

AttachPlus Makes PDF the Medium for Secure Document Transfer



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Don Fluckinger - PDFZone

In talking to the enterprise world, Adobe likes to use the "secure container" metaphor for PDF. This idea, that the data contained in a password-protected PDF is safe and secure, isn't complicated, but by the time you toss in the concepts of document workflow, server-side encryption and "policies" served, it is way over the head of the typical office user.



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Tempe, Ariz.-based [AttachPlus](#) gets it, though, and the company has distilled the concept of PDF as a secure container down to a level that anyone bright enough to send an e-mail can get. The company's product, also called AttachPlus, takes a document, turns it into a PDF if it's not already one, attaches it to an e-mail, and puts password protection on it—all from within a person's e-mail client software.

Two seconds, and the tax forms you're exchanging with an accountant are suddenly wrapped up in a secure container. Just like the ones that high-rolling multinational financial institutions are shooting around their networks.

The idea behind AttachPlus, according to the company's development manager, Kevin Basso, grew out of small financial planners' need for a desktop software tool to quickly secure documents sent to customers. These small businesses needed security not only for transmitting their clients' sensitive personal data across the Internet, but also to keep it secure in their hard drives—because of SEC regulations that require they keep records for seven years—and as a result the whole market sector is migrating from paper to PDF.

Password-protected PDFs can also prevent the embarrassment of accidentally sending a document to the wrong person, Basso points out. "These financial planners serve their hometown communities, not regions. If you accidentally send something, it's to a neighbor, and you're telling them how much you make, how much you've been saving

and all that."

Password-protecting documents probably protects a financial planner's customers more than it does the planner, Basso says. While servers at a 25-person office might be relatively secure, it's the customers' home computers that are vulnerable to viruses and identity thieves who get into hard drives through unprotected broadband networks to access credit card or other sensitive financial data.

AttachPlus features most of the customizable security settings that Adobe Acrobat does, but instead of the user having to create a PDF then surf through Acrobat's menus to assign encryption parameters and save the file somewhere, AttachPlus responds when the user selects **File>Send To** within an e-mail client or within Microsoft Office applications. It also costs just \$50, or one-ninth of the price of Acrobat Pro, and it can merge documents from different applications into one password-protected PDF.

The company hopes that more than just financial planners will find its software widget useful. Lawyers and medical facilities are the next logical market, as they—like financial planners—have a lot of 25-person offices and must comply with state or federal document privacy mandates.

To accommodate small businesses, whose owners typically work both from home and at an office location, AttachPlus's licensing allows for registering copies at home and at work. The license works per person at a company instead of per machine.

"It's for the non-techies," Basso says. "It's for the people who are just trying to get their job done much more efficiently. It brings PDF to them—I don't think a lot of financial planners and law firms are going to go out and buy Acrobat, because they're just not thinking of it. [AttachPlus] is kind of a way to introduce them to PDF... It's extending your privacy policy to attachments—why wouldn't you?"

