PfeifferReport

Adobe InDesign 'Share for Review': Speeding up the Design Review Process

About this research

This report presents the findings of a market-specific benchmarking and research project conducted by Pfeiffer Consulting for Adobe. The main aim of the research was **to document the efficiency and productivity gains linked to the use of the 'Share for Review' feature of Adobe InDesign**, compared to results obtained when relying on conventional review workflows.

Benchmarks were executed using *Pfeiffer Consulting's Methodology for Productivity Benchmarking*, which has been fine-tuned over more than a decade, and measures the time experienced operators take to execute specific tasks. Please refer to the Methodology section on the last page of this document for more information.

About 'Share for Review'

'Share for Review', which was introduced with Adobe InDesign 2020, and has been expanded in its functionality with InDesign 2021, allows designers and stakeholders **to significantly streamline the often time-consuming design review process**. The feature lets users share InDesign documents through a web-preview, which supports real-time and concurrent commenting by several users.

This research project specifically focussed on productivity gains linked to the use of the 'Share for Review' feature, both in an individual workflow situation and in the context of team collaboration. In our benchmarks, **using 'Share for Review' was on average over three times faster** then other methods. (See chart below.)

Executive Summary

▷ 'Share for Review' was introduced with Adobe InDesign 2020, and **has been significantly expanded** in the latest release of the software.

▷ 'Share for Review' allows designers to make **a web-preview of a document available on-line for commenting.** This speeds up the review process significantly.

▷ In document sharing benchmarks for this research, **using 'Share for Review' was three to six times faster** than other sharing methods.

▷ Benchmarks measuring time to implement requested changes showed that 'Share for Review' **speeds up document revision by a factor of two** by linking comments directly to corresponding elements of the InDesign document.

▷ Overall, **'Share for Review' was on average over three times faster** than other methods of sharing and revising documents. (See chart on the left.)

Key Benchmark Results: Average of 8 Workflow Benchmarks

With 'Share for Review' (336% prod. increase)
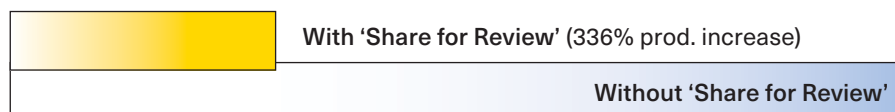
Without 'Share for Review'

Chart based on the average of 8 different sets of workflow benchmarks.
A total of 138 individual benchmark measures were taken.
Reference value: Average time when working with other workflows. **Shorter is better.**

How 'Share for Review' Speeds Up the Document Revision Cycle

The Productivity Challenges of the Review Process

The document review process is an integral part of every creative project: Each time, a design or content-decision needs to be validated by one (or, more often, several) stakeholders, the designer needs to share the current state of the project, collect comments and integrate them. In the case of InDesign, this process up to now required creating a PDF file of the design, sharing it, and, once all reviewers have added their comments, implement requested changes. **While this process works well, it can be time-consuming,** especially when several stakeholders need to comment on the same design. (See table on page 4.)

'Share for Review' streamlines this process significantly: At any point, a designer can share the current state of an InDesign document through a web-preview that allows for direct commenting by several concurrent reviewers. More importantly, **the designer can see comments in real-time not only in the Review panel of InDesign, but also directly in the document itself**, speeding up the integration of requested changes.

The impact on overall productivity is significant. **There are basically three bottle-necks** in the review process. **The first one is sharing**: Having to create a PDF and forward it each time a design needs to
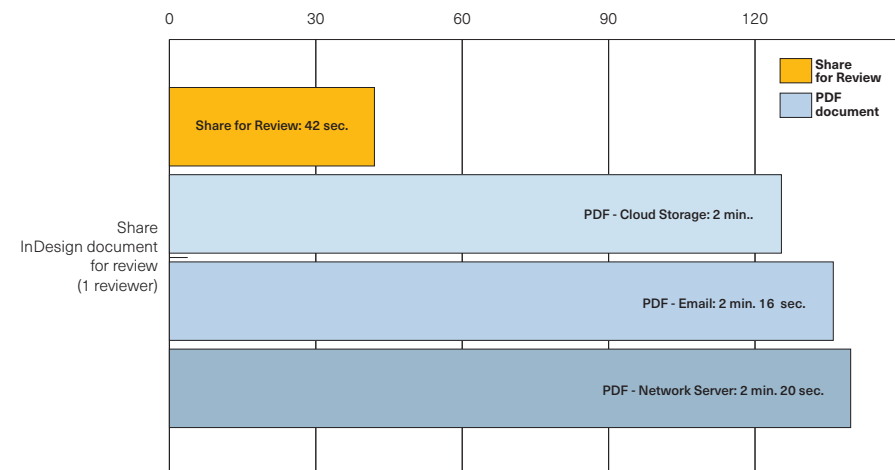
Major Points

▷ 'Share for Review' allows designers to **share an InDesign document through a web-preview** where several reviewers can comment in real-time. These comments **show up immediately in the InDesign document**.

▷ Using 'Share for Review', **implementing requested changes is significantly more efficient**. Once changes have been applied, updating the web-preview makes them immediately available to the reviewers.

▷ Using **'Share for Review' was three to six times more efficient** in these benchmarks, compared to sharing PDF files for review.

Share for Review: Comparison of Sharing Methods

Time-scale in seconds. All data are the average of 3 individual benchmarks
Shorter is better.

Legend:
- ■ Share for Review
- ■ PDF document

- Share for Review: 42 sec.
- PDF - Cloud Storage: 2 min..
- PDF - Email: 2 min. 16 sec.
- PDF - Network Server: 2 min. 20 sec.

Share InDesign document for review (1 reviewer)

*In our benchmarks we compared 'Share for Review' with other methods of sharing a design with stakeholders (email, using a cloud storage repository, or copying and retrieving files from a network volume). **Using 'Share for Review' was on average over three times faster** than using these other methods.*

be reviewed quickly adds up over time. **The second bottleneck is staggered reviews:** If several stakeholders need to contribute their comments, this can only be done sequentially, unnecessarily delaying the review process. Finally, **integrating requested changes also slows down the process**, since the designer has to switch back and forth between the reviewed PDF file and the design. This means for instance copying text to be replaced in Acrobat, switching to InDesign, locating and selecting the text to be replaced, and pasting the correct version.

'Share for Review' speeds up the review process on all three levels: Sharing a design through a web-preview is significantly faster than other methods: In the benchmarks for this research, even **a single share operation was over three times faster**. In a **staggered review process** with one designer and 3 reviewers, **'Share for Review' was over six times faster.**
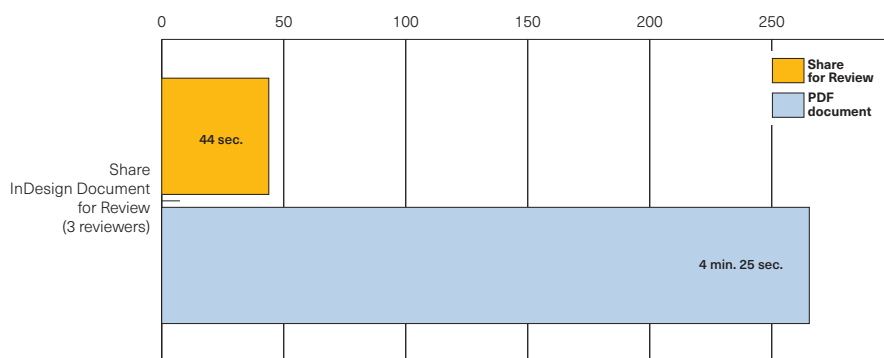
Finally, direct access to design elements and text that needs to be changed significantly speeds up the revision process. In our benchmarks, **implementing requested changes in a design was over two times faster** — but beyond time savings, the convenience of the process is significant, since **the designer can simply update the review link to share the latest state of the design.**

Key Benchmark Results

The Impact of Multiple Reviewers: We benchmarked the time spent by a designer and three stakeholders to share and retrieve a file, forward a reviewed file to the next reviewer, and return the reviewed file to the designer. Only the time necessary for sharing and retrieving the file by all participants was taken into account. **Share for review has a significant advantage in this kind of review,** since all participants can comment simultaneously; the designer can see comments within the InDesign document, and **update the web-preview** to make changes available to reviewers.

Multiple Reviewer Sharing Benchmarks
Time-scale in seconds. All data are the average of 3 individual benchmarks
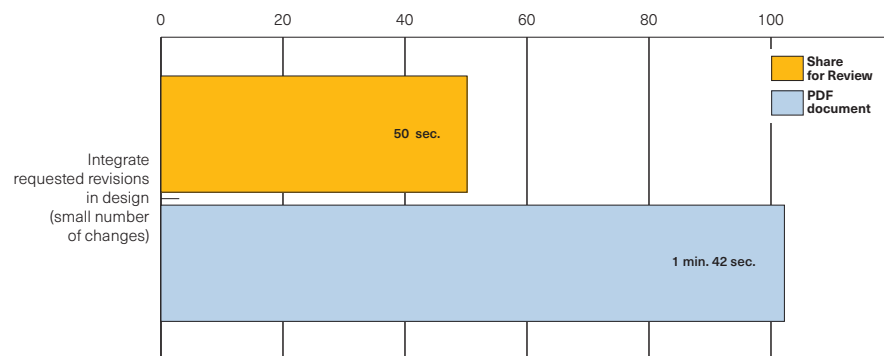**Shorter is better.**

Share InDesign Document for Review (3 reviewers)
- Share for Review: 44 sec.
- PDF document: 4 min. 25 sec.

One Page Document Revision: Implementing requested changes of a design means that the designer has to go back and forth between the PDF file containing the comments, and the InDesign layout. This benchmark measured the time necessary for very simply revisions (three minor changes on a one-page document, and a single change in a five page report). **'Share for Review' speeds up this process significantly, since comments are directly linked to the page layout.** This is particularly efficient with text edits, such as replacing or deleting text.
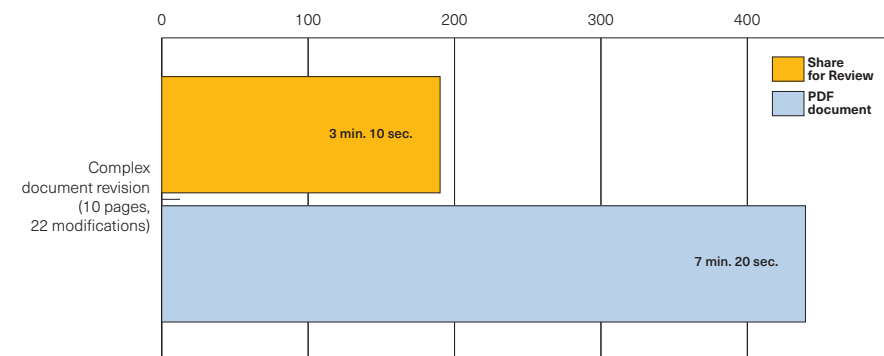
Simple Document Revision Benchmarks
Time-scale in seconds. All data are the average of 3 individual benchmarks
Shorter is better.

Integrate requested revisions in design (small number of changes)
- Share for Review: 50 sec.
- PDF document: 1 min. 42 sec.

Ten Page Document Revision: This benchmark measured the time necessary to implement 22 requested changes in a ten page document. Changes included deleting, replacing and inserting text, changing attributes of graphic elements, and more. **'Share for Review' is significantly more efficient in these operations**, particularly in longer documents, since it eliminates the need to search for and manually select specific segments of text to be modified, which also **reduces the risk of errors in the revision process.**

Document Revision Workflow Benchmarks
Time-scale in seconds. All data are the average of 3 individual benchmarks
Shorter is better.

Complex document revision (10 pages, 22 modifications)
- Share for Review: 3 min. 10 sec.
- PDF document: 7 min. 20 sec.

The Impact of 'Share for Review' on Team Productivity

Team Productivity in Creative Projects

Team productivity is inherently complex. This is particularly true in the creative industries, where many different competencies need to be managed to work together as efficiently as possible — and usually under intense deadline pressure. **The review process of creative projects makes up a considerable part of this workflow.**
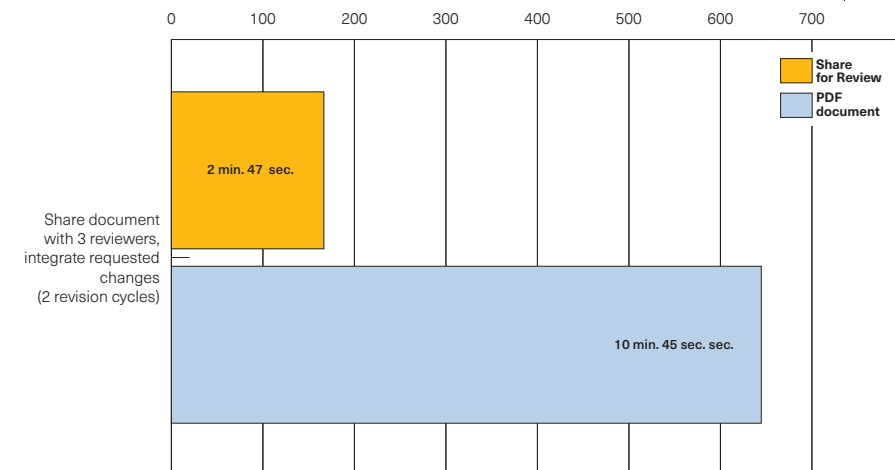
Part of the problem is the fact that the review process of creative projects usually involves a number of stakeholders, from the creative director, to the account manager, perhaps a commissioning agency, sometimes some freelancers, and of course the client himself. Not only that — it also happens in many successive stages, from initial ideation to the finished design, each of which need to be reviewed by several people: The designer may first show his initial ideas only to the creative director, before sharing a design more widely. And before a project gets actually reviewed by the client, **many iterations will have taken place, each of which will have been reviewed by one or several stakeholders.**

In this complex situation, relying on the exchange of files that reviewers comment on is not only **fraught with potential problems** (such as the wrong file being shared or an outdated version of a project being commented on), it is also **very time-consuming.**

Major Points

▷ The **document review process is a significant part** of overall team productivity.

▷ Relying on shared PDF documents for review can be **time-consuming and error-prone**, especially when several reviewers are involved.

▷ **'Share for Review' streamlines team review workflows significantly**, by allowing several reviewers to comment at the same time, and making requested changes appear directly in the page layout.

▷ Cumulated **time-savings provided by 'Share for Review' scale to many hours** as team-size and number of occurrences increase. (See table on following page.)

Complete Document Revision Workflow (3 stakeholders, 2 revision cycles)
Time-scale in seconds. All data are the average of 3 individual benchmarks
Shorter is better.

Sharing for review and implementing changes: This benchmark analyzed a real-world review process with multiple stakeholder, and measured the time necessary to share a design with 3 reviewers, implement a first round of changes, share the updated version, and input a few final modifications. *Using 'Share for Review' was almost four times faster,* since all reviewers can comment simultaneously. The designer has direct access to comments within the InDesign file, and can **share the new version simply by updating the review-link.**

How Time Savings with 'Share for Review' Scale with Team-Size

Operation	Size of team	Number of Individual Operations (Time Saved)			
		1	5	10	20
'Share for Review' (Average of All Benchmarks)	1	**2 min. 38 sec.**	13 min. 08 sec.	26 min. 15 sec.	52 min. 31 sec.
	5	13 min. 08 sec.	1 h. 5 min. 38 sec.	2 h. 11 min. 16 sec.	4 h. 22 min. 33 sec.
	10	26 min. 15 sec.	2 h. 11 min. 16 sec.	4 h. 22 min. 33 sec.	8 h. 45 min. 05 sec.
Integrate Changes (Average of All Benchmarks)	1	**2 min. 31 sec.**	12 min. 34 sec.	25 min. 08 sec.	50 min. 15 sec.
	5	12 min. 34 sec.	1 h. 2 min. 49 sec.	2 h. 5 min. 39 sec.	4 h. 11 min. 17 sec.
	10	25 min. 08 sec.	2 h. 5 min. 39 sec.	4 h. 11 min. 17 sec.	8 h. 22 min. 35 sec.

*It is common to **underestimate the cumulative effect of small productivity gains**. Yet, as this table shows, **their impact can be significant** as the number of occurrences and team-size increase.*

How 'Share for Review' Increases Team Productivity

While 'Share for Review' is useful and convenient for small workgroups, **the benefits of the feature significantly increase in larger teams**, where several stakeholders need to review a design.

For this research, we **benchmarked a real-world review workflow:** A ten-page document that needed to be checked by three reviewers, and also involved a second review-cycle once the first changes had been implemented. We measured the time necessary to share the two versions between the designer and the reviewers, and as well as the time necessary to implement requested changes, such as text replacement, text formatting and changes to the design. **This took almost eleven minutes working with PDF files — compared to under three minutes using 'Share for Review'.** It is also important to point out that **these time savings scale in a linear fashion** as team-size and number of reviews increase. (See table above.)

The Intricacies of the Review Process

	Without 'Share for Review'	With 'Share for Review'
Review process (single reviewer)	▷ **Creator:** Convert document to PDF, share with reviewer ▷ **Reviewer:** Download shared PDF, comment ▷ **Reviewer:** Return reviewed PDF ▷ **Creator:** Download reviewed PDF	▷ **Creator:** Share public or private link for review ▷ **Reviewer:** Access shared link, comment.
Review process (multiple reviewers)	▷ **Creator:** Convert document to PDF, share with reviewer 1 ▷ **Reviewer 1:** Download shared PDF, comment, share with reviewer 2 ▷ **Reviewer 2:** Download shared PDF, comment, share with reviewer 3 ▷ **Reviewer 3:** Download shared PDF, comment, return reviewed PDF ▷ **Creator:** Download reviewed PDF	▷ **Creator:** Share public or private link for review ▷ **Reviewers:** Access shared link, comment simultaneously.
Implementation of requested changes	▷ **Creator:** Download reviewed PDF, switch between reviewed PDF and document, implement changes one by one ▷ **Creator:** Convert updated file to PDF, share for approval	▷ **Creator:** Implement changes directly in the InDesign document, update review link for approval

*Reviewing a creative file can require many steps: not only does it usually imply converting the document to PDF before reviewing can begin, it also means that the PDF file needs to be shared, downloaded by the reviewer(s), then saved and returned to the creator to implement the requested changes. **This is particularly time-consuming in a staggered review process where several stakeholders are concerned.***

Methodology

This benchmark project was commissioned by Adobe and independently executed by Pfeiffer Consulting.

All the productivity measures presented in this document are based on real-world workflow examples, designed and executed by professionals with many years of experience with the programs and workflows involved.

How we measure productivity

The basic approach is simple: in order to assess productivity gains that a program or solution may (or may not) bring, we start by analyzing the minimum number of steps necessary to achieve a given result in each of the applications or workflows that have to be compared.

Once this list of actions has been clearly established, we start to execute the operation or workflow in each solution, with the help of seasoned professionals who have long-standing experience in the field and with the solutions that are tested.

Every set of steps is executed three times, the average of the three measures is used.

About Pfeiffer Consulting

Pfeiffer Consulting is an independent technology research and benchmarking operation focused on the needs of publishing, digital content production, and new media professionals.

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