

An Affordable Adobe Acrobat Pro Alternative?

How's that for an alliteration?

I have not tested this software yet, but it looks like it is a very affordable alternative to Acrobat Pro.

It's called Soda PDF 7. The business edition (seems very similar feature-wise to Acrobat Pro) is on sale for \$139 per license.

<http://sodapdf.com/legal?affChecked=1>

Here's a list of the features:

<http://sodapdf.com/getmediaresource.ashx?r=%20/media/334019/sales-sheet-soda7-business.pdf>

I have no financial interest in this. Just learned about it from TechnoLawyer today (you should subscribe, it's free) and am passing the info along.

I'm probably going to try to demo it using the trial offer just to see what it does (I already use Acrobat Pro X)

Andy Simpson, U.S. Virgin Islands

Furthermore, Foxit is also financially feasible... (I tried).

In my search for an Adobe alternative, I ended up using Foxit. Turns out to be pretty good with OCR and has all other functions that I've needed so far.

<https://www.foxitsoftware.com/>

Joshua M. Biletsky, California

Ben (not a lawyer) Schorr and I are currently working on an article about collaborating on pdf files stored in OneDrive for Business. The focus is on how well various pdf programs integrate with the OneDrive for Business platform. The article will be published on the ABA Legal Tech Resource Center's blog; I'll post a link here once the article has been published.

Lisa Solomon, New York

I have used Acrobat Pro for a long time, since around version 7 or 8 (I'm now using XI). It is a state-of-the-art program, as are Photoshop and other Adobe products. Since I began using it, I have had no reason to look at another PDF program. Thus far, the price difference has not been a sufficient reason for me.

Steven Finell, California

Ross Kodner was really big on the full version of Acrobat. His philosophy

was that if a program was central to your practice it didn't make sense to cut corners.

Not that it doesn't hurt to shop around. I got a full version of Acrobat XI Pro for around \$200.

Kevin W. Grierson, Virginia

I was on Acrobat pro for a while. Then I switched to one of the copies--I tried a few, from Nitro and Nuance and such. I'm very tech savvy and I figured any minor differences would be a wash.

Boy was I wrong. Now I'm back on Acrobat Pro DC. It is so very much better (and better integrated) than anything else on the market, it isn't even funny.

This is one of these situations where savings are not always savings. There's some stuff you just "have to own." The top 3 are probably Office, Acrobat Pro, and your own web domain. It makes you so much more efficient.

Erik Hammarlund, Massachusetts

Ross also advocated for supporting software companies. If you're going to use a product like WordPerfect, a favorite of his, he'd say buy it so Corel can afford to stay in business. He had a point there, as he frequently did.

Deborah G. Matthews, Virginia

I don't think the cost of Acrobat or Word (especially Word) are worth it for most lawyers.

I have used Nitro and FoxIt over the years and Nitro is a smoother, more user-friendly product, while FoxIt is actually better at some functions than Nitro (their OCR is leaps and bounds better than Nitro), just not as user-friendly. Most attorneys need to convert files to PDF, merge PDF files together, bookmark them, redact them, and add Bates numbers. These products perform all of those functions at a fraction of the price. I am also still waiting for someone to give me specific functions Acrobat Pro does that the alternatives do not.

Also I have used LibreOffice and OpenOffice instead of Word for years now and I can count on one hand the number of times there was a compatibility error. Again, lawyers are not creating integrated spreadsheets and web elements in their Word docs very often, so you don't need the real thing at full price. LibreOffice and OpenOffice are much better than Word at playing nicely with old WordPerfect files, and Google Docs is light years ahead of desktop Word in collaboration tools. My assistant and I have a shared Google Doc for potential clients - we can both be speaking to potential clients and editing the same document at the same time. All of these options can save in .docx also, so compatibility with other offices shouldn't be a problem.

If you use either product for more advanced functionality in your practice, then yes, you probably need to buy the real deal. If technology is a weakness for you, I don't think Libre/OpenOffice or FoxIt is polished enough to make the cost savings worthwhile (NitroPDF is really slick, though). Keep in mind that these tips are coming from someone who uses Linux to run his office, so I like technology. If you don't like technology, then the hassle of working with constantly in-development software that always has a bug here and there may not be worth it for you. If you're curious, though, all of the Office alternatives are free, so why not give it a try?

I agree with Deborah that you should support the manufacturer to keep the product going - but I don't think we should support manufacturers selling overpriced software because it's a name you have heard of before.

Respectfully yours,

Kirby G. Smith, Georgia

I keep OpenOffice around because it's useful for hacking into files that were "locked" by Word or other software programs. But if you do any kind of work involving back and forth with contracts and documents marked for changes, there really isn't a good substitute for Word. Even if you keep the file format the same, formatting issues inevitably crop up.

Kevin W. Grierson

Desktop Word allows collaborative, simultaneous, editing too. In the 2016 version that collaboration is nearly real-time (depending on the speed of your connection) so you can actually watch the other person type if you really want to.

Disclaimer: Still never been a lawyer.

Ben M. Schorr, Arizona

Will the article include a comparison of some acrobat alternatives?

Regards,

Phil A. Taylor

The article discusses Acrobat Pro DC, Nuance Power PDF Advanced, Foxit PhantomPDF Business and Nitro Pro 9, but, again, focuses only on those programs' integration with OneDrive. It does not contain a comparison chart of all features. You can find comparison charts on some of the products' websites, however.

Lisa Solomon

I agree that cutting corners on software is not a good idea. Better to look for other areas to save money.

Now, FWIW, the current version is Acrobat DC (or Acrobat XII). This

version represents a huge (and I mean really huge) change in the user interface. If you thought the last big change (I'm thinking 9 to XI was big, wait til you see this).

So far I have not seen anything really new in the application, just a reworked user interface. It's all icons all the time. Another attempt to oversimplify.

David Masters, Colorado

Having made the pitch for Acrobat and not cost-cutting, I will say this: I don't see any particular reason to upgrade Acrobat until you reach a point where Acrobat can't read or print to the current "flavor" of PDF or otherwise starts having problems. I think I held onto 6 until 9 came out, then stuck with 9 until I found a good price on XI. I haven't heard anything about the latest version of Acrobat that makes me think that upgrading from XI is necessary at this point.

Kevin W. Grierson

I have Adobe Acrobat XI Pro and I had thought that it was the latest version (for the desktop). I didn't know about a XII version. I don't want the DC version because I don't want a monthly charge for using a sw product. Is XII really an improvement over XI?

Thanks for this thread of messages.

Roberta Fay, California

<http://www.brucebnews.com/2015/04/adobe-releases-new-version-of-acrobat-12-um-acrobat-dc/>

I just found this (thru google search). Anyone really using Acrobat DC and the CC effectively -- I have seen complaints about the CC and its interface several places online.

I don't know what to do because I want to stick with Acrobat Pro. (I really like the portfolio feature.) However, I don't want to make another mindless upgrade (when I don't even use the full set of features on a current edition).

Roberta Fay

You can "buy" the license for Acrobat DC (XII); you don't have to pay the monthly subscription. At this point I am not willing to say that XII is a significant improvement over XI.

David Masters

I use the free version of Adobe which lets me make and sign PDFs. The only thing I regularly need to do that it doesn't let me do is add/remove pages

or combine PDFs. I found free services to do both of those, though.

"Smallpdf.com" for merging two PDFs or deleting pages from a PDF:

<http://smallpdf.com/merge-pdf>

"PDFfill.com" for editing a PDF: <https://www.pdfill.com>

I just can't bring myself to pay a couple hundred bucks for something I can easily get for free. Is there anything from the paid version that I'm missing?

Stephen Charles McArthur, California

I try to use several word processing systems and several acrobat software variants as well. I have Acrobat Pro XI, Nuance PDF Pro, and Nitro PDF. For specific tasks I find one easier than another. I also find that any of them occasionally have difficulty with a particular file. Since I have options, my general approach is to immediately switch to another. It enhances work flow and efficiency here. To my view you need multiple computers and multiple software packages to keep from getting sidelined with a particular issue when time is important.

Darrell G. Stewart, Texas
