

## Getting Rid of Metadata the Easy Way

By now most practitioners have heard about metadata. Numerous articles have addressed exactly what it is and its dangers. Entire seminars have been dedicated to the ethical ramifications of metadata scrubbing and mining. But for people like me, who aren't exactly technophobes but aren't particularly tech savvy either, a lot of the articles and webinar discussions go right over my head. The discussions tend to be either hyper-technical or overly esoteric, with little practical application. So for everyone out there who is like me, here is an ultra simple explanation of what metadata is, why you don't want it, and more importantly, how you can get rid of it.

Metadata is information that computer programs store about the documents you create. As more courts adopt e-filing programs and our practices become increasingly dependant upon email communication, we all need to be conscious of what information we are actually providing when we email a document. Unlike their paper alternatives, electronic documents often contain more information than appears on the page. Word processing and other programs store information like undo/redo history, tracked changes you made to the document in previous versions, hidden data in spreadsheet and table cells, pages removed from .pdf documents, comments that were made in the editing process, etc. Essentially, metadata includes several things you don't want opposing counsel to know about your emailed work product.

How do I get rid of it? Of course, you can purchase software to automatically remove metadata from your file attachments that you email. For example, Workshare Protect, ConfidentSend and MetaReveal are just a few.<sup>1</sup> But if you don't want to go out and purchase a program to do it for you, no problem! Most programs we use for document creation come ready-equipped to remove metadata. Here's a non-exhaustive list of commonly used programs, what types of metadata each program stores, and how to remove it:

### Adobe Acrobat 9

1. **Open .pdf document.**
2. **Choose Document > Examine Document.** If metadata is found, it is listed in the Examine Document panel with a selected check box beside each item. Metadata categories include author's name, keywords, file attachments, annotations and comments, form fields, hidden text, hidden layers, bookmarks, embedded search index, deleted hidden page and image content.
3. **Uncheck any boxes for items you do not want removed from the document.**
4. **Click Remove.**
5. **Save your document.**

### Word Perfect X3

1. **Open document.**

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<sup>1</sup> The author does not endorse any of these programs or make any statements or representations about the efficacy of any of these programs, but rather, the names are provided for illustrative purposes only.

2. **Choose File > Save Without Metadata** (dialog box appears with check boxes). Word Perfect automatically adds \_mtd to the end of the filename to identify that the file does not contain metadata. If you change the filename, do not remove the \_mtd from the filename.
3. **Select metadata to remove.** Categories of metadata include comment information, hidden text, annotations, undo/redo history, document summary data, headers, footers, hyperlinks, OLE object information, and routing slip.
4. **Save your document.**

#### **Office Excel 2007**

1. **Open workbook.**
2. **Click the Microsoft Office Button.**
3. **Click Save As** (rename your workbook).
4. **Click the Microsoft Office Button.**
5. **Choose Prepare > Inspect Document** (a dialog box will appear with check boxes).
6. **In the Document Inspector dialog box, select the check boxes to choose the types of hidden content that you want to be inspected.** Categories of metadata include comments and ink annotations, document properties and personal information, headers and footers, document server properties, custom XML data, Invisible content, hidden rows and columns, and hidden worksheets.
7. **Click Inspect.**
8. **Review results.**
9. **Click Remove All.**
10. **Save your document.**

#### **Microsoft Office 2007**

1. **Open file.**
2. **Click the Microsoft Office Button then point to Prepare**
3. **Click Inspect Document** (dialog box appears).
4. **Uncheck any categories of metadata you don't want removed.** Metadata categories include comments, revisions, versions, and annotations, document properties and personal information, custom XML data, headers, footers and watermarks, and hidden text.
5. **Click Inspect.**
6. **Click Remove All.**
7. **Click Reinspect** (if any further metadata is found, click Remove All again).
8. **When no more hidden data is located, click Close.**
9. **Save your document.**

#### **Office PowerPoint2007**

1. **Open document.**
2. **Click the Microsoft Office Button then point to Prepare.**

3. **Click Inspect Document** (dialog box appears).
4. **Uncheck any categories of metadata you don't want removed.**  
Metadata categories include comments and annotations, document properties and personal information, custom XML data, invisible on-slide content, off-slide content, and presentation notes.
5. **Click Inspect.**
6. **Click Remove All.**
7. **Click Reinspect** (if any further metadata is found, click Remove All again).
8. **When no more hidden data is located, click Close.**
9. **Save your document.**

Well, there you have it. You now know how to easily protect your clients and your work product from metadata mining.

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