Real-World Productivity for Design Professionals

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Key Productivity Data and Benchmark Analysis

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Introduction

This document presents key findings of a benchmarking project designed to assess the impact of the Adobe Creative Suite 4 on the productivity of creative professionals.

Benchmarks were designed to measure how specific functions speed up everyday tasks. For details on the methodology used to conduct these benchmarks, see "About the Benchmarks" at the end of this report.

This report focuses specifically on features and functionality geared towards the professional designer. Design and development of web and interactive content, digital imaging, and video production are covered in separate reports.

▷ *Overall, **Adobe Creative Suite 4 can save a designer hours of work every month,** quickly paying for the upgrade through increased productivity.*

How Live Preflight Helps You Keep Your Deadlines

What is it all about?

Preflighting of documents, to eliminate potential production-level problems in design workflows (such as missing fonts, or insufficient image resolution), has been part of the InDesign feature set for years. But there were always two bottlenecks: fixing problems once they had been spotted, and the fact that preflighting usually occurs at the end of document preparation, and thus at a time when every second is precious. Live Preflight solves both problems.
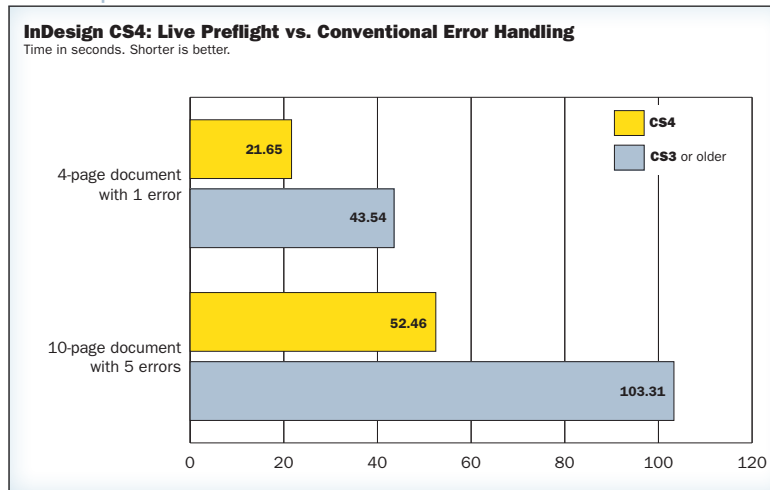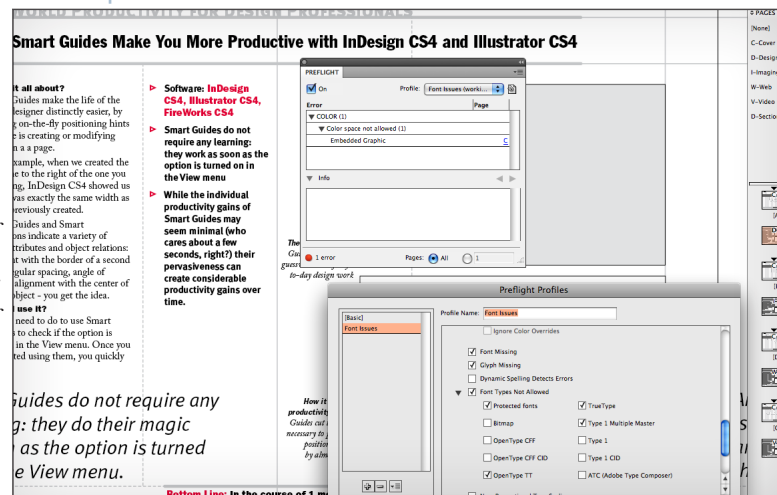
How do I use it?

Live Preflight is activated by default, using a standard profile, and assists you in fixing problems by providing a summary of the issue and a suggested fix directly in the Preflight panel. Images with an error can be accessed directly from within the Preflight panel.

▷ *Live Preflight saves time by allowing you to spot and fix problems as they occur.*

▷ **Software:**
InDesign CS4

▷ **Live Preflight is an essential extension of the existing preflight functionality. It lets you define preflight profiles that can track a vast array of potential problems, and that go significantly beyond the features of previous releases, yet remains easily usable.**

The feature: Live Preflight can track a great variety of potential problems: the profile being created here tracks the use of fonts that could create problems at output, such as OpenType fonts containg TrueType outlines, or Multiple Master fonts.

How it affects productivity: Locating and fixing document errors with Live Preflight was twice as fast in our tests as compared to the preflight functionality in previous releases.

InDesign CS4: Live Preflight vs. Conventional Error Handling
Time in seconds. Shorter is better.

4-page document with 1 error	CS4: 21.65
	CS3 or older: 43.54
10-page document with 5 errors	CS4: 52.46
	CS3 or older: 103.31

CS4
CS3 or older

0   20   40   60   80   100   120

Bottom Line: Live Preflight can save you over an hour per month.
(Based on 3 repetitions of benchmarked operations per day. Click here to find out more.)

How Smart Guides Make You More Productive with InDesign CS4

What is it all about?

Smart Guides provide on-the-fly positioning hints while you create or modify objects on a page.
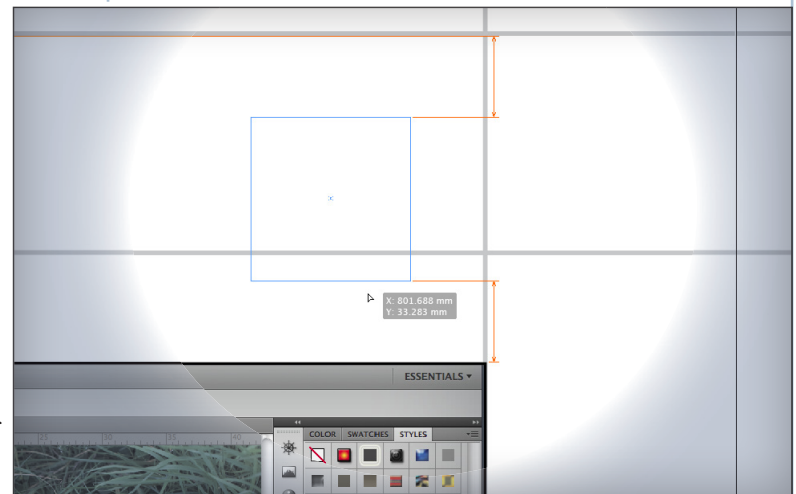
As an example, when positioning a frame, InDesign CS4 shows you when it is placed at the same distance from two elements close by (see illustration).

Smart Guides indicate a variety of objects attributes and object relations: alignment with the border of a second object, regular spacing, angle of rotation, alignment with the center of another object—you get the idea.

How do I use it?

All you need to do to use Smart Guides is to ensure the option is selected in the View menu. Once you have started using them, you quickly wonder how you managed to live without them.
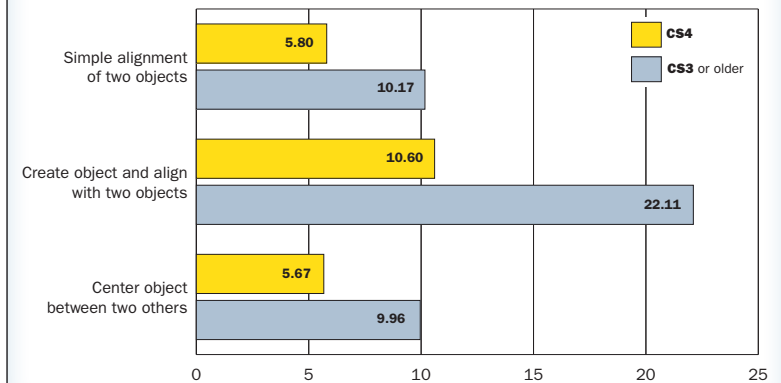
▷ *Smart Guides do not require any learning: they assist the user in an unobtrusive yet efficient way.*

▷ **Software:**
InDesign CS4
also available in
Illustrator CS4
Fireworks CS4

▷ **Smart Guides do not require any learning: they work as soon as the option is turned on in the View menu**

▷ **While the individual productivity gains of Smart Guides may seem minimal (who cares about a few seconds, right?) their pervasiveness can create considerable productivity gains over time.**

The feature: Smart Guides take a lot of fiddling out of day-to-day design work.

X: 801.688 mm
Y: 33.283 mm

ESSENTIALS ▾

COLOR SWATCHES STYLES

How it affects productivity: Smart Guides (benchmarked here with InDesign CS4) cut the time necessary to precisely position objects by almost 50%.

InDesign CS4: Use of Smart Guides for Object Positioning
Time in seconds. Shorter is better.

	CS4	CS3 or older
Simple alignment of two objects	5.80	10.17
Create object and align with two objects	10.60	22.11
Center object between two others	5.67	9.96

0   5   10   15   20   25

Bottom Line: In one month, InDesign's Smart Guides can save you over two hours.
(Based on 20 repetitions of benchmarked operations per day. Click here to find out more.)

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How the Adjustments Panel Can Speed Up Non-destructive Image Correction

What is it all about?

The Adjustments Panel was introduced in Photoshop CS4 to streamline the process of making non-destructive changes to images. Previously, in order to make such changes, it was necessary to create an adjustment layer, choose the kind of adjustment (Levels, Contrast, etc), and then adjust desired settings. With The Adjustments Panel, all you need to do is to select the option and choose the setting in one convenient panel.
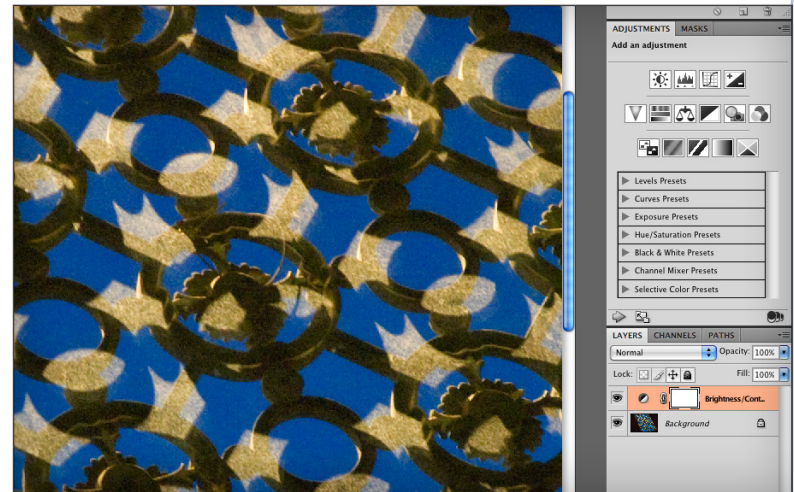
How do I use it?

In fact, you don't need to do anything: Photoshop CS4 automatically creates a new adjustment layer as soon as you select an option. The program also automatically creates a layer mask and presents presets for each adjustment option within the panel, saving many round-trips to the menu-bar.
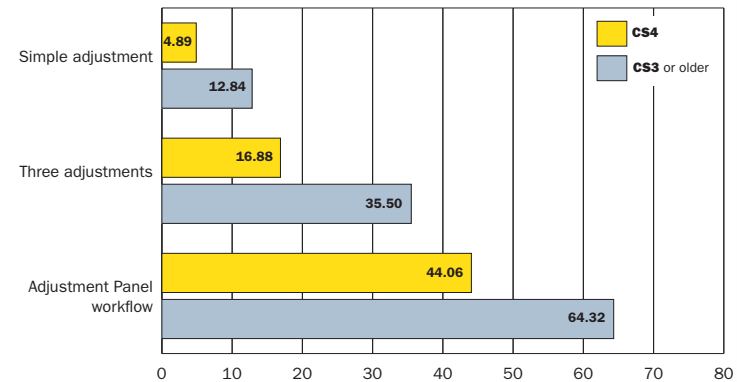
▷ *The Adjustments Panel eliminates several unnecessary steps in the non-destructive image modification workflow.*

▷ **Software:**
Photoshop CS4

▷ **The Adjustments Panel speeds up non-destructive image modifications considerably by eliminating several time-consuming steps.**

▷ **Cumulative productivity gains linked to the Adjustments Panel are significant, especially if you spend a lot of time tweaking images to look just right.**

The feature: The Adjustments Panel offers fast access to frequently used image modification options by placing them in a panel and automating the creation of an adjustment layer and layer mask.

How it affects productivity: With the Adjustments Panel, applying changes to an image in Photoshop CS4 takes less than half the time required in previous Photoshop releases.

Photoshop CS4: Adjustments Panel vs. Create Adjustment Layer
Time in seconds. Shorter is better.

	CS4	CS3 or older
Simple adjustment	4.89	12.84
Three adjustments	16.88	35.50
Adjustment Panel workflow	44.06	64.32

0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80

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Bottom Line: Using the Adjustments Panel can save you over an hour each week.
(Based on 10 repetitions of benchmarked operations per day. Click here to find out more.)

▷ **5**

Keeping Related Illustrator Work Together with Multiple Artboards
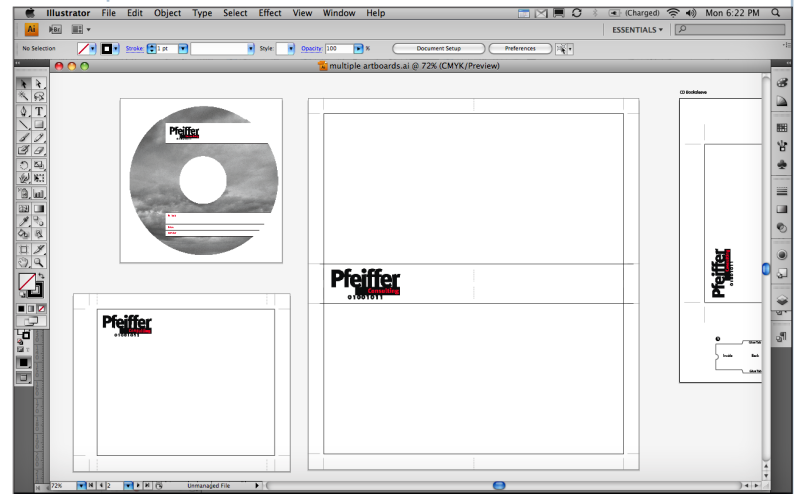
What is it all about?

Multiple artboards transform Illustrator from a single-page application to one that can handle up to 100 pages of varying sizes in a single file. This is very useful for managing projects that are composed of a variety of related design pieces.

How do I use it?

The number of artboards can be set at the creation of a new Illustrator document. Additional artboards can be created with the artboard tool in the tool palette, and existing artboards can be modified and moved around freely to adapt to the needs of a project.
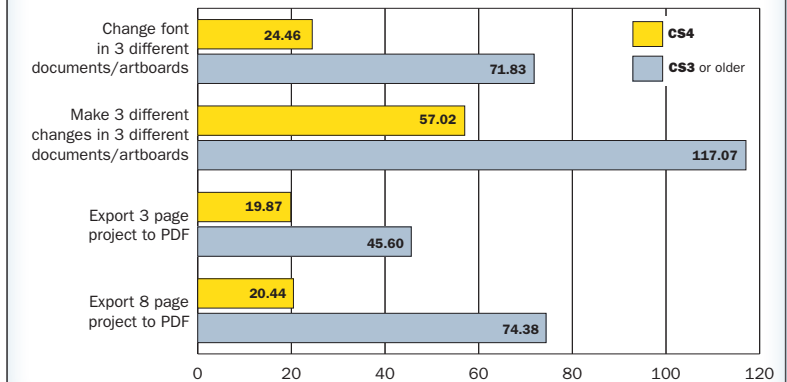
▷ **Software:**
Illustrator CS4

▷ **Multiple artboards have an immediate impact on productivity, as soon as a project comprises several individual pieces that share settings and design elements.**

▷ **Particularly when experimenting with design variations, being able to see their impact on a whole range of design objects saves a lot of time.**

The feature: Multiple artboards are essentially pages of varying sizes and proportions displayed next to each other on the Illustrator paste-board and stored in the same file.

▷ *Multiple artboards make managing design projects with multiple deliverables significantly easier.*

How it affects productivity: Being able to change common parameters such as fonts or color without having to switch between different documents has an immediate impact on productivity.

Illustrator CS4: Multiple Artboards
Time in seconds. Shorter is better.

	CS4	CS3 or older
Change font in 3 different documents/artboards	24.46	71.83
Make 3 different changes in 3 different documents/artboards	57.02	117.07
Export 3 page project to PDF	19.87	45.60
Export 8 page project to PDF	20.44	74.38

0   20   40   60   80   100   120

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Bottom Line: Multiple artboards can save you over 3 hours per month.
*(Based on 3 repetitions of benchmarked operations per day. **Click here to find out more.**)*

Creating and Modifying Gradients in a More Efficient Way
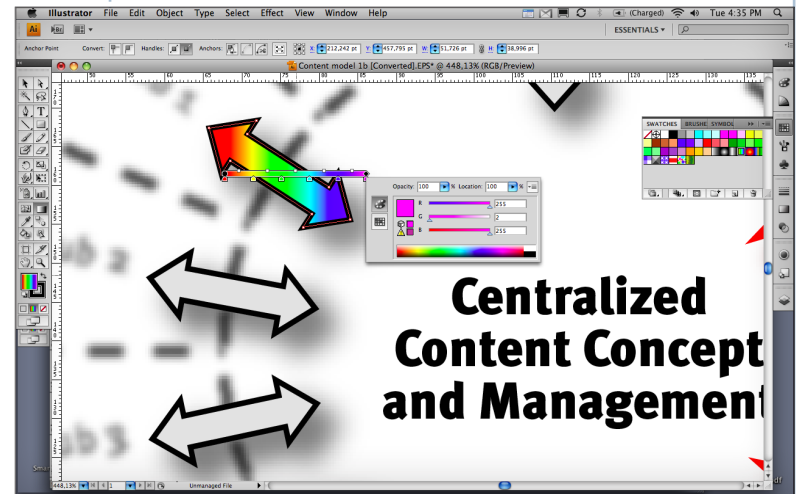
What is it all about?

Gradients are one of the most fundamental features Illustrator provides. The new gradient tool provides one of the most ground-breaking improvements of this functionality since the introduction of the program over two decades ago.

How do I use it?

The gradient tool is essentially the same tool you have always used, just better. Gradients can now be directly modified with the gradient tool, including complex, multi-color gradients. Saving a modified gradient has been significantly streamlined.
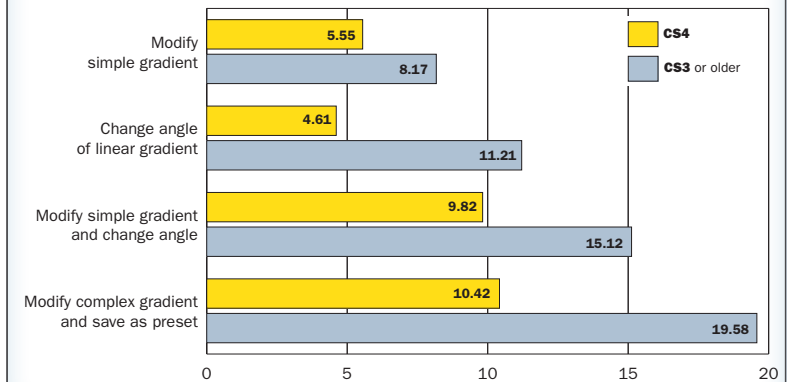
▷ **Software:**
Illustrator CS4

▷ **The new Gradient tool is particularly efficient when you work on a larger screen, where mouse movements to the various panels take more time than on smaller displays.**

▷ **The new gradient tool offers innovative options such as the possibility of skewing circular gradients interactively.**

The feature: The new gradient tool displays a color-bar with color swatches that can be modified directly, without going back to the Swatches panel.

Centralized Content Concept and Management

Illustrator CS4: Gradient Tool
Time in seconds. Shorter is better.

How it affects productivity: Modifying a simple gradient is almost twice as fast with the new gradient tool.

	CS4	CS3 or older
Modify simple gradient	5.55	8.17
Change angle of linear gradient	4.61	11.21
Modify simple gradient and change angle	9.82	15.12
Modify complex gradient and save as preset	10.42	19.58

▷ *The new gradient tool makes creating and modifying gradients significantly faster.*

Bottom Line: The new gradient tool can save you more than an hour per month.
*(Based on 10 repetitions of benchmarked operations per day. **Click here to find out more.**)*

How Flash CS4 Professional Speeds Up Creating Animations
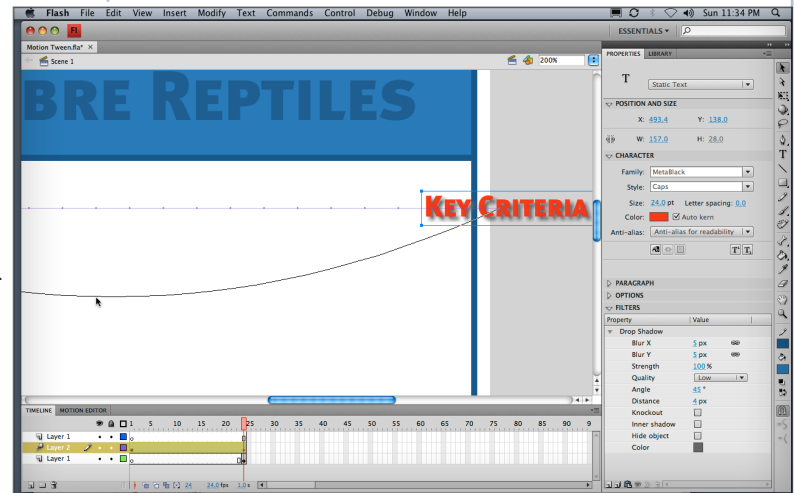
What is it all about?

Flash Professional is a powerful animation and motion design tool, and each new release extends the possibilities for both designers and developers. Flash CS4 represents a major overhaul of the program and introduces a completely new and more direct animation model (alongside the methods already in place).

How do I use it?

Creating a simple motion tween has been significantly streamlined in Flash CS4. All you need to do is select an object, right-click, and select Motion Tween from the pop-up menu. The application automatically inserts keyframes and a motion path that can be visually adjusted.
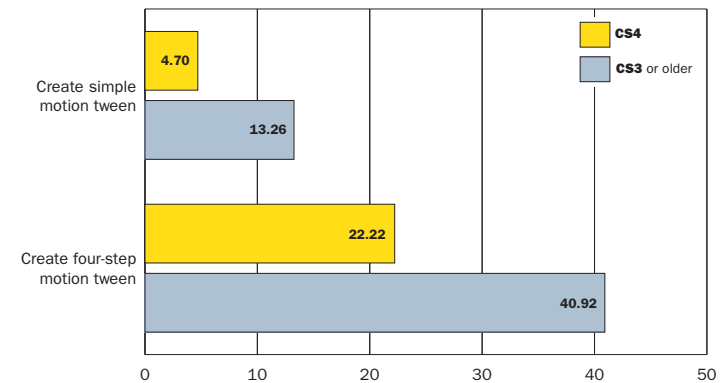
▷ **Software:**
Flash CS4 Professional

▷ **For designers who want to explore the Flash authoring environment but find it intimidating, the new release is a major improvement that incorporates many Adobe ease-of-use conventions.**

The feature: When you create a motion tween, Flash CS4 automates the tasks of creating the necessary keyframes. Even more important, the program automatically creates a Bézier–curve motion path that can be easily modified.

Flash CS4: Create Simple Animation
Time in seconds. Shorter is better.

How it affects productivity: Creating a simple animation in Flash CS4 takes one third of the time required in previous releases.

Chart legend:
- CS4
- CS3 or older

	Time (seconds)
Create simple motion tween — CS4	4.70
Create simple motion tween — CS3 or older	13.26
Create four-step motion tween — CS4	22.22
Create four-step motion tween — CS3 or older	40.92

▷ *Flash CS4 Professional demonstrates significantly deeper integration with the Adobe Creative Suite environment.*

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Bottom Line: New animation tools can save you 1 hour 30 minutes per month.
(Based on 10 repetitions of benchmarked operations per day. Click here to find out more.)

How Designers Can Create CSS — Without Even Knowing It
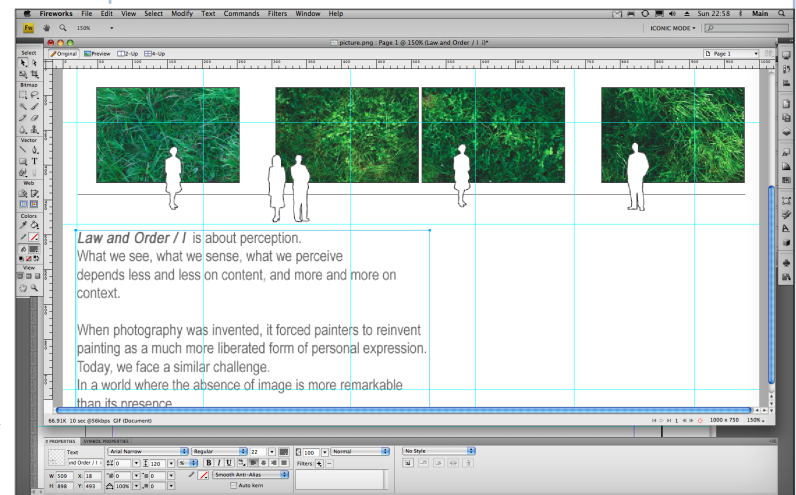
What is it all about?

Fireworks CS4 is the first release of the application that allows you to export formatting information using cascading style sheets (CSS), providing considerable productivity gains at the site creation stage. In addition, Dreamweaver CS4 adds simplified tools for navigating and modifying CSS-based sites.

How do I use it?

Simple: Format your Fireworks CS4 page and export it as CSS. Instead of exporting the page as HTML tables with rasterized text, Fireworks CS4 creates the necessary CSS style sheet that can then be fine-tuned in Dreamweaver.
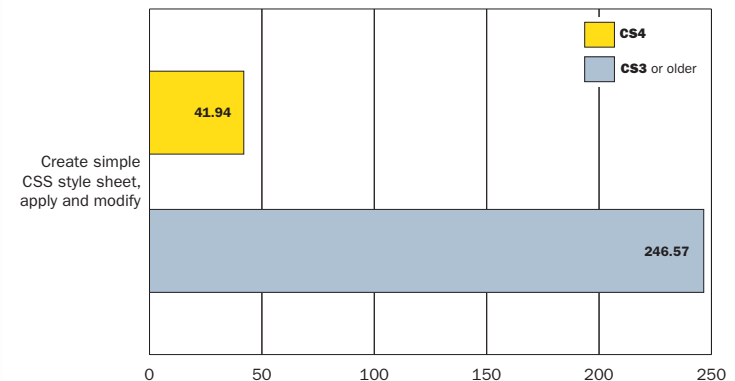
▷ **Software:**
Fireworks CS4
Dreamweaver CS4

▷ **Whether you are a hard-core CSS coder or new to web development, the combination of Fireworks CS4 and Dreamweaver CS4 offers a spectacularly simpler—and faster— way to build a modern web page.**

▷ **The productivity gains over previous releases of the same programs are spectacular.**

▷ *Fireworks CS4 could do for CSS what WYSIWYG HTML editors did for web design: Make it accessible for designers without programming skills.*

The feature: Text formatting information in a Fireworks CS4 document is exported as a CSS style sheet that is directly recognized and managed by Dreamweaver CS4.

Fireworks CS4/Dreamweaver CS4: CSS Creation and Management
Time in seconds. Shorter is better.

CS4
CS3 or older

Create simple CSS style sheet, apply and modify

41.94
246.57

0   50   100   150   200   250

How it affects productivity: Even with an extremely simple example, the productivity gains of creating CSS in Fireworks CS4 are spectacular.

Bottom Line: Creating CSS with Fireworks CS4 can save you over 3 hours per week.
*(Based on 3 repetitions of benchmarked operation per day. **Click here to find out more.**)*

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How Adobe Creative Suite 4 Increases Efficiency in Managing Windows
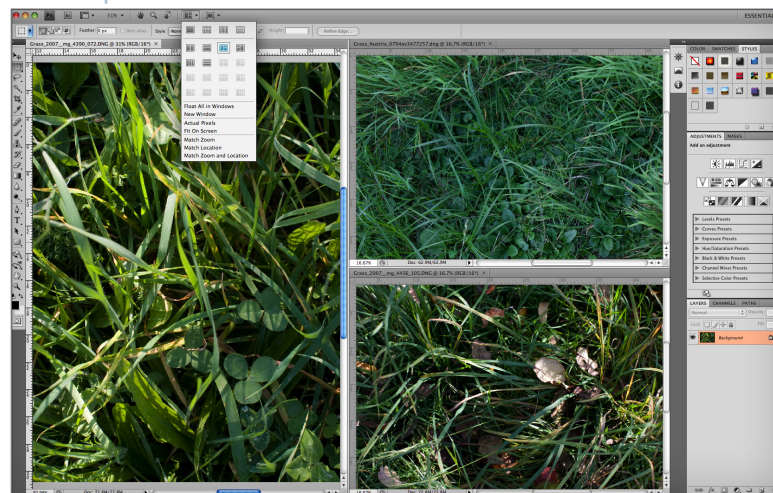
What is it all about?

Adobe Creative Suite 4 sports a new user interface for managing windows and panels, making working with multiple documents much more convenient. If you like the classic way of shuffling windows around to see what they contain, you can still do this, but the tabbed user interface common to the key applications in Adobe CS4 is clearly more convenient: Open documents show up as tabs in the main application frame, and splitting the screen to compare several windows is very easy.

How do I use it?

Adobe CS4 applications have a new Application Bar that gives very fast access to different display configurations, which can be changed easily. Multiple documents appear as tabs; switching between documents is as easy as clicking on the right tab.
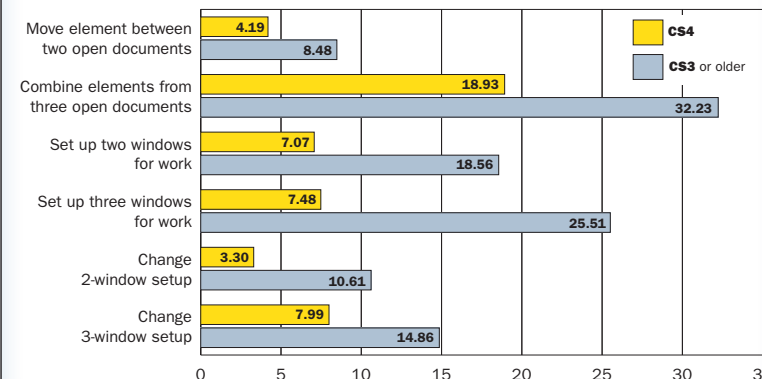
▷ *Increasing the efficiency of working with multiple documents is hugely important in creative workflows.*

▷ **Software:**
InDesign CS4
Illustrator CS4
Photoshop CS4
Flash CS4 Professional
Fireworks CS4

▷ **While the new Application Frame and Application Bar in Adobe CS4 applications are a departure from operating system conventions, their impact on productivity is obvious once you start working with them.**

The feature: The available screen real-estate can be split among several open documents with a single click. Switching between different configurations is simple; the space necessary for panels is automatically taken into account.

How it affects productivity: The time spent shuffling windows around accumulates quickly; the new user interface can provide very significant productivity gains almost immediately.

InDesign CS4/Illustrator CS4: User Interface Efficiency
Time in seconds. Shorter is better.

Operation	CS4	CS3 or older
Move element between two open documents	4.19	8.48
Combine elements from three open documents	18.93	32.23
Set up two windows for work	7.07	18.56
Set up three windows for work	7.48	25.51
Change 2-window setup	3.30	10.61
Change 3-window setup	7.99	14.86

Bottom Line: The tabbed user interface of Adobe Creative Suite 4 can save over 3 hours a month.
(Based on 10 repetitions of benchmarked operations per day. Click here to find out more.)

Integrate Interactivity Into Design Projects with InDesign CS4

What is it all about?

What do you do if you have a layout or publication that you want to make available in print and also on the web? Of course InDesign has been capable of exporting interactive documents containing bookmarks, hyperlinks and video using the PDF format, but what about Flash? That is exactly what SWF and XFL export introduced with InDesign CS4 offer.
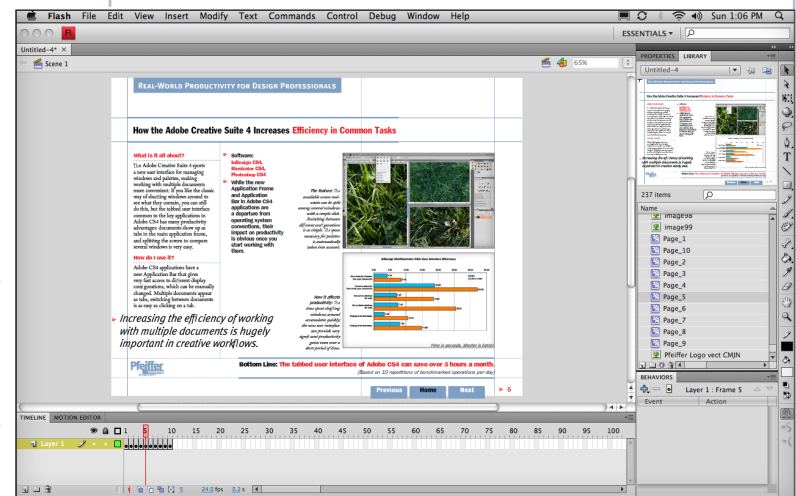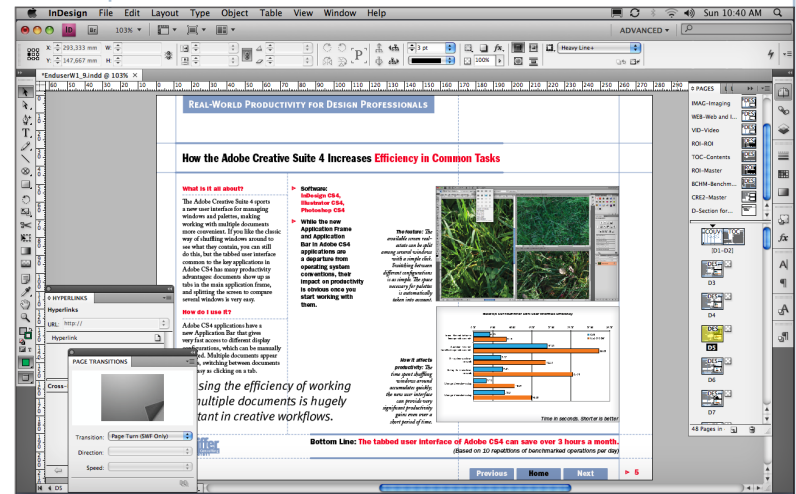
How do I use it?

Exporting InDesign CS4 documents to the Flash authoring environment works exactly like PDF export. Designers can either export a self-contained SWF file, or hand off an editable XFL file that can then be enriched using the wide array of animation and motion tools in Flash CS4.

▷ *InDesign CS4 closes the gap between the design of highly sophisticated print deliverables and the interactive authoring workflow.*

▷ **Software:**
InDesign CS4
Flash CS4 Professional

▷ **Combined with the simplified animation tools Flash CS4 offers, the InDesign export to XFL and SWF formats allows designers to extend the reach of their creativity and add an interactive component to print-centric projects.**

InDesign CS4 provides tools for introducing interactive controls such as hyperlinks, buttons and transition effects such as page turns that can be embedded into PDF and SWF files.

XFL documents created in InDesign CS4 can be opened and edited in Flash CS4. InDesign text can remain editable, be transformed into vector outlines, or be rasterized.

Bottom Line: Exporting InDesign documents to PDF, SWF or XFL formats offers a simple way to integrate print and interactive design.

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Return On Investment (ROI) Projections

How does it all add up?

This document looks at some key figures extracted from the extensive productivity benchmarking project Pfeiffer Consulting has conducted on Adobe Creative Suite 4 software.

While the complete benchmarking project comprises over 120 individual benchmarks, we have picked **key features of Adobe Creative Suite 4 that are common in a wide range of creative workflows**, and are usually repeated over and over again.

Even seemingly minimal productivity gains—say, a few seconds for a single operation— add up over time, when an operation is frequently repeated.

Every mouse click counts, and every second adds up. This is particularly true for workflows executed under enormous deadline pressure.

Just the few features analyzed here can save you many hours over the course of a month— precious time gained to be more creative, more time to explore visual ideas, to take your work to the next level. And this is without taking into account all the other productivity enhancements in the Adobe Creative Suite 4.

Feature	Reptitions of Benchmarked Operations/day	Time saved per month	Time saved per year
▷ **InDesign CS4:** *Live Preflight*	3	1 h. 12 min.	13 h. 20 min.
▷ **InDesign CS4:** *Smart Guides*	20	2 h. 14 min.	24 h. 40 min.
▷ **Photoshop CS4:** *The Adjustments Panel*	10	3 h. 43 min.	41 h. 00 min.
▷ **Illustrator CS4:** *Multiple Artboards*	3	3 h. 07 min.	34 h. 17 min.
▷ **Illustrator CS4:** *The New Gradient Tool*	10	1 h. 18 min.	14 h. 28 min.
▷ **Flash CS4 Professional:** *Simple Animation Creation*	10	1 h. 30 min.	16 h. 39 min.
▷ **Fireworks CS4:** *CSS Creation for Designers*	3	3 h. 24 min.	37 h. 30 min.
▷ **Adobe CS4 User Interface** *Efficiency in Managing Windows*	10	3 h. 24 min.	37 h. 27 min.

This table only looks at a small selection of new features introduced by the Adobe Creative Suite 4. It is clear that even seemingly minimal productivity gains of frequently repeated operations can save creative professionals hours or even days over the course of a year.

Figures calculated from the number of repetitions of benchmarked operations for each feature. See feature pages for detail.

About the Benchmarks: How We Measure Productivity

▷ 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**.

▷ **No scripting or programming of any kind was used** during the execution of the benchmarks.

▷ For an in-depth description of the benchmark methodology, complete list of benchmarks and detailed results, please download the complete **Adobe CS4 Productivity Benchmark Report** at www.pfeifferreport.com

About the Adobe CS4 Productivity Benchmarks

The productivity figures in this report are part of an extensive and ongoing productivity benchmarking project commissioned by Adobe, in order to independently assess the productivity gains that the latest release of Adobe Creative Suite can provide creative professionals.

Pfeiffer Consulting independently developed and executed the benchmarks presented here, by analyzing creative workflows in four different segments of activity: design, web and interactive, digital imaging, and video. The benchmarks were designed and executed by creative professionals.

How we design the benchmarks

The basic approach is simple: in order to assess productivity gains that a new release or a different product 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 that have to be compared.

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

In order to be certain that no lag or operator-induced delays are included in the productivity measures, each benchmarked example is cut down into small segments of three or four steps each. After an initial training phase, each segment is executed three times,

and the average time is used as a result. The cumulative times for all segments that form a complete workflow example are then used as benchmark results.

How we prepare hardware for testing

We use factory-standard configuration hardware, that has been completely re-initialized prior to benchmarking. Only the system software and application software necessary for tests, as well as all required updates at the time of testing, are installed on the benchmark system. No peripherals other than the ones required for the benchmarks are connected. Network access is only enabled when required by the benchmark protocol, or for software activation.

Hardware

Benchmarks for this document were conducted on a 2008 release 2.8GHz Mac Pro equipped with 4GB of RAM. Future benchmarks for this ongoing project will also be executed on a similarly configured Windows system.

About Pfeiffer Consulting

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

Download the full Adobe Creative Suite 4 Productivity Benchmark Report, as well as other benchmark reports and research studies at www.pfeifferreport.com.

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