

# SUCCESS STORY

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-Jim Blessing,  
Information  
Technology  
Supervisor

## activePDF Solutions Enable the Postal Regulatory Commission to Streamline Processes, Reduce Costs, and Ensure GPEA Compliance

Company:	Postal Regulatory Commission
Industry:	Government
Product(s) Used:	activePDF Server/DocConverter, activePDF Toolkit

### Solution Spotlight

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The Postal Regulatory Commission uses activePDF solutions to overhaul its paper-based docket filing system, effectively eliminating costs, improving efficiency, and fulfilling requirements of the Government Paperwork Elimination Act.

### Company Overview

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Created by the Postal Reorganization Act, the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) is an independent agency of the federal government that regulates policy changes affecting the U.S. Postal Service. In addition to presiding over public hearings, the PRC oversees submission of recommendations for postal rate increases, changes to mail classifications, post office closures, and customer complaints.

## Business Challenge

In the course of its proceedings, the PRC typically handles thousands of documents which have to be collated, organized, and ultimately distributed to Commission members, government employees, and interested citizens. Historically, hard copies of these documents were either hand-carried to the PRC office or sent via mail, with submissions often consisting of thousands of pages. Documents relating to the same issue were organized into a docket, which eventually grew to include information about opinions, recommendations, orders, testimony, motions, rulings, interrogatories, responses to interrogatories, and additional related information. Each document was then hand stamped with information tying it to the original docket number, and filed for public reference in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act. For every docket, the number of pages could grow to tens of thousands, and each page might have been copied and distributed over 150 times. The manual duplication and distribution process meant over a million physical pages could change hands during the course of a single case. With printer operating costs, postage, and other distribution expenses, the cost of this paper-intense process could easily exceed \$150,000 per year.

Like other government agencies, the PRC was required to migrate its paper-based processes to electronic systems in accordance with the Government Paper Elimination Act (GPEA). For the PRC, compliance with the GPEA entailed a two-phased approach in order to effectively deal with both its document distribution and submission processes. After investigating alternatives, the PRC decided upon PDF as its preferred format, due to its platform-independence, portability, and the ubiquity of PDF viewing applications. In order to quickly gain traction, the PRC decided to first tackle the task of making completed dockets available electronically – this would enable them to better serve their customers without requiring significant development effort or changes to internal processes. With this goal in mind, the first phase of the project involved manually scanning paper submissions to PDF to make them electronically available for viewing or printing. Although the resultant PDFs were easier to access, the PRC still required a more efficient alternative to its manual submission process.

Tackling this second phase proved a bit more challenging – the PRC needed to extend PDF creation capabilities to filing submitters. Because submissions could be sent from citizens as well as government employees, the PRC needed to accomplish its objectives without requiring end users to purchase or install additional software - a goal that could only be achieved with a server-side solution. Since original documents could be submitted in any number of native formats, the PRC required a solution that would enable on-the-fly conversion to PDF from a variety of file types. Once the documents were converted, they could easily be stored and accessed from a secure section of the PRC's website.

## activePDF Solution

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After investigating available server-based software offerings, the PRC selected activePDF as its preferred vendor, based on product cost-effectiveness and ease of implementation. Choosing from activePDF's robust product line, the PRC opted for a combination of activePDF Server, DocConverter and Toolkit to fulfill all of its requirements.

Integrating activePDF Server and DocConverter into its proprietary web-based interface, the PRC enabled users to quickly and easily convert over 280 different file formats directly to PDF. With this solution, PDF conversion options were controlled on the server, keeping user involvement to a minimum. Submitters simply chose documents to upload and click OK – conversion occurred transparently. Since both Server and DocConverter were engineered for multi-threaded processing, simultaneous submissions could be handled seamlessly, without requiring users to wait in a queue.

Once conversion to PDF was complete, the PRC used activePDF Toolkit to merge related documents into a single navigable PDF file. Toolkit also helped the PRC to replace its hand-stamping process with a more streamlined approach. Using information retrieved from the server, Toolkit automatically stamped critical docket information onto each PDF, without requiring any end-user intervention. After this post-processing was completed, submitted documents could be posted to the Daily Listing section of the PRC's website. Published each day, this listing provided both internal and external users with an index of submissions for viewing or printing.

## Results

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Awarded the 2003 e-Gov Pioneer Award for its innovative use of technology, the PRC's implementation of activePDF products has effectively eliminated most of its paper-based processing, reduced foot traffic into its office, and ultimately created a much more cost-effective and efficient process. In fact, the process has become so streamlined that in a recent case a motion, an objection to the motion, and a reply to the objection were all filed on the same day– a process that historically could easily have taken a week, now completed within a few hours. Jim Blessing, the PRC's Information Technology Supervisor, has this to say about the solution: "The integration of activePDF products into our public Web site has helped enormously to facilitate doing business with the PRC. This a real boon for participants that use the site to file documents related to cases before the Commission."

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