

TECH CHOICES



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Adobe LiveCycle: An e-Forms Leader Combining Strong Forms Design With Ubiquitous Access

The Forrester Wave™ Vendor Summary, Q2 2006

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

By combining a strong forms design environment, forms management and process capabilities, and good XML support with the ubiquitous Acrobat Reader rich client, Adobe LiveCycle is a Leader in the e-forms software market. LiveCycle's design environment is business-user-friendly and includes the most comprehensive set of form templates. LiveCycle's advanced capabilities are industry leading — 2D bar code support and 3D graphics capabilities are built into the product. Adding up all its capabilities, Adobe LiveCycle is a good fit for most any type of e-forms deployment, especially when the forms are widely deployed to end users.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Business process executive, information management executive, IT operations executive

ADOBE LIVECYCLE IS BEST SUITED WHEN FORMS ARE WIDELY DEPLOYED

In 2002, Adobe Systems purchased a small vendor named Accelio (formerly JetForm), took that company's e-forms capabilities, and gradually added functionality like document security and PDF generation to create the LiveCycle platform from which to create, process, and archive documents.¹ Beyond the LiveCycle platform, Adobe focuses more widely on user interactions with information, as evidenced by the 2005 acquisition of Macromedia and Adobe's offering of the Flex presentation layer development platform.

LiveCycle, though, remains a formidable product in the e-forms market thanks to the ubiquitous access provided by the free Acrobat Reader client that has penetrated the target audience of many e-forms projects — individual customers. Adobe is not just about forms access, though. LiveCycle also features a strong design editor and comprehensive forms processing capabilities. Forrester evaluated Adobe's current offering and strategy for e-forms against approximately 100 criteria (see Figure 1). The LiveCycle product is a good fit for buyers who:

- **Deploy forms to a large number of end users.** The common availability of the free Adobe Acrobat Reader means that Adobe has the least intrusive "rich" forms client of any e-forms vendor. Reader Extensions give organizations the ability to turn on features such as write access and digital signature within the Reader client. The net is flexible deployment options that allow organizations

to control how users interact with forms. The Adobe Reader client gives organizations a way to distribute forms to a large number of end users with more interaction control than possible via browser-based forms.

- **Require a high level of print-and-fill forms.** The PDF format Acrobat Reader uses allows users to print with pixel precision exactly what they see on the screen. In conjunction with LiveCycle's strong 2D bar code support, Adobe is able to prepopulate as much information as possible into a form, distribute it electronically in the Acrobat Reader client, and allow users to print and fill forms and submit them back via fax or mail. Adobe can ingest such forms via partnership with leading capture software provider Kofax.
- **Operate in a primarily J2EE IT environment.** The LiveCycle platform was architected for J2EE environments and operates best within those. While .NET integration is possible, it requires integration through SOA. Given Microsoft's much-improved InfoPath forms product, unless print-and-fill forms are a driving requirement, LiveCycle should not be given preference in predominantly .NET environments.

To see how Adobe LiveCycle stacks up against four other e-forms competitors, see the Forrester Wave™ evaluation of the e-forms software market.²

Figure 1 Adobe Systems Adobe LiveCycle Evaluation Overview


CURRENT OFFERING	
Forms design interface	Adobe LiveCycle Designer offers a user-friendly design user interface with comprehensive forms templates, drag-and-drop functionality, forms creation wizards, 2D bar code support, libraries of both common and advanced form components, dynamic layout support, and language support. The product also has good XML schema support via XFA, business rules support, and testing and preview options. LiveCycle Designer also offers advanced functionality such as 3D graphics support.
Forms deployment (distribution and access)	Adobe LiveCycle provides flexible forms access options including PDF and HTML, integration with leading ECM platform for forms management, and basic workflow and process management capabilities.
Forms processing (submission/ingestion)	Adobe LiveCycle offers comprehensive 2D bar code recognition capabilities, online submission support, and schema, rules, and code validation. The product supports ingesting paper forms via partnership with Kofax.
Architecture and platform	LiveCycle supports common IT platforms, provides solid XML and Java support, has flexible security options, and can scale to support large enterprise deployments.
STRATEGY	
Product strategy	Adobe's product strategy for LiveCycle is focused on providing an engagement platform that includes PDF and rich Internet applications to provide a layer between users and back-end systems.
Corporate strategy	Adobe focuses almost one-third of its resources on e-forms and targets solutions for both vertical applications and horizontal processes for enterprises.
Financial resources to support strategy	Adobe is public and profitable. In 2005, Adobe's revenues were \$1.966 billion and annual GAAP net income was \$602.8 million. (This does not include any of the Macromedia revenues).
Cost	LiveCycle Designer is \$349. LiveCycle Forms is \$50,000/CPU. LiveCycle Reader Extensions starts at \$10,000/form. LiveCycle Barcoded Forms starts at \$5,000/form. LiveCycle Form Manager is \$35,000/CPU.
MARKET PRESENCE	
Installed base	Adobe has 1,500 or more LiveCycle customers.
Revenue	2005 year-end financial revenue was \$1.966 billion.
Revenue growth	Revenue growth was approximately 18% for fiscal year 2005.

Source: Forrester Research, Inc.


Figure 1 Adobe Systems Adobe LiveCycle Evaluation Overview (Cont.)

MARKET PRESENCE	
Systems integrators	Adobe has more than 60 system integrators worldwide. A specific list of partners can be found on the Adobe Web site.
Services	Adobe Professional Services offers consulting, education, and support services, having approximately 160 engineers for implementation services.
Employees	Adobe is a company of just under 6,000 employees, and Forrester estimates that approximately 250 engineers are dedicated to the LiveCycle product line.
Technology partners	Adobe has strong partnerships with SAP and EMC, as well as a good network of systems integrators.

Source: Forrester Research, Inc.



Go online to download additional in-depth data and scores for this vendor and other vendors included in this Forrester Wave evaluation.



SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

Online Resource

The underlying spreadsheet for Figure 1 is available online. The spreadsheet includes more detailed data and scores for this vendor.

This detailed data and scores for this vendor are also available online through an Excel-based vendor comparison tool that provides detailed product evaluations and customizable rankings.

The Forrester Wave Methodology

We conduct primary research to develop a list of vendors that meet our criteria to be evaluated in this market. From that initial pool of vendors, we then narrow our final list. We choose these vendors based on: 1) product fit; 2) customer success; and 3) Forrester client demand. We eliminate vendors that have limited customer references and products that don't fit the scope of our evaluation.

After examining past research, user need assessments, and vendor and expert interviews, we develop the initial evaluation criteria. To evaluate the vendors and their products against our set of criteria, we gather details of product qualifications through a combination of lab evaluations, questionnaires, demos, and/or discussions with client references. We send evaluations to the vendors for their

review, and we adjust the evaluations to provide the most accurate view of vendor offerings and strategies.

We set default weightings to reflect our analysis of the needs of large user companies — and/or other scenarios as outlined in the Forrester Wave document — and then score the vendors based on a clearly defined scale. These default weightings are intended only as a starting point, and readers are encouraged to adapt the weightings to fit their individual needs through the Excel-based tool. The final scores generate the graphical depiction of the market based on current offering, strategy, and market presence. Forrester intends to update vendor evaluations regularly as product capabilities and vendor strategies evolve.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Adobe's purchase of Accelio pushed the company squarely into the enterprise software market and led to the release of LiveCycle. See the August 31, 2004, Quick Take "[Adobe LiveCycle, eForms Grow Up.](#)"
- ² Forrester evaluated five e-forms software vendors across 100 criteria and found that Adobe and IBM are the clear market leaders. Once viewed as a necessary bureaucratic evil, forms are increasingly used as a tool to systematically capture data, serve as an interface to a process step, and bridge the paper-digital divide. The drive to replace paper with digital forms led to the emergence of e-forms software that sits at the intersection of data, content, and process. In the last few years, vendor offerings have advanced greatly, with each vendor's approach being different. Adobe is a Leader, bringing together a user-friendly forms design environment with the ubiquitous Acrobat Reader rich client. IBM is a Leader providing unparalleled XML and digital signature support. Cardiff Software and Microsoft are Strong Performers, offering e-forms products appropriate for forms-driven horizontal business processes. And FileNet is a Strong Performer with an e-forms product aimed squarely at integrating forms into enterprise processes. See the June 16, 2006, Tech Choices "[The Forrester Wave™: e-Forms Software, Q2 2006.](#)"