several factors distinguish tools that reduce risk and improve efficiency from those that create new problems.

Vendor Trust and Track Record

How long has the company been in business? Startups and unknown operators come and go; your documents need a vendor that will be here in five years and beyond. Who are their customers? Enterprise partnerships with industry leaders signal a level of security scrutiny and product maturity that free tools cannot match. Companies trusted by Google, Microsoft, Amazon, Dell, and Lenovo have been vetted at a level that protects your organization by association. Where is the company based, and what are their data handling and privacy practices?

AI Integration—Built for Documents, Not Bolted On

AI is a powerful tool for improving efficiency and productivity in document workflows—but it's meant to enhance a workflow, not replace one. General-purpose AI platforms can generate content, but they are not designed for document creation: formatting breaks, layouts don't translate, and outputs require manual cleanup before they're usable.

AI hallucinations—confidently incorrect information—are a real risk when generating business documents. Incorrect data, fabricated details, or errors in contracts, reports, and customer-facing materials can cause significant harm.

Security and compliance concerns multiply when employees paste sensitive content into external AI tools with unclear data retention policies.

Purpose-built AI tools designed specifically for document automation and intelligence reduce these risks. Solutions like Foxit AI Assistant operate within the document environment, maintaining formatting

integrity and adhering to enterprise security standards. Look for AI features that live inside your PDF workflow—translation, content assistance, form generation—rather than requiring employees to export data to external platforms and manually reassemble the results.

Integration with Existing Tools

Does the solution work inside the applications employees already use? The ability to create PDFs directly from Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint—without changing workflows or learning new tools—drives adoption and reduces friction. Browser extensions, mobile apps, and cloud storage integrations extend this reach across devices and platforms.

Creation and Editing Capabilities

Look beyond basic conversion. Can users build documents from scratch? Can they modify text, images, and layout in the PDF itself without converting back to the source format? Full editing capabilities mean teams can finalize documents in a single application rather than bouncing between tools.

Security and Compliance

Evaluate encryption, password protection, and permission controls. Does the solution support redaction for permanently removing sensitive content? Are there audit trails for tracking document access and modifications? Compliance with industry standards—SOC 2, HIPAA, GDPR—matters for organizations in regulated industries. On-device processing options can keep sensitive files off third-party servers entirely.

OCR and Scanned Document Support

The ability to convert scanned images into searchable, editable PDFs is essential for organizations digitizing paper workflows. OCR transforms static images into documents that can be searched, indexed, and processed by other systems.

Scalability and Administration

Enterprise deployment requires centralized license management, admin controls, and usage visibility. IT needs the ability to deploy, configure, and manage the solution across the organization—not support dozens of individual installations with no oversight.



Total Cost of Ownership

Compare bundled functionality against the cost of multiple point solutions. Consider licensing models—per-user, per-device, subscription—and how they scale with your organization. Factor in the hidden costs of "free" tools: data exposure, lack of support, compliance risk, and the IT time spent managing a fragmented toolset.

The Business Case for Standardization



Consolidating PDF creation under a single, trusted platform delivers measurable benefits across the organization:

- ✘ **Reduced tool sprawl and licensing complexity:** One solution replaces the patchwork of free tools, redundant applications, and ad-hoc workarounds that accumulate over time.
- ✘ **Consistent document quality:** PDFs created with a standard tool look professional and uniform, reflecting well on the organization.
- ✘ **Improved security posture:** Eliminating unvetted online converters removes a significant blind spot from your security and compliance program.
- ✘ **Lower support burden:** IT supports one platform instead of troubleshooting a dozen different tools across departments.
- ✘ **Faster onboarding:** New employees learn one tool, not five. Training is simpler, and productivity ramps up faster.

- ✦ **Clear accountability:** An established vendor with enterprise customers provides support, compliance documentation, and a roadmap for future capabilities.

When PDF creation is standardized, IT gains visibility and governance over document workflows. Security is not just about locking down endpoints—it's about knowing where your documents go and ensuring they're handled by tools you trust. Control your documents, and you control your risk.



Conclusion: Taking the Next Step



PDF creation happens across every department in your organization. The question is whether it's managed or ad hoc, secure or risky, efficient or fragmented.

Free online tools may seem convenient, but the cost of a data breach—financial, reputational, and regulatory—far exceeds the cost of a proper solution. When employees upload sensitive documents to unknown third parties, they create risks that IT cannot see, manage, or mitigate.

Standardizing on a comprehensive PDF platform from a trusted vendor reduces cost, improves security, and gives teams the tools to create professional documents without friction. Look for solutions that integrate creation, editing, security, and signing in a single platform—backed by a company with the track record to prove it.

Modern document workflows require modern tools from vendors you can trust. Take control of PDF creation, and you take control of your document security.



Learn More

Foxit has been a leader in PDF technology since 2001. Trusted by industry leaders including Google, Microsoft, Amazon, Dell, and Lenovo, Foxit provides the document solutions that enterprises rely on for security, compliance, and productivity.

Foxit PDF Editor provides complete PDF creation, editing, security, and signing capabilities—integrated into Microsoft Office, mobile devices, and web workflows. Create PDFs from scratch or convert from any file type. Edit text, images, and layout directly in the document. Secure files with encryption, permissions, and redaction. Route documents for signature with built-in eSign.

Foxit AI Assistant brings purpose-built AI capabilities into your document workflow—including translation, content assistance, and intelligent document processing—without the risks of sending sensitive data to external AI platforms.

One platform to replace the patchwork of free tools, point solutions, and risky online converters. Enterprise-grade security. Compliance certifications. Global support. A vendor you can trust.

Explore how Foxit helps organizations take control of document creation. Visit www.foxit.com to learn more.



The new standard for AI-powered document productivity

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