



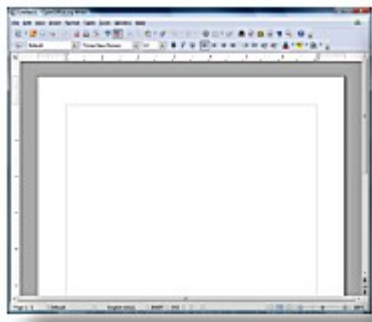
Creating PDF's for Free with Open Office

I'm very excited about a software program that I came across. It has pretty much the same functionality that Microsoft Office products have. The software package contains a word processor, database software, spreadsheet program, presentation software and image editing program. It has just about everything anyone would need in a software package except an email program.

The software is produced by an organization called OpenOffice.org. One of the best features about these particular software packet is that it is free. Let me repeat that. It is free.

Looks Like Microsoft

The user interface looks like any Microsoft Office product. Anyone currently using Word or Excel should be able to transition from Microsoft to Open Office easily. There are some menu option differences that require some getting used to, but it's not a major inconvenience.



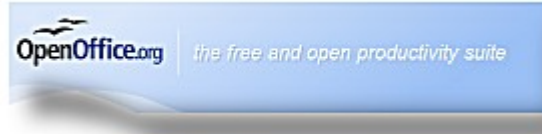
My biggest and most obvious concern about using this product was

opening existing Microsoft documents with Open Office. Open Office passed the test with flying colors. As a matter of fact, it could open just about any file type, no matter what the program. For example, opening a Word document while using Open Office's spreadsheet program was as simple as going to the menu and opening a new file.

I didn't have to open the word processing software first in order to access the right file type. Open Office opens the appropriate software program automatically.

One Major Bell (or Whistle)

What impressed me most with the software (aside from the fact it's free) is the ability to create PDF files. There is the option to export any file to PDF. The most impressive aspect about



the PDF creation is that the exported file will make any imbedded hypertext links clickable. That's a wonderful feature in my eyes.

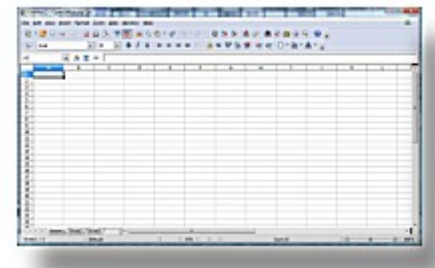
I had purchased a software called PDF Create. The software enabled me to create PDF files from any of my documents, whether it was word, excel or even images. The only problem was that when creating a PDF using PDF Create, the resulting document would not maintain clickable hypertext links.

The document would display the traditional blue underlined wording to give the reader the impression the link was clickable, but upon placing the mouse over the text, the document would display the URL as a pop up. The reader could not click on the link and be directed to the URL.

I thought I was doing something wrong, so I searched the internet for a solution only to find that the software did not have the ability to create clickable links. What a disappointment.

Putting Open Office to the test

I attempted to export a large Excel workbook to PDF. It did take quite some time because of the enormity of my spreadsheet, but it worked. I ended up with a 3,039 page PDF document that retained all of the hypertext links and document cross references. I was impressed.



In my humble opinion, I believe that if I had



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made such a request from Microsoft Excel I would have not only had to unplug my computer to get it would work again, I would have to remove the battery from the laptop and wait for it to recover from such an arduous task (after all, I am still using Windows Vista).

The Pièce de Résistance

The icing on the cake with the software is that there is a built in OCR (Optical Character Recognition) functionality which allows users to modify existing PDF files. Modifying PDF's can be a bit tricky, but it's great to know that a free software provides the ability to do it.

Downside to Open Office

- So far, I've found that saving large files takes longer using Open Office than with using Microsoft products. The wait is measured in seconds and not minutes so it's not too bad.
- It doesn't seem to be compatible with Framemaker files.

I've only been using it for a couple of days so I haven't had a chance to really see what it can or cannot do, but my initial evaluation is positive. If for nothing else than creating PDF's it's worth a look see.

