

TEAM-FRIENDLY EDITING WITH LAYERED PDF FORMAT

Writers commonly spend a significant part of the working hours editing copy, and many of us have come to rely on the tried-and-true *Track Changes* feature of Microsoft Word. Utilizing distinct colors to visually set the emendments apart, this robust feature will likely see you through many a copyediting situation. Occasionally though, you may find yourself in a situation where it's important to visualize how the proposed changes work within the context of the overall document.

A possible scenario calling for this would be a marcom collateral project, where one needs to present revisions to non-writer team members. Ability to visually examine how well the changes fit in within the broader content and layout can be of a premium value in such a situation. Here *Track Changes* is not as helpful. One alternative worthy of consideration for a situation like that is utilizing stackable layers feature of the Adobe PDF' portable document format.

The stackable layers concept is similar to the one of onion skins: individual layers sit on top of each other,

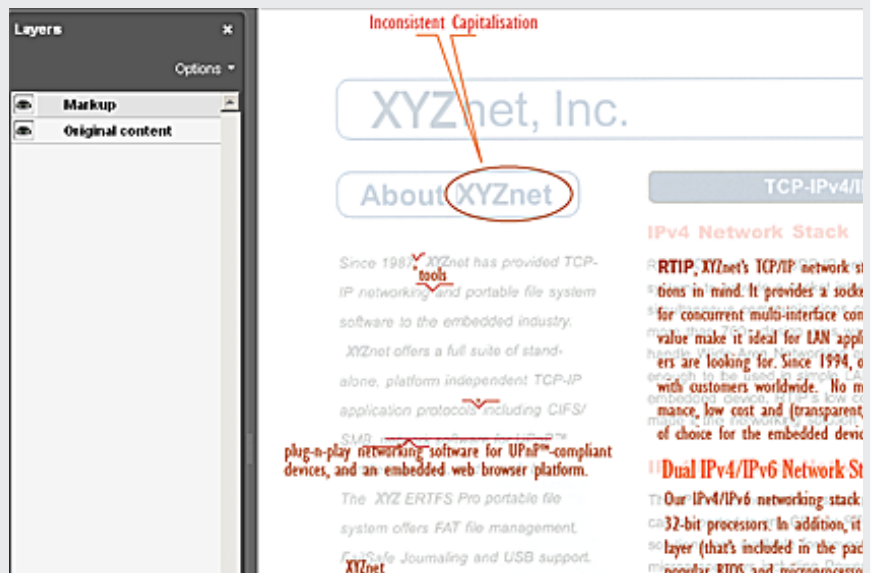
with each carrying a part of the overall content load. Usability value of this paradigm comes from users ability to switch visibility of individual layers On and Off, and the fact that Adobe authoring software lets you set the opacity values of layers as well.

Placing original content and the emendments on separate layers and fine-tuning the initial, On-Document-Open opacity values provides for an effective presentation format to make a compelling case to your teammates. Switching layers' visibility On and Off allows for a close-up examination of the emendments and facilitates triage.

With clean look and user friendly interface of the Adobe PDF format, the setup is intuitive to master and can be used successfully with team members lacking prior experience working with an editor.

Below is an example of how the technique is used for marcom copyediting:

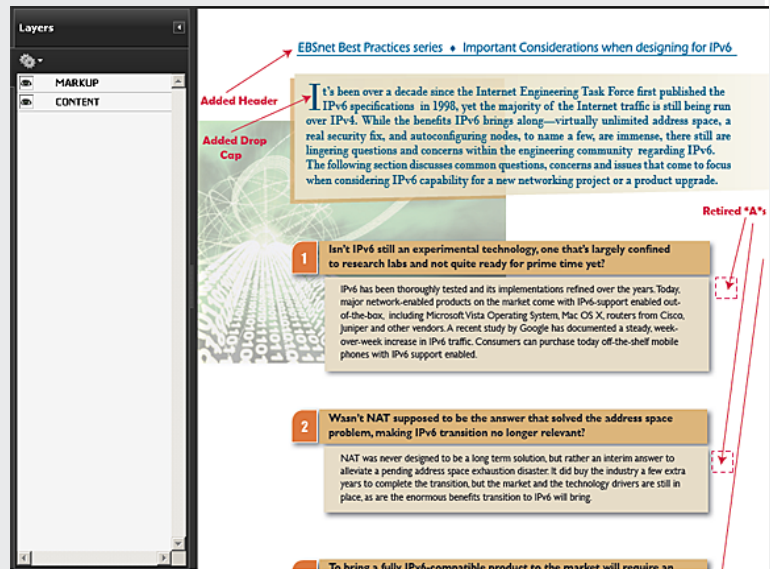
This screenshot, taken in Acrobat application window, shows two layers, *Markup* and *Original content*, each with visibility controls on the left, while the larger window displays the original content in light blue, with editorial changes floating on a separate layer set in brown. For this presentation the original collateral piece was scanned in, brought into Adobe software, and the layer Opacity value was set at 27% to allow changes and new content on the *Markup* layer stand apart visually. The new copy paragraphs were slightly offset as well, to give additional visual cues.



Actual PDF document can be downloaded at http://marcom.comxa.com/Markup/LayeredPDF_example.pdf.

Below is another example of the layered PDF technique's application. Here it is used to annotate the changes relating mostly to the document design.

As in the first example, markup is set in a distinct color and placed on a separate layer; which team members can toggle On/Off to evaluate the proposed revisions.



Actual PDF document can be downloaded at http://marcom.comxa.com/Markup/EBS_markup_example.pdf.

In summary, the layered PDF format can serve as an effective presentation tool in today's busy writers and editors arsenal. Using it allows for clean and persuasive separation of content and emendments, facilitating teamwork and resulting in a higher quality content product.

About the author:

Rusty Zainoulline is a freelance technical marcom writer and graphics designer based in Seattle area. He can be reached at [rusty.zainoulline <at> gmail.com](mailto:rusty.zainoulline@gmail.com).