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# Building with PDF

**PDF is providing the ideal vehicle for distributing and updating UK building regulations and building materials manufacturers' technical catalogues on CD-ROM in a cost-effective and timely manner.**

London-based Complete Picture publishes building regulations and British Standards information on CD-ROM and develops PDF-based technical reference CD-ROMs for a variety of clients in the building and related industries.

#### BENEFITS SUMMARY

- PDF preserves the exact appearance of regulations documents which have legal status.
- Cross-platform capability means that building regulations and BSI material is equally accessible on PC and Macintosh.
- PDF-based CD-ROMs provide fully interactive navigation and email/Web links for ease of use.
- Pilkington's *Glass Index* has saved hundreds of thousands of pounds on printing and distribution, while adhering to corporate style and allowing for wider distribution and localised content.

[www.completepicture.co.uk](http://www.completepicture.co.uk)  
[www.pilkington.com](http://www.pilkington.com)

As architects and construction companies up and down the UK know to their cost, compliance with building regulations is no laughing matter. Even though drafted with health and safety foremost in mind, the torrent of paper governing the construction and maintenance of both public and private buildings represents a substantial body of material, totalling thousands of pages.

And in the UK that information isn't free either; building regulations have to be bought from HMSO. Then they have to be filed and stored and periodically updated. It all means managing a lot of paper – getting it, reading it, filing it and retrieving it as and when necessary, checking that's it's still current and replacing it if it's not.

Feeling that there was a business opportunity in finding a better way of providing this information, Paul Dennis set up Complete Picture in 1997 to provide regulatory information in an electronic form. While competitors were (and still are) offering microfiche-based solutions, Dennis was certain that the best route was to go entirely digital.

Dennis's previous experience in selling financial information on CD while working at Extel Financial had brought Adobe Acrobat to his attention. "It was important to

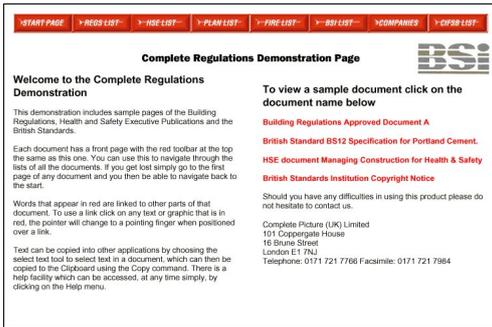
have something that worked cross-platform, as about 20 per cent of UK architects use Macs," he explains. "I also did a survey among architects and found that fidelity to the printed version was important to them, as these are legal documents. Acrobat met both needs."

The biggest challenge he faced when setting up Complete Picture's CD-ROM based delivery mechanism was that the vast majority of regulations documents were only available in paper form. Dennis was one of the UK's earliest users of Acrobat Capture, the paper-to-PDF translation tool that converts scanned pages into PDF documents containing searchable text and bitmap images. "The process involved extensive manual checking and editing as everything had to be right," he says.

Once the documents had been converted and checked, the distribution model that Complete Picture still uses was developed. The CD contains the complete set of build-

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**– Stephen Lipscombe  
 European marketing communications  
 manager, Pilkington**



Acrobat's interactive navigational features are fully exploited by Complete Picture, both in its own Complete Regulations CD-ROM (top) and in The Glass Index for Pilkington (above and below).



ing regulations in a locked and encrypted form. Recipients of the CD have free access to summary documents via an interactive interface built in PDF; they can read extracts or summaries but in order to access the full document they send an order through to Complete Picture and in return are given an unlocking code that grants access. This unlocking capability is achieved using an Acrobat plug-in called FileOpen Publisher from US developer FileOpen Systems ([www.fileopen.com](http://www.fileopen.com)).

In addition to regularly updating the CD as building regulations change over time, Complete Picture has struck a deal with

the British Standards Institute (BSI) to include 320 British Standards on *The Complete Regulations* CD. As BSI is producing its own PDFs, the process is quite straightforward: Complete Picture presents document summaries in its own front-end PDF file, which link directly to the appropriate Standard document. Rights to access the BSI material are purchased via the same unlocking mechanism as for building regulations.

## CRYSTAL CLEAR

Complete Picture hasn't just applied its PDF skills to its own data publishing, however. A significant ongoing project for the company has been the production of *The Glass Index* for global glass manufacturer Pilkington.

Pilkington was a customer for the *Complete Regulations* CD, so approached Complete Picture about preparing a digital version of its *Specifiers' Guide*, a large ring-binder containing hundreds of pages of detailed product information. Although some of the brochures and data sheets it contained were used independently of the *Guide*, the complete origination, printing and distribution cost for the *Guide* came to around £750,000.

Complete Picture was given the job of producing a digital version of the *Guide*. Working from original page layout files for 80 or so different publications that it contained, they reformatted documents to suit on-screen viewing, without sacrificing any detail or the established visual style of Pilkington's publications.

The PDF version has been an enormous success for Pilkington. More than 20,000 copies of *The Glass Index* have been requested, not only from the UK but as far afield as Canada, the US, Australia and the Far East.

"The CD has been a hugely successful marketing communications and technical

tool," affirms Stephen Lipscombe, European marketing communications manager at Pilkington. "The hardcopy *Specifier's Guide* cost in the region of £42 per copy to print, package and distribute. For that money we can produce and dispatch about 40 CDs with the benefits of an interactive interface and the excellent Adobe PDF platform.

"PDF was an essential part of our strategy, as it gives a common platform that any architect, engineer or designer will respect and that will not cause any problems with IS policies at recipients' sites," he adds. "Additionally, the magnification facility that enables detailed drawings to be blown up without loss of clarity is invaluable."

A second edition of the CD is in preparation for launch in March 2001 and Pilkington is planning to develop localised versions for the first time. The company's regional marketing teams across Europe will have the opportunity to create French, German, Italian, Polish and Russian product information that can be accessed from the standard English version of the CD.

Complete Picture has produced similar PDF-based technical information CD-ROMs for a number of other clients, including plasterboard manufacturer John Carr, building materials giant Knauf and Scotland's Royal Institute of Architects. In each case, the cross-platform viewing and printing fidelity made possible by PDF and Adobe Acrobat have been an essential ingredient. "Acrobat is core to what we do," confirms Dennis.

## TOOL KIT

### Software

Adobe Acrobat with FileOpen plug-in

### Hardware

Apple Macintosh

Adobe Systems Europe • 1 Roundwood Avenue, Stockley Park, Uxbridge UB11 1AY • [www.adobe.co.uk](http://www.adobe.co.uk)

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