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## Review: Bluebeam PDF Revu

By Caren Schwartz

**TechnoScore: 4.5**

1 = Lowest Possible Score; 5 = Highest Possible Score

[www.bluebeam.com](http://www.bluebeam.com)**INTRODUCTION**

Bluebeam PDF Revu, by Bluebeam Software, is a tool to create, view, markup, and edit PDF files. There are two versions of Bluebeam PDF Revu — Standard and CAD — as well as Bluebeam Conversion Server.

Both versions of Bluebeam PDF Revu offer an extensive range of features including integration with Microsoft Office programs and conversion of Windows and CAD files into multiple formats (PDF, TIF, JPG, BMP, PSD, PNG, PCL, GIF, EMF, and WMF). The CAD version adds functions for CAD applications, including the ability to batch convert from AutoCAD or SolidWorks. Bluebeam Conversion Server provides automated PDF creation technology for an unlimited number of users.

As a software consultant specializing in helping firms manage time, money, and information I frequently receive PDF documents and convert documents to PDF format. My primary computer runs Windows XP Professional SP2 with an AMD Athlon XP 2200+ 1.80 GHz and 1 GB of RAM. After using Bluebeam PDF Revu Standard Edition (hereafter referred to as Bluebeam) on an almost daily basis for several months I am delighted with its capabilities.

**INSTALLATION**

Out of the “box” the basics of Bluebeam were easy to use. I installed Bluebeam Standard edition from a download. The installation was simple. However, given that there are a number of helpful user preferences, it might have been useful for the program to immediately open to the Bluebeam Administrator, the central point for customizing settings.

The program comes with a 141-page User Guide that you can search or print out. The descriptions of how to complete tasks and use the program were clear and well-illustrated, although when I printed the instructions, the illustrations came out a little bit light. When you open the program you get immediate access to useful Quicktips and tutorials as well as links to video tutorials and resources that exist online.

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**A FEW OF MY FAVORITE THINGS**

Each PDF you open becomes a tab across the top of the Bluebeam screen. This makes switching between documents quite easy. You also have a separate section on the side of the screen that shows thumbnails of the document, tools, document bookmarks, or layers.

I really like the thumbnail feature which enables easy manipulation of the pages in a document and helps you to find a specific page, especially if that page has a unique look.

Another capability I found very useful was the combine capability which quickly enables you to combine multiple PDF documents and change the order. I needed to send a client multiple reports

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printed from another application. I didn't want to attach eight documents so I put Bluebeam to work.

First I printed each report to a Bluebeam PDF using the Bluebeam PDF printer driver that is automatically installed. I didn't think about naming the reports when I created them and named them list1, list2, list3, etc., If I had named them appropriately I could have changed the order when doing the combine using the very friendly combine interface. Instead, I just combined them and then opened the document in Bluebeam. Using the thumbnails I was able to determine which page belonged where and drag them into the right order. I saved the PDF and, right from Bluebeam, emailed it to my happy client. Bluebeam also has the capability to convert documents as a batch.

Bluebeam enables you to compare two PDF files and highlight the differences. You can review the differences through the markup list. The markup capabilities within Bluebeam appeared to be fairly powerful and flexible. One nice feature is that you can customize tool sets and each user can define a "my tools" which stores markup annotations for use across user sessions.

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For attorneys there are detailed PDF security settings available to control the ability to open, edit, print, copy, or change the document.

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I was also very pleased with the ability to print documents of non-standard sizes. I had a need to convert a name and address directory from Word to PDF. The directory had been created at 5" x 8" rather than 8" x 11". I opened the directory in Word and used Bluebeam's plug-in icons to change the settings and then create a PDF. The PDF came out perfectly sized. When trying to do this last year in Adobe Acrobat I ran into a number of problems getting the PDF set up as the right size. It may have been possible in Acrobat but in Bluebeam it was easy.

For attorneys there are also detailed PDF security settings available to control the ability to open, edit, print, copy, or change the document. You can extract pages from a document or insert pages into an existing document. You can add headers and footers to the document and include page numbers, the date, and an auto-generated Bates Number.

Another useful feature is redaction. All of my faxes come to me through email as a PDF. These faxes sometimes include client authorizations to pay by credit card and include the credit card number. I want to keep the PDF as proof of authorization but, for security reasons, I do not want the credit card number stored. With Bluebeam's redaction feature I can permanently removed the credit card number in a way that can not be reversed.

If you use CAD programs you will probably find the add-ins for CAD highly valuable. I did not do an actual speed comparison with other PDF creation programs but found the speed acceptable, although it sometimes seemed a little slow. I have been told that if you are converting CAD documents, optimizations have been done in Bluebeam that improve performance in this area as compared to competition.

#### **WISH LIST**

The only thing I found missing compared to Adobe Acrobat is a "Save to Time Matters" button. For many this is not an issue, but for those who use Time Matters it may be a show-stopper.

#### **PROBLEMS AND TECH SUPPORT**

The problems I experienced were minor. When I moved Bluebeam to a different computer I had problems with licensing. I contacted technical support and they reset my license quickly. If I had thoroughly read the documentation I would have known to contact them prior to uninstall and reinstall, as this is mentioned.

I also had trouble removing the Bluebeam toolbar from Word on the computer on which I first installed Bluebeam. I emailed technical support on a Saturday afternoon and received an answer early on Monday. Although the first answer did not resolve

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the problem, a second exchange was handled promptly and did fix the issue.

Additionally, I had to get used to the fact that the scroll wheel on my mouse worked as a zoom rather than a scroll wheel, until I was directed to the preferences section where I could disable this setting.

I called Bluebeam technical support on one occasion and found that they answered fairly quickly, spoke English, and were very pleasant and helpful.

Overall the technical support department earns my highest approval.

### PRICING

Bluebeam PDF Revu Standard Edition starts at \$149 per seat with a \$49 optional annual maintenance fee. Bluebeam PDF Revu CAD Edition starts at \$199 per seat with a \$60 optional annual maintenance fee. Bluebeam Conversion Server starts at \$2,999 per server with a maintenance price of \$900. Discounts are available on all products for multiple seats or servers. More information is available at [www.bluebeam.com](http://www.bluebeam.com).

### CONCLUSION

On a scale of 1 to 5, I give Bluebeam PDF Revu a 4.5. I would highly recommend Bluebeam PDF Revu, especially if you use CAD programs or if you don't need the link to a program like Time Mat-

ters. I'm delighted to have it installed on one of my computers and find that, for a number of PDF functions, I switch to that computer rather than use Adobe Acrobat.

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Caren Schwartz is the founder of [Time & Cents Consultants](http://Time & Cents Consultants), a Southport Connecticut firm that specializes in helping professionals select, install, and get the most out of their software. Her philosophy is that companies can save time and money when they can better manage their time and money. Time & Cents works with a diverse range of industries including law firms, accounting firms, financial institutions, and other professional services firms. Ms. Schwartz is a Certified Professional Advisor for QuickBooks® and a Certified Consultant for Timeslips® by Sage, Peachtree® by Sage, Amicus Attorney® and Amicus Accounting by Gavel and Gown Software, as well as a Certified Independent Consultant for Time Matters®, Billing Matters™, Billing Matters Plus, and PCLaw® by LexisNexis.

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