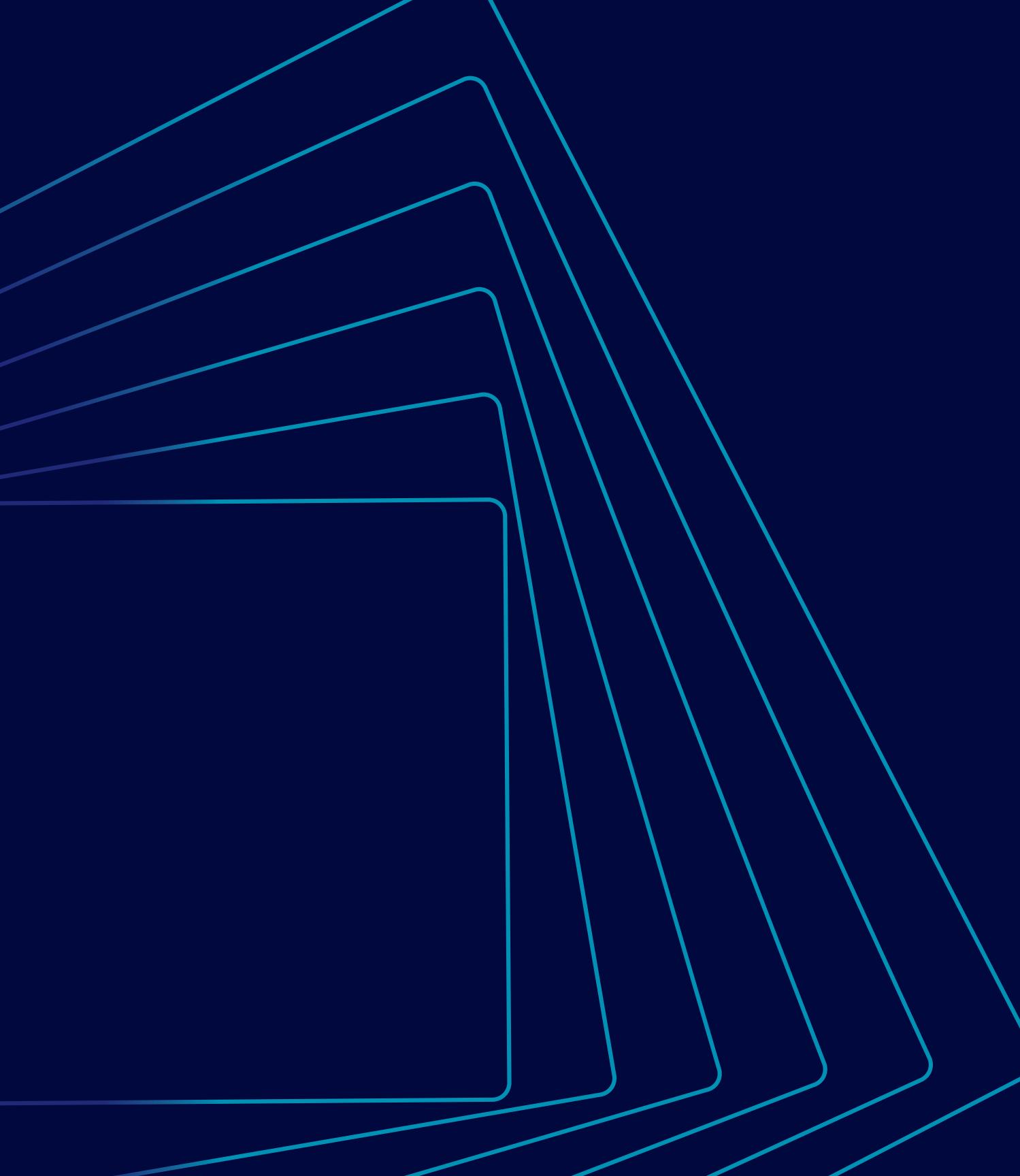


The Complete Document SDK Buying Guide

Everything you need to know before you buy





Introduction

Are you considering incorporating document processing capabilities into your applications or workflows?

Whether you're in the early stages of exploration or already deep in the buying process, our comprehensive **SDK Buying Guide** is here to assist you. Discover key insights, essential considerations, and valuable tips that will empower you to make an informed decision when selecting an SDK for document processing.





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Let's get everyone
up to speed on the lingo.

If you're a developer or *technical wizard*
feel free to jump ahead to the next section.

JUMP AHEAD

If you're new to the document processing space
or a little less familiar with software development
kits, hang around here for a bit and you'll be an
expert before you know it.

WHAT IS AN SDK?



What is an SDK?

An SDK, or Software Development Kit, serves as a comprehensive package of APIs, libraries, code samples, and documentation for developers. It allows them to efficiently build applications for specific platforms or systems.

By leveraging an SDK developed and maintained by a specialized third party, you can save valuable time and resources in development, enhance product quality, and achieve seamless integration with related products and frameworks.

The key components of an SDK typically include APIs and libraries for frequently used code sequences, code samples for practical application, and comprehensive documentation offering step-by-step guides, pre-built sample apps, developer support, code walkthroughs, tutorial videos, and other technical materials.

By combining SDKs with your own code, you can create a robust software product without having to build and maintain every aspect from scratch. Ultimately, an SDK serves as a catalyst to accelerate software development projects, enabling faster time-to-market and long-term cost efficiency.

What is a Document Processing SDK?

A document processing SDK typically supports a wide range of document formats, including text documents, spreadsheets, presentations, PDFs, images, and more. A document processing SDK enables developers to parse and extract data from documents, manipulate and modify document content, convert and export documents to different formats, generate and automate document creation, extract and analyze data from documents, apply security measures to protect documents, perform OCR (Optical Character Recognition) on scanned documents, and facilitate collaboration and commenting on documents.

What is a PDF SDK?

PDF SDKs serve as specialized software development kits designed to facilitate the rapid introduction of PDF-related functionality within applications. They empower developers to create, modify, and manage PDF documents effortlessly, opening a world of possibilities for businesses and individuals alike.





What is an Office SDK?

An Office Document Processing SDK enables developers to programmatically interact with office documents, extract data, manipulate content, perform conversions, generate reports, and automate various tasks. It typically provides features tailored to specific office document formats, such as DOCX (Microsoft Word), XLSX (Microsoft Excel), PPTX (Microsoft PowerPoint), ODT (OpenDocument Text), ODS (OpenDocument Spreadsheet), and more.

What is a CAD Document SDK?

A CAD Document Processing SDK enables developers to extract information, manipulate, convert, or perform other operations on CAD files programmatically. CAD document processing SDKs are designed to handle specific tasks related to CAD files, including: File Parsing and Extraction, Conversion and Export, Geometry and Attribute Manipulation, Visualization and Rendering, Data Extraction and Analysis, Collaboration and Markup.

What is the value of a Document SDK?

For software companies, integrating document processing capabilities into their applications can be a game-changer. Document SDKs provide the necessary tools and libraries to empower software developers to incorporate robust PDF functionalities directly into their software solutions allowing them to get to market faster, increase time in app, differentiate from the competition and improve customer satisfaction.

Improve efficiency and reduce expenses

Developing document-related technology entirely in-house can be financially prohibitive and operationally taxing. By turning to established Document SDK vendors, developers can tap into existing, well-built technology that meets the demands of a mature market. This approach eliminates the need to reverse-engineer and build everything from scratch, freeing up valuable time and resources.

Differentiate your offering and improve productivity

Document SDKs offer software developers a means to differentiate their products by providing powerful document capabilities. By seamlessly integrating PDF functionality, developers can create applications that offer a comprehensive suite of features, allowing users to complete their tasks without the need to switch between multiple apps. This streamlined experience enhances user productivity and satisfaction, maximizing the time users can realistically spend within a single application.





What problems can a document SDK solve for businesses looking to optimize internal document workflows?

Inconsistent Document Formats

Documents in various formats lead to compatibility issues and inconsistencies. A document SDK standardizes document types by converting them into universally accepted PDF format, ensuring consistent display and printing across platforms.

Inefficient Document Workflow

Manual handling of document-related tasks is time-consuming and prone to errors, hindering workflow efficiency. A document SDK automates tasks like document generation, modification, and conversion, reducing manual effort and streamlining the document workflow.

Limited Collaboration Capabilities

Lack of effective collaboration tools hampers teamwork and slows down decision-making processes. A document SDK facilitates real-time collaboration through features such as annotation, commenting, and versioning, enabling multiple users to collaborate simultaneously on PDF documents.

Inadequate Document Security

Businesses need to protect sensitive information and prevent unauthorized access to confidential documents. A document SDK offers security features like encryption, password protection, and digital signatures, ensuring secure handling and preventing data breaches.

Inefficient Document Distribution

Manual document distribution processes are time-consuming and may lead to errors or inconsistent delivery. A document SDK enables streamlined document distribution through features like merging, splitting, and compression, optimizing file sizes and ensuring efficient delivery.

Non-compliance with Regulatory Requirements

Industries have specific compliance and regulatory requirements for document management that need to be met. A document SDK helps meet these requirements by providing features like metadata management, redaction of sensitive information, and document auditing capabilities.

Limited Integration with Existing Systems

Existing document management systems need to be integrated with new functionalities. A PDF SDK seamlessly integrates with existing systems, enhancing their capabilities by incorporating PDF functionality without requiring significant infrastructure changes.





What problems can a document SDK solve for businesses building SaaS applications?

Slow Time to Market

Given the complex nature of PDFs and document processing, SaaS companies may face delays in introducing document-related functionality into their applications, which can slow down their time to market. A document processing SDK enables rapid integration of document-related functionality, allowing SaaS companies to quickly introduce robust document processing features and accelerate their time to market.

High Developer Costs

Developing document processing capabilities in-house can be financially burdensome for SaaS companies, requiring significant investments in developer resources and expertise. By leveraging a SDK, SaaS companies can reduce developer costs by tapping into existing, well-built technology and avoiding the need to develop everything from scratch.

Resource Restraints

SaaS companies with small teams may struggle to allocate resources and prioritize product innovation, including the development of advanced document processing features. A document SDK offers pre-built, feature-rich functionality, allowing SaaS companies to quickly enhance their products with innovative document processing capabilities without straining their limited resources.

Customer Churn

SaaS companies risk losing customers to competitors if their applications lack robust document processing capabilities that meet customer expectations. Integrating a document processing SDK empowers SaaS companies to offer comprehensive document processing functionalities, ensuring their applications remain competitive and meet customer demands, reducing the risk of customer churn.

Inconsistent Document Formatting

SaaS companies may struggle with maintaining consistent document formatting across different devices, browsers, or operating systems, leading to a subpar user experience. A document SDK ensures consistent document formatting by leveraging standardized PDF rendering capabilities, providing a consistent and high-quality viewing experience for users.

Scalability and Performance

As companies grow and onboard more users, the demand for document processing capabilities may increase, putting a strain on system scalability and performance. A document processing SDK is designed to handle large volumes of documents efficiently, ensuring scalability and optimal performance even with a growing user base.

Integration with Existing Infrastructure

Integrating new document processing functionality seamlessly into existing SaaS infrastructure, including APIs, databases, or third-party services, can be challenging. A document processing SDK provides robust integration capabilities, enabling smooth integration with existing infrastructure and ensuring compatibility with other services and systems.





Most Important Considerations when Selecting a PDF SDK

Rendering Quality

Rendering quality is crucial for accurate and visually appealing document display. High rendering quality accurately reproduces fonts, images, formatting, and layout, maintaining the integrity of complex documents. A reliable Document SDK with excellent rendering quality enhances clarity, readability, and precision, leading to user satisfaction and facilitating seamless document processing and collaboration.

Security

It is crucial to avoid introducing potential security loopholes through the SDK's dependencies and limitations; even with a trustworthy vendor, third-party dependencies and mandatory server-side security process can pose additional security concerns. Determine if the SDK source code is forked from open-source or proprietary to the vendor. If forked, assess the number of vulnerabilities in the library and consider the active development of the SDK and maintenance frequency.

Scalability

When selecting an SDK, it is essential to consider the long-term roadmap for your internal tool or SaaS product. As switching costs grow over time, scaling into new functionalities can become more costly if the chosen SDK does not support them from the beginning. Ensure that the overall SDK package is suitable for your future support, performance, and user experience needs. Open-source SDKs are rarely optimized or maintained to support high-volume production use cases, both currently and in the future. By choosing an SDK that is future-proofed, you can avoid the need for switching or adding another vendor to fill gaps as your offering scales.

Support

To maximize your ROI and ensure a successful SDK purchase, prioritizing an exceptional developer experience is crucial, especially with open-source SDKs. Test the speed at which your developers can set up initial proofs of concepts (POCs) and customize code samples for representative projects. Evaluate the availability of customizable code samples, get-started guides, cookbooks, blogs, video tutorials, and sample apps for easy testing and MVP creation. Additionally, consider the intuitiveness of the documentation and the responsiveness and expertise of support engineers, as they significantly contribute to accelerated time to market and overall success.

Stability and Performance

For internal tools, an SDK should provide a great user experience with stability and optimal performance. Performance can vary based on server-side dependencies and code quality, so it's essential to compare relevant use cases. Remember that it's not only about milliseconds; applications that don't work as intended, lag, exhibit unintuitive behavior, or have other performance and UX issues can cause users to revert to old ways or suffer from the same inefficiency.



Deciding Between Open Source or Proprietary PDF SDKs

Unmodified Open Source

These provide flexibility and a starting point for customization, but they may lack comprehensive documentation and support. Additionally, they might not stay updated with industry standards, security, and performance optimizations, leading to additional maintenance efforts for developers.

Pros:

- Flexibility for customization
- Freely available
- Starting point for integration

Cons:

- Limited documentation and support
- May lack industry standards and updates
- Higher maintenance effort required

Modified Open Source

These libraries provide the advantages of open-source flexibility along with proprietary enhancements. Developers can customize and optimize performance to meet specific requirements.

Pros:

- Customizable and optimized
- Cost-effective compared to full proprietary engines
- Greater control over functionality

Cons:

- Requires expertise for modification and maintenance
- Potential compatibility and license conflicts

Full Proprietary Engine

A commercially developed solution that offers comprehensive features, support, and ongoing development. These engines are often backed by dedicated teams and provide extensive documentation, reliable support, and frequent updates.

Pros:

- Comprehensive features and ongoing development
- Reliable support and frequent updates
- Extensive documentation available

Cons:

- Requires licensing fees

When choosing between these options, it's essential to consider factors such as the level of customization needed, available resources, development expertise, and long-term maintenance requirements. Understanding the pros and cons of each approach will help you make an informed decision that aligns with your project's needs and goals.

Document SDK

Features to Look For:



PDF View/Annotate/Manipulate:

Users can view, annotate, and manipulate PDF documents within an application, allowing effective interaction with PDF content.



Enable Digital Signatures:

Users can electronically sign PDF files, ensuring document authenticity and integrity with a tamper-evident seal and verifying the signer's identity.



Secure Redaction:

Mark and remove sensitive information from PDF documents, protecting privacy and complying with data protection regulations.



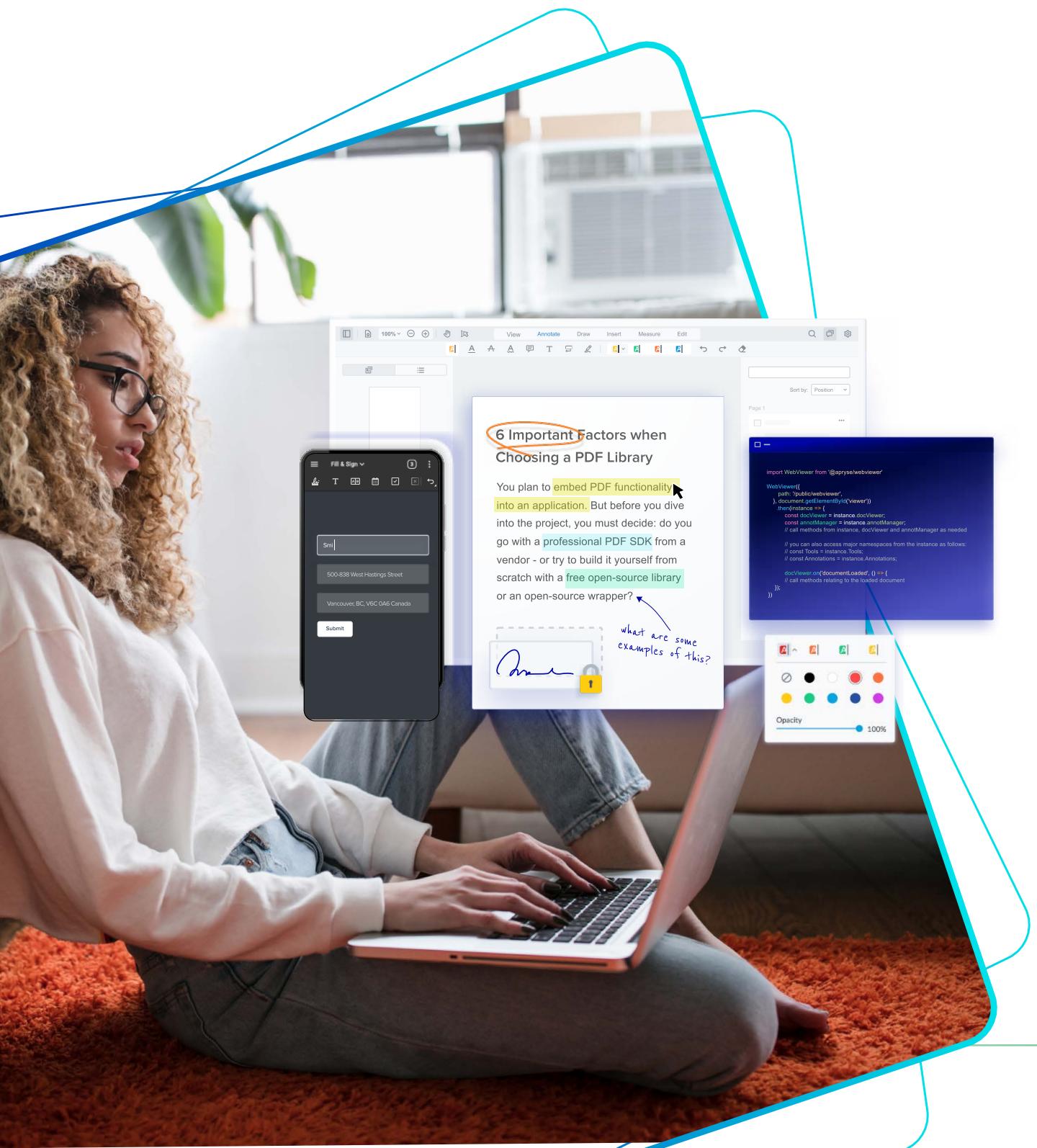
Create/Fill/Submit Forms:

Interact with interactive form fields in PDF documents, entering data, selecting options, and electronically submitting forms.



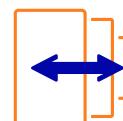
Create/View/Annotate/Edit DOCX:

Create, view, annotate, and edit Microsoft Word documents (DOCX) within the application, enhancing document versatility and seamless integration with Microsoft Word functionalities.



Compare Documents:

Highlight differences and track changes between two document versions, facilitating revision review, accuracy validation, and ensuring consistency.



Support CAD/BIM/Media/DICOM:

Extend PDF SDK capabilities to handle specialized file formats like CAD, BIM, media (images, audio, video), and DICOM medical imaging files.



Apply Client-Side Security:

Encrypt, password-protect, and control access to PDF documents on the client-side, ensuring data confidentiality and protection.



Manage User Permissions:

Control document access and define permissions for users interacting with PDF documents, maintaining confidentiality and data protection.



Collaborate on Review & Approval:

Enable multiple users to review, comment on, and approve PDF documents, streamlining collaboration, productivity, and effective communication.

How much should I spend on my PDF SDK?

The cost of SDKs that support PDF and other document formats can vary significantly, ranging from free options for basic server-side PDF viewing to higher-priced solutions offering advanced functionality, security, and scalability.

Determining the right ROI for your organization depends on various factors, including your specific priorities, business focus, and expected benefits from integrating an SDK. It is essential to consider the potential gains in efficiency, productivity, competitive differentiation, and user satisfaction that can be achieved by embedding the SDK into your applications.

Careful evaluation and understanding of your organization's unique needs will help you make an informed decision regarding the appropriate level of investment in an SDK to maximize the return on your integration efforts.





Determining ROI of a Document SDK

01

Assess the labor costs associated with not using an SDK or developing in-house using open-source libraries.

Evaluate the time and resources required for in-house development, including the number of months, developers involved, ongoing maintenance and support, and the total annual labor costs for sustaining the internal product.

02

Determine the opportunity cost of not using a scalable SDK.

Think about your product's long-term plan and its potential for driving efficiency, revenue, and user value. Consider the roadmap for the next five years and the benefits your users could gain from features like fast document performance, support for different file formats, and document conversion workflows.

03

Factor in the future switching costs, such as time, customer disruption, and cost justification, as your business needs evolve.

Be cautious when opting for lower-priced SDKs with narrower feature sets, as switching later can be challenging and cost-prohibitive. Look for an SDK that offers comprehensive potential for product innovation and roadmap evolution, ensuring your ability to differentiate and adapt in the market.

04

Consider the intangible benefits.

Assess how incorporating SDK-powered capabilities can enhance customer satisfaction, streamline workflows, and improve the value your customers perceive in your application. Additionally, consider the security benefits that can contribute to increased adoption and usage, as customers value strong security measures.

Selecting the best Document SDK Vendor:



Reputation and Experience

Evaluate the vendor's reputation in the industry and their experience in providing PDF SDK solutions. Consider factors such as their track record, customer reviews, and the number of years they have been in business.



Customer Support and Responsiveness

Assess the vendor's level of customer support and their responsiveness to inquiries and technical issues. Look for prompt and knowledgeable support that can assist you throughout the integration and usage of the SDK.



Flexibility and Customization

Determine the level of flexibility and customization options offered by the vendor. Consider whether they can accommodate specific requirements or offer tailored solutions to meet your unique needs.



Licensing and Pricing

Review the vendor's licensing models and pricing structures. Evaluate whether their pricing aligns with your budget and usage requirements. Consider any additional costs associated with support, maintenance, or future upgrades.



Service Level Agreements (SLAs)

Evaluate the vendor's service level agreements, which define the level of service, uptime guarantees, and response times. Assess whether they can meet your performance and reliability expectations.



Integration Support

Determine the level of integration support provided by the vendor. Look for resources such as code samples, libraries, and SDKs that facilitate seamless integration with your existing software infrastructure.



Documentation and Resources

Examine the quality and comprehensiveness of the vendor's documentation, guides, and resources. Look for easily accessible and up-to-date documentation that can assist your development team in integrating and utilizing the PDF SDK effectively.



Security and Compliance

Evaluate the vendor's approach to security and compliance. Inquire about the security measures implemented in the SDK, such as encryption, user permissions, and compliance with industry regulations. Ensure they prioritize data protection and offer robust security features.



Long-Term Roadmap and Updates

Inquire about the vendor's long-term roadmap for their PDF SDK. Assess their commitment to ongoing development, feature updates, and bug fixes. Consider whether their roadmap aligns with your future needs and ensures the longevity and relevance of the SDK.



Vendor Stability and Scalability

Consider the vendor's financial stability and ability to scale with your organization's growth. Evaluate whether they have a strong customer base and the resources to support your evolving needs over time.

Comparing PDF SDK Vendors

Are you currently in the process of evaluating PDF SDK vendors for your business and seeking a comprehensive review of available options to make an informed decision?

Our team has developed an all-in-one comparison chart that provides a detailed analysis of various PDF SDK vendors tailor-made to offer insights that will assist you in evaluating the offerings available in the market and finding the best fit for your business needs.

Check out the comparison chart now!

COMPARISON CHART



PDF Rendering Engine	Apryse PDF SDK	Foxit PDF SDK	PSPDFKit PDF SDK	Adobe PDF SDK	Mozilla PDF.js
PDF Viewer UI	(developed in-house, consistent across server, web, and mobile)	PDFlum proprietary fork	(out-of-the-box UI customizations, proprietary source code)	(web SDK is a fork of the open-source library PDFlum)	Adobe proprietary, server-side rendering, always on connection
File Types - Viewing & Annotation	(out-of-the-box UI customizations & access to UI source code for deep customization)	(out-of-the-box UI customizations, proprietary source code)	(out-of-the-box UI customizations, proprietary source code)	(out-of-the-box UI customizations, proprietary source code)	PDF.js open-source
PDF/A1-3 (A/B/U)	✓ PDF, FDF, XFDF	✓ PDF, FDF, XFDF	✓ PDF, XFDF	✓ PDF	open-source UI, limited out-of-the-box customizations, have to fork
Office (Word, PowerPoint, Excel)	✓ (client- or server-side)	✓ PDF/A	✓ (server-side, windows only)	✓ PDF/A viewing only	✓ PDF
Images	✓ (client- or server-side)	✓ (client- or server-side)	✓ (server-side creation)	✓ (client- or server-side SDK required)	✓ PDF/A viewing only
CAD Formats	✓ JPEG, PNG, JIF, TIFF, SVG, BMP, GIF, WMF, EMF, HDP, JP2, JPC	✓ DWG, DXF, DGN, RVT, DWF	✓ JPEG, JPG, TIFF, PNG, GIF, JPX, (BMP server-side)	✓ JPEG, PNG, TIF/F	✓ PDF
3D BIM Files	✓	✓ FC, RVT	✗	✗	✗
Advanced Imaging Formats (DICOM)	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Document Formats	✓ AAI, ARW, DCR, RAF	✗	✓ (client- or server-side SDK required)	✗	✗
Audio & Video Files	✓ Email (.MSO), TXT, RTF, ODT, OOS, ODP, WPF	✗	✓ server-side HTML to PDF	✗	✗
Web Formats	✓ MP3, MP4, OGG, FLAC, OGG, WEBM	✓ HTML, HTM, MHT	✗	✗	✗
PDF Capabilities	Apryse PDF SDK	Foxit PDF SDK	PSPDFKit PDF SDK	Adobe PDF SDK	Mozilla PDF.js
Multi-Tab Viewing	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Side-by-Side Document Viewing	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗

The Apryse ADVANTAGE

Industry Leadership & Experience:

Apryse is trusted by developers of over 20,000 companies ranging from start-up, governments to Fortune 500, supporting hundreds of millions of end-users. With 20 years of innovation and developer expertise of more than 12 acquisitions of leading PDF SDK companies, Apryse now offers the most comprehensive, future-proof, and high-quality PDF and document SDK platform in the world.

Global Client Support:

With major offices housing development, sales, and support staff in the USA, Canada, Belgium, Singapore, and other countries, Apryse is positioned to support businesses around the clock, no matter where they are. The key to our success as an SDK leader is our investment into building valuable long-term business relationships with our partners that start the moment you reach out to us and are always focused on resolving your unique challenges even long after the ink has dried, and not just making a sale.

A Partner that lets you grow & innovate:

The Apryse SDK is built in-house with full ownership over its source code, and a UI that is available as open source to make it your own. Free from the limitations of foundational technology forks, Apryse is capable to act on the pulse of industry trends to rapidly innovate its SDK offering – and let customers differentiate in ways no other SDK can offer, from editing PDF and Office, collaboration on CAD, to working with Video and 3D files.

Fair & Simple Pricing:

We bill simple and fair based on your actual used capabilities and document consumption with trust-based reporting. Our goal is to make the SDK valuable in our clients' long-term strategy, the SDK needs to result in a continuous positive-ROI investment and not become a cost-center upon renewals. Prices can be customized and locked in, and consumption pricing guarantees that cost only scales as you add platforms and features with your growing needs and returns.

Why Industry Leaders Trust



Get started with Apryse →

What our customers say:

"The speed at which they integrate is superior to their competition and their product roadmap has been good -- they've invested in the right things."

 **AUTODESK** | **Marcus O'Brien**, Global Head of Product Management, AutoCAD

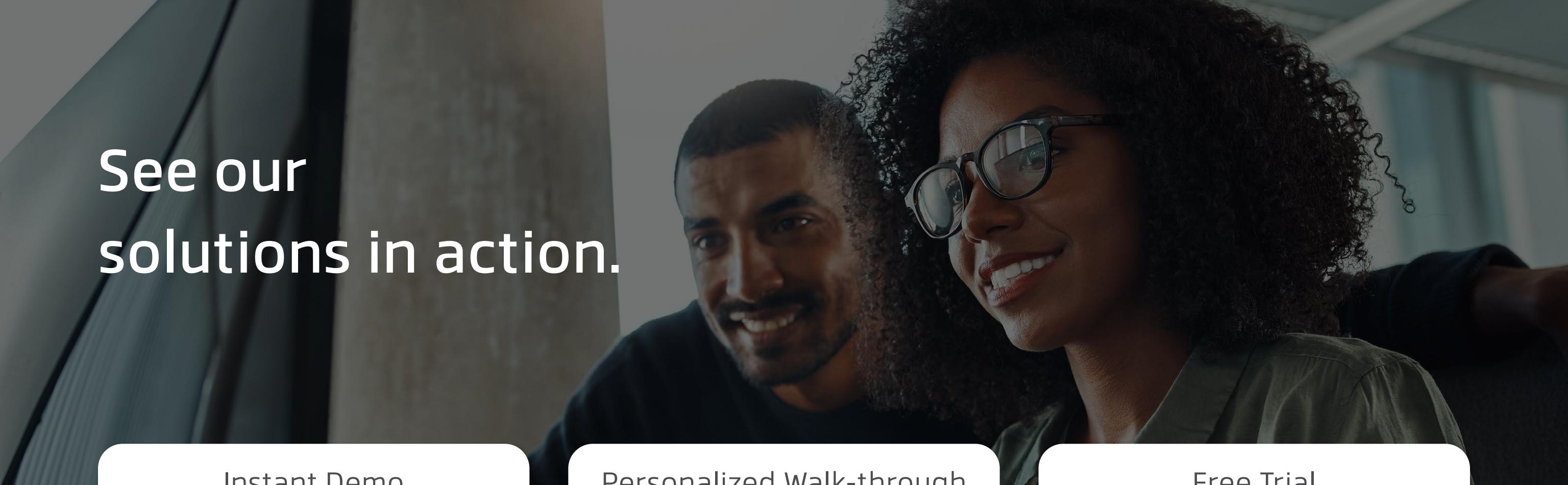
"Apryse SDK [PDFTron] had particularly strong annotation and collaboration features, and their cross-platform approach allowed us to accelerate how we delivered products."

 **Bentley** | **Sam Stuart**, Senior Product Manager, Bentley Systems

"Apryse [PDFTron] demonstrated superior speed and functionality out of the box. In contrast, the competition took a lot of shortcuts and it was obvious in the user experience."

 **Drawboard** | **Alistair Michener**, Founder and CEO, Drawboard

Learn how dropbox enhanced their workflows with help from Apryse's Complete PDF SDK [here](#).



See our solutions in action.

Instant Demo

Start exploring our capabilities instantly with our interactive demo.

[LET'S PLAY!](#)

Personalized Walk-through

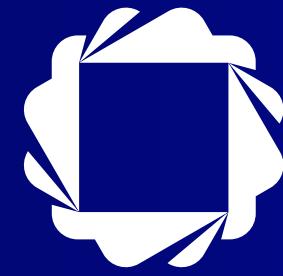
Chat with one of our solutions engineers to discover the best solution for your unique needs.

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Free Trial

Sign up in seconds to access an unlimited trial, all SDK downloads and access to the developer community.

[I'M READY](#)



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