

Is there a free alternative to form creation software like acrobat, for just a single form?

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I am looking for a way to overlay some text onto a pdf document, through automation. The goal is to have a high quality one page printout of a form (in PDF format, but without any defined fields as of yet) combined with the text that will be overlayed onto the form. Alternative suggestions, like converting to postscript and then merging the two together, are welcome. The only important thing is the printed output- what goes on inside the computer to achieve that goal (as long as it is cheap, legal, automated, and doesnt involve a ton of programming) is not important. I am using delphi, but am also familiar with visual basic 6.

I have tried searching Usenet and was able to find software that is capable of doing overlays (perhaps even automated ones, I'm not sure). But I was hoping someone knew of a way to do it for free.

If I had a PDF file with the fields already defined, I wouldn't have any problems. I would just use the free FDF directx component to load data into the form, and that's it. It is actually defining the fields that is the problem. I don't imagine there is any free PDF form creation software out there...that is why I am looking to overlay as an alternative method.

Possible solutions I have thought about:

1. Manually defining fields in the PDF file with acrobat full version, automatically converting the form data into an FDF file at runtime, loading it into the PDF, and printing (too expensive)
2. Convert the PDF into a metafile and try to somehow overlay the text with TPrinter (don't even know if this is possible, but it is made a moot point by the fact that I wasn't able to convert the PDF into a metafile without majorly screwing it up)
3. Study the PDF specification and try to figure out how to manually program the fields into the PDF, without any form creation software (how hard is this?)

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If no one comes up with any better ideas, what I will probably do is create the form with a trial version of Acrobat/Omniform/other and buy it when I have enough money....but I would rather not do that, if possible.