

Pdf vs. HTML

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Pdf vs. HTML
The good and bad

How many of you marketers have wondered about the efficiency of digital documents, whether on your web site or on CD-ROM? Our clients have asked which one is better? We thought you could benefit from the good and bad.

Let's get the bad out of the way first. Whenever possible avoid .pdf files. There are several reasons for this including:

- You will have to purchase extra software to create pdf files. (Although the Adobe site will do a few free for you.)
- Your customers will also need a plug-in to view the pdf files
- Pdfs are not indexed by most search engines, Google is an exception
- Your article summary and meta-tags will never have all the keywords that people will search
- Most people don't know how to use the Acrobat tool bar and can't search, cut, paste and forward pdfs
- You may have to prepare multiple pdfs depending on your purpose and audience

Now the good news:

- With a some practice and sensible use, pdf files are easier to prepare than HTML pages
- PDF files always display exactly as created, regardless of fonts, software, and operating systems
- Google, the search engine, does index pdf files

- If properly prepared, you can cut and paste text from a pdf file
- Pdfs can make it more difficult to steal your intellectual property
- Pdfs are perfect for forms
- Anyone, anywhere can open a PDF file. All you need is free Acrobat Reader software.
- Content in PDF documents can be saved in Rich Text Format and reused in other applications
- Adobe PDF files can be published and distributed anywhere: in print, attached to e-mail, on corporate servers, posted on Web sites, or on CD-ROM

So, if you are interested in getting an abundance of material on-line for readers to print and you're not interested in search results, then pdf files can be very useful.

If you are concerned with search engine results, capturing your viewers eye and dealing with an untrained audience, then HTML is the way to go.

Bottom line, if you have the budget utilize a great vendor who can consult you on your best possible solution. If you have the budget and time with in-house talent then you could use HTML with enhancements or develop the expertise and optimization skills necessary for using pdf files in your marketing material.

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