



**PDF Days
Europe
2025**

How to use the Techniques for Accessible PDF in your day-to-day work

Duff Johnson | CEO | PDF Association

Markus Erle | CEO | axes4

The PDF Accessibility LWG

This presentation was prepared by the three chairs of the PDF Accessibility LWG in cooperation with the PDF Association's CEO Duff Johnson:



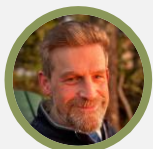
Birgit
Peböck



Markus
Erle



Zak
Kinsey

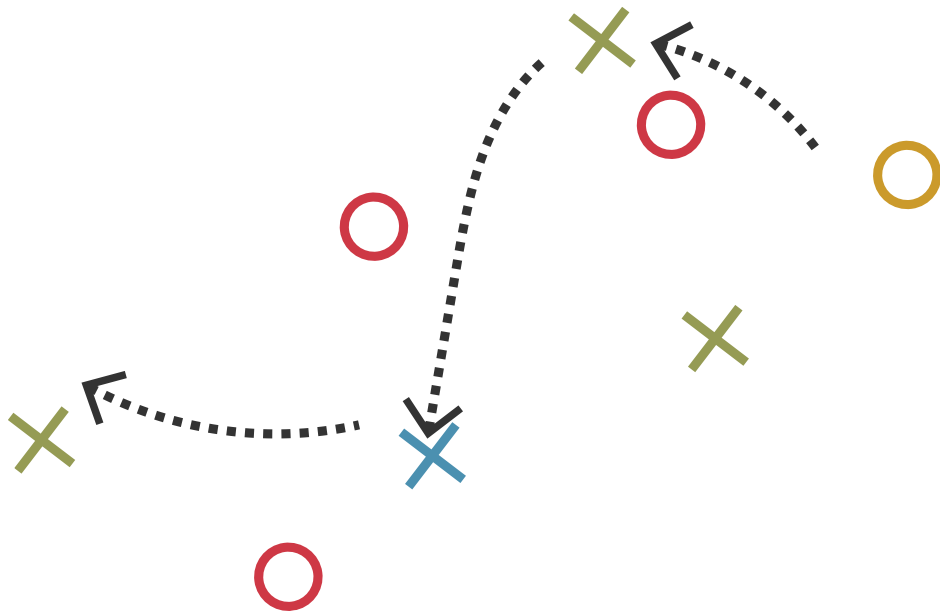


Duff
Johnson



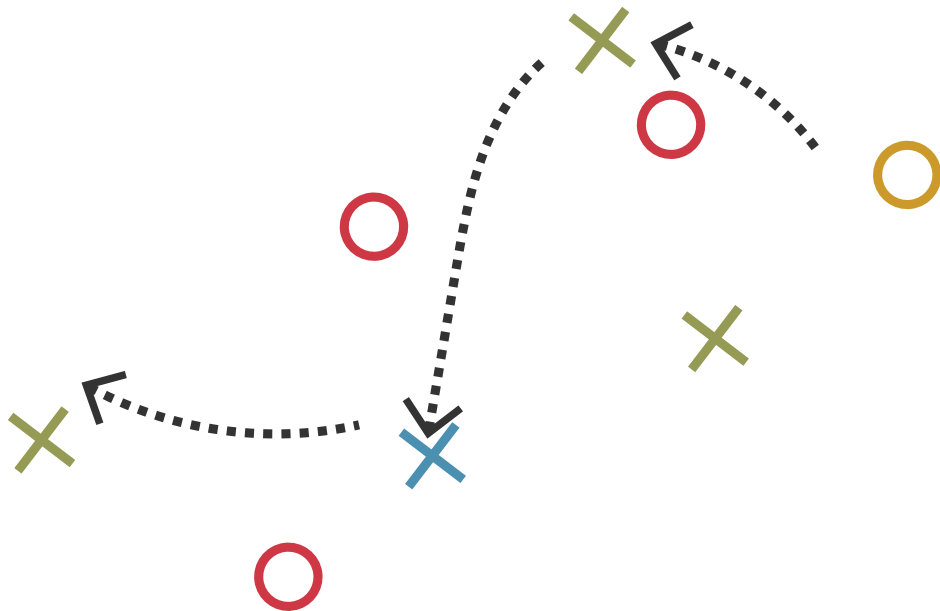
The Techniques for Accessible PDF

- Developed by the PDF Accessibility LWG

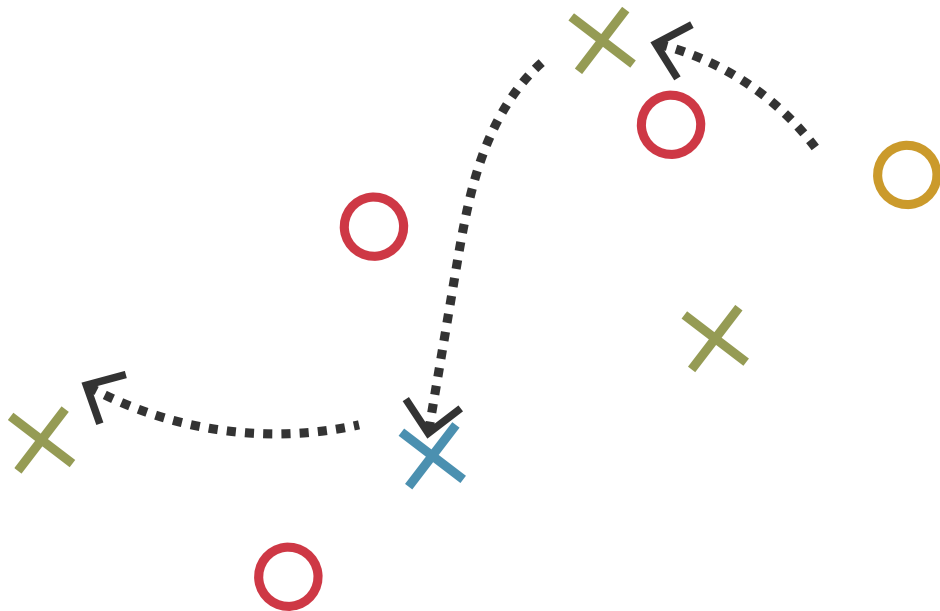


The Techniques for Accessible PDF

- Developed by the PDF Accessibility LWG
- Launched in January 2025, with new Techniques added each quarter



The Techniques for Accessible PDF



- Developed by the PDF Accessibility LWG
- Launched in January 2025, with new Techniques added each quarter
- Are quickly becoming an essential source of knowledge and practical guidance for everyone involved in PDF Accessibility

What to expect

- **In Part 1:**

we'll begin by recognizing **nine distinct roles** in the accessible PDF ecosystem.

What to expect

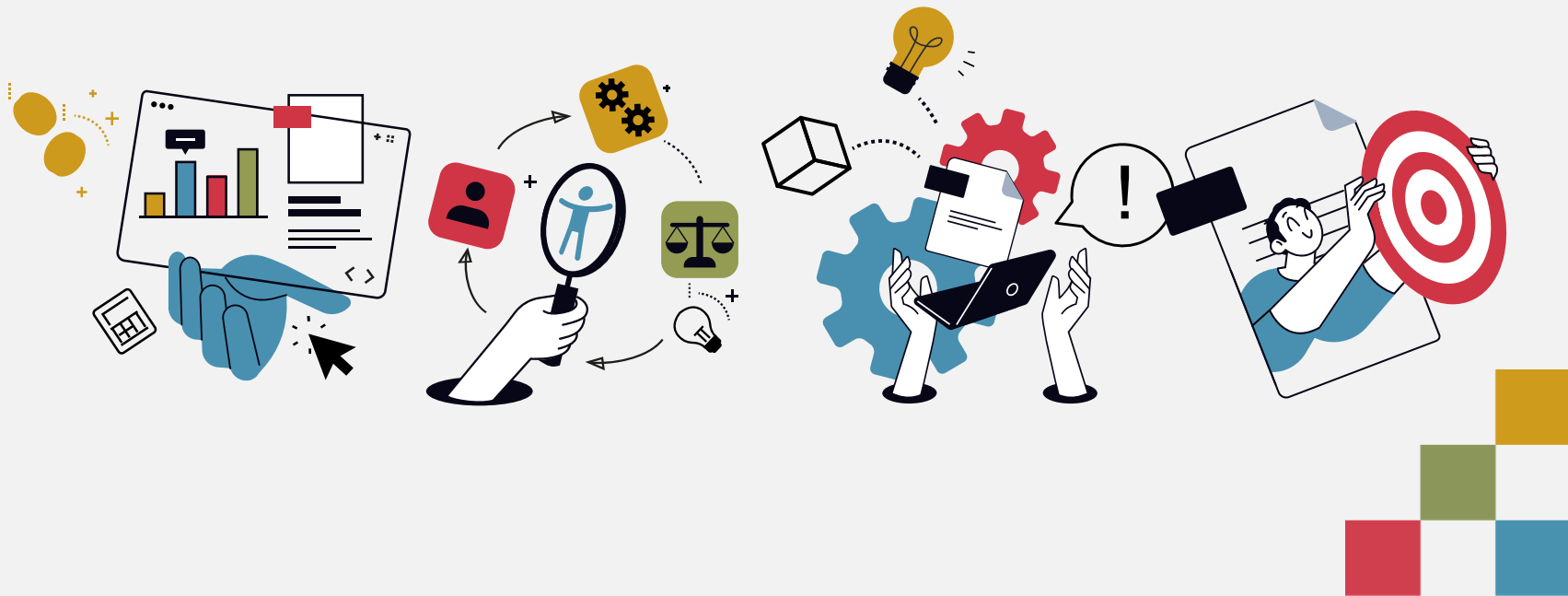
- **In Part 1:**

we'll begin by recognizing **nine distinct roles** in the accessible PDF ecosystem.

- **In Part 2:**

we'll take **a single Technique** and explore it through these nine roles

Part 1: Nine roles in the accessible PDF ecosystem



Line-of-business roles



Characteristics

- Typical business objectives
- Not directly related to accessibility
- Accessibility is a priority

Line-of-business roles



Characteristics

- Typical business objectives
- Not directly related to accessibility
- Accessibility is a priority

Roles

- Author
- Procurer

The Author

Job:

- Creates content, often in Word, InDesign, or other tools, before exporting to PDF



The Author



Job:

- Creates content, often in Word, InDesign, or other tools, before exporting to PDF

Key Question:

- *“Am I doing the right thing in my authoring tool?”*

The Author



Job:

- Creates content, often in Word, InDesign, or other tools, before exporting to PDF

Key Question:

- *“Am I doing the right thing in my authoring tool?”*

The Techniques can help:

- Making their PDF files more accessible from the moment of creation
- By guiding the choice of authoring tool

The Author



Main benefit:

- To learn how the choices made in their software affect accessibility

The Procurer

Job:

- Makes purchasing decisions for software and services



The Procurer



Job:

- Makes purchasing decisions for software and services

Key Question:

- *“Am I buying the right software?”*

The Procurer



Job:

- Makes purchasing decisions for software and services

Key Question:

- *“Am I buying the right software?”*

The Techniques can help:

- Asking the right questions
- Setting clear requirements
- Evaluating whether a solution is actually fit for purpose

The Procurer



Main benefit:

- The Techniques support informed purchasing decisions.

Accessibility roles



Characteristics

- Ensuring that PDF files (among other types of media) regarding accessibility meet applicable laws, standards, specifications and organization policies.

Accessibility roles



Characteristics

- Ensuring that PDF files (among other types of media) regarding accessibility meet applicable laws, standards, specifications and organization policies.

Roles

- Tester
- Remediator
- Trainer
- Policy-maker

The Tester

Job:

- Verifies whether a PDF meets accessibility requirements



The Tester



Job:

- Verifies whether a PDF meets accessibility requirements

Key Question:

- *“How can I use the techniques to determine whether a PDF complies with the applicable standards?”*

The Tester



Job:

- Verifies whether a PDF meets accessibility requirements

Key Question:

- *“How can I use the techniques to determine whether a PDF complies with the applicable standards?”*

The Techniques can help understanding:

- What to test,
- How to test it, and
- When to conclude that a requirement is fulfilled

The Tester



Main benefit:

- Both PASS techniques and FAIL examples guide testers to consider all relevant aspects, identify errors consistently, and build confidence that nothing important was overlooked.

The Remediator



Job:

- Repairs existing PDFs to make them accessible

The Remediator



Job:

- Repairs existing PDFs to make them accessible

Key Question:

- *“How do I use these techniques for practical guidance on fixing problems efficiently using the software available to me?”*

The Remediator



Job:

- Repairs existing PDFs to make them accessible

Key Question:

- *“How do I use these techniques for practical guidance on fixing problems efficiently using the software available to me?”*

The Techniques can help by:

- Providing with a reliable model, in a functional PDF file
- Showing how to do it right

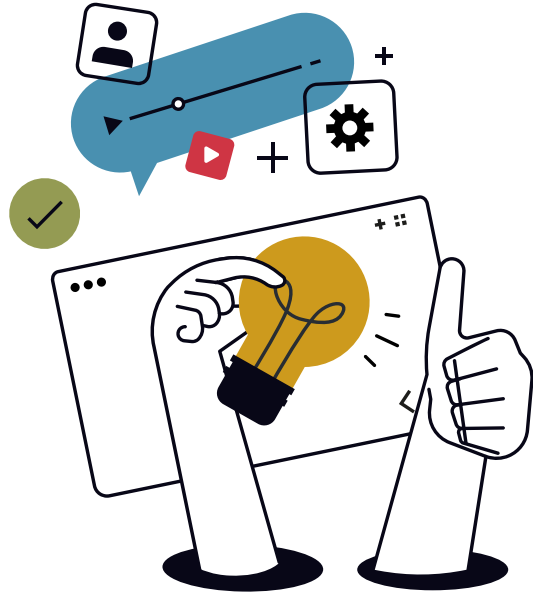
The Remediator



Main benefit:

- Adjusting a document according to the relevant Techniques, they can be confident that the result complies with related accessibility requirements.

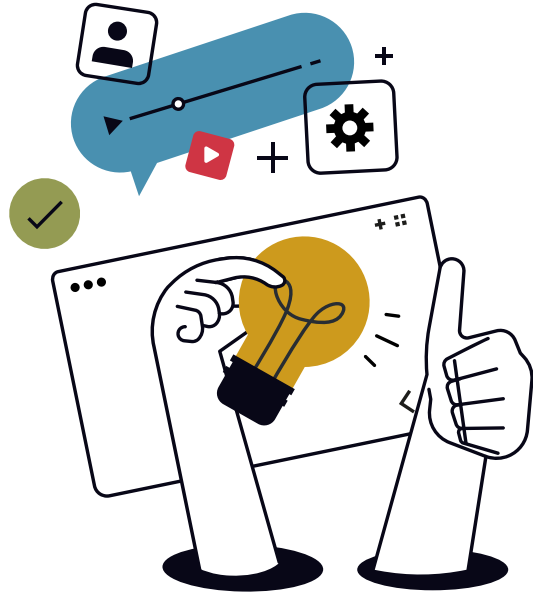
The Trainer



Job:

- Teaches authors, testers and remediators how to create, check or fix documents to ensure that they are accessible

The Trainer



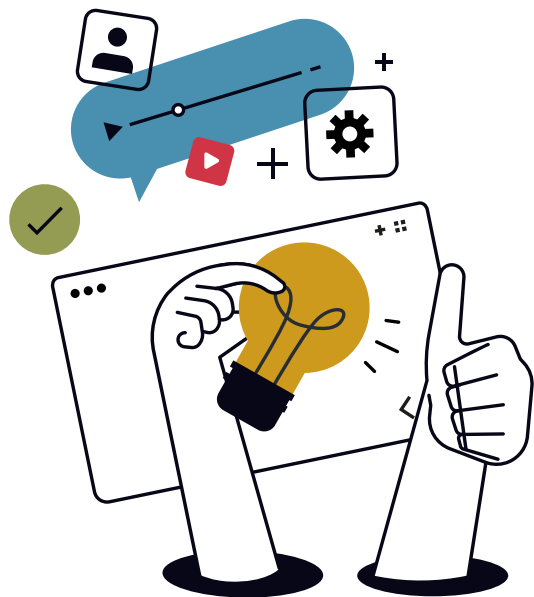
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- Teaches authors, testers and remediators how to create, check or fix documents to ensure that they are accessible

Key Question:

- *“How can I use these techniques as a teaching resource, to help me to make complex requirements more understandable and easier to put into practice?”*

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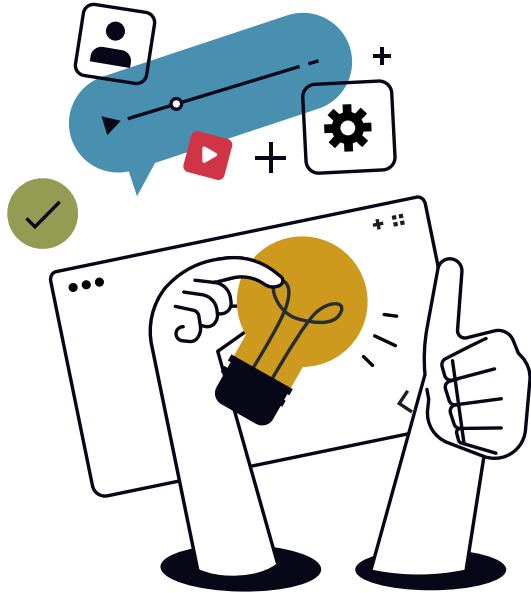
Key Question:

- *“How can I use these techniques as a teaching resource, to help me to make complex requirements more understandable and easier to put into practice?”*

The Techniques:

- Provide ideal content for training courses

The Trainer



Main benefit:

- Providing assets that trainers can then “translate” into practical lesson materials for specific audiences and tools.

The Policy-Maker



Job:

- Establishes and tracks the actions and metrics necessary to the successful management of a given organization's commitment to accessible content, from websites to apps to PDF documents

The Policy-Maker



Job:

- Establishes and tracks the actions and metrics necessary to the successful management of a given organization's commitment to accessible content, from websites to apps to PDF documents

Key Question:

- *"To which reliable resources can I refer to provide PDF accessibility guidance to different roles?"*

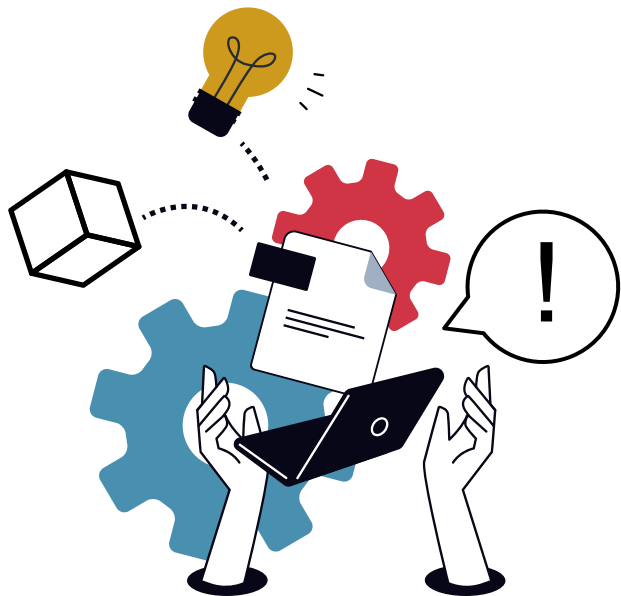
The Policy-Maker



Main benefit:

- Similar to WCAG's techniques for web content, Techniques for Accessible PDF offer policy-makers a transparent framework that may be used to establish performance requirements and reportable metrics to inform activities in other roles.

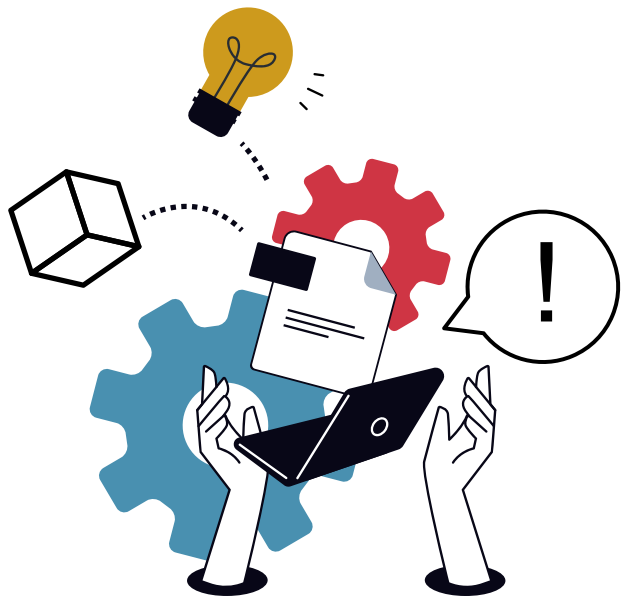
Industry roles



Characteristics

- Industry members create and maintain the tools all other roles use.

Industry roles



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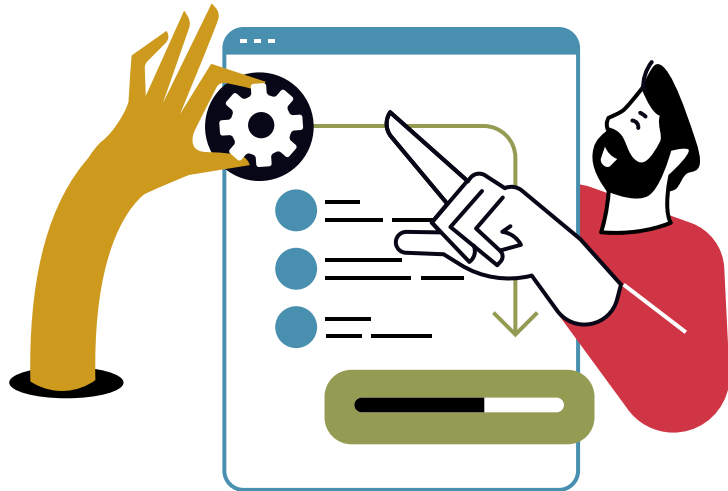
Roles

- PDF developer
- API and AT developer
- Product manager and Marketer

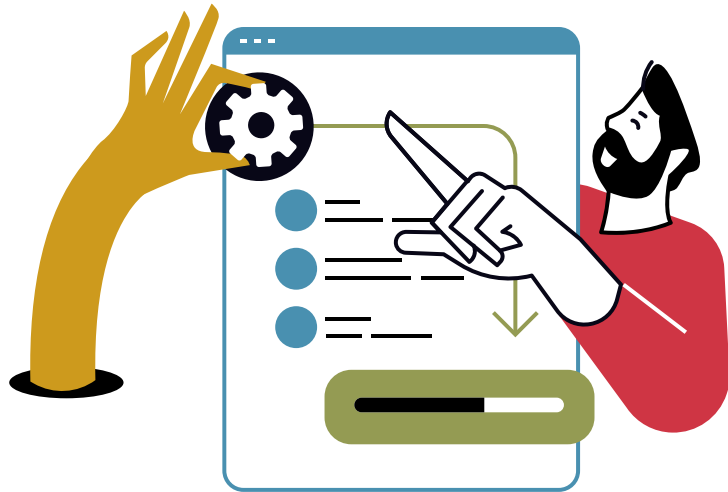
The PDF Developer

Job:

- Builds the tools that create, process, or check tagged PDFs



The PDF Developer



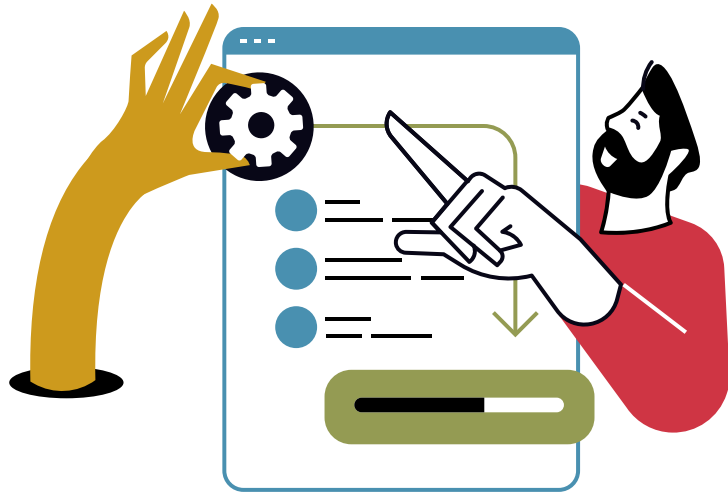
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Key Question:

- *“Am I creating relevant features that offer reliable support for accessibility standards?”*

The PDF Developer



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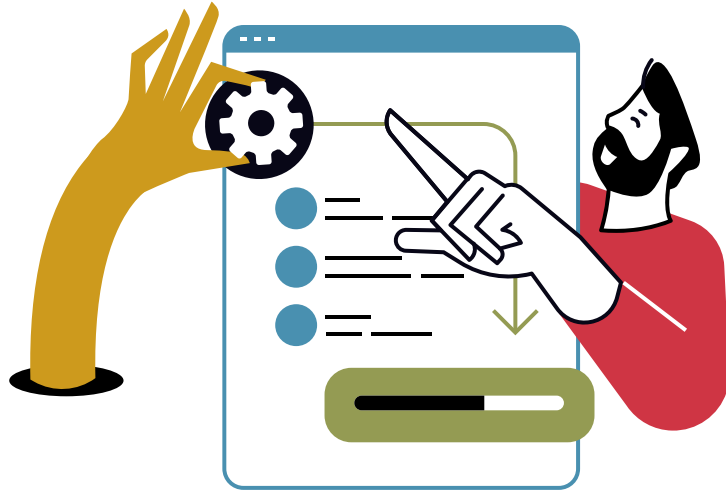
Key Question:

- *“Am I creating relevant features that offer reliable support for accessibility standards?”*

The Techniques:

- Are a vendor-neutral standards-aligned reference with which to check implementations
- Deepen the necessary common understanding of the standards, but provide the freedom to innovate

The PDF Developer



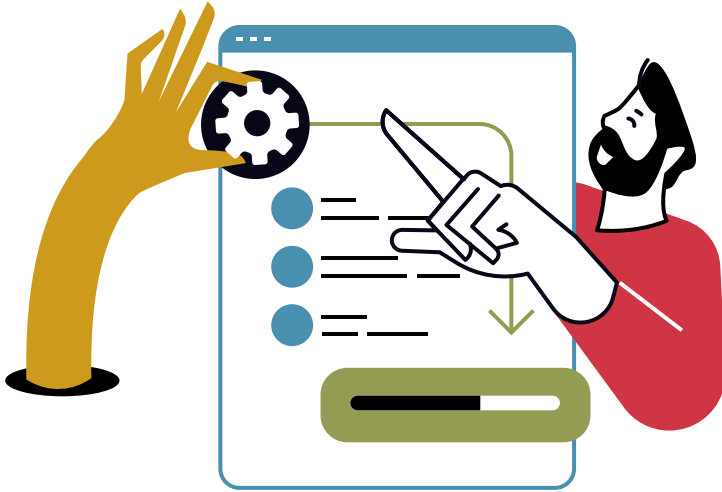
Main benefit:

- Providing developers with a way to achieve a common understanding of technical requirements from functional PDF files targets, improving efficiency and confidence in software development efforts.

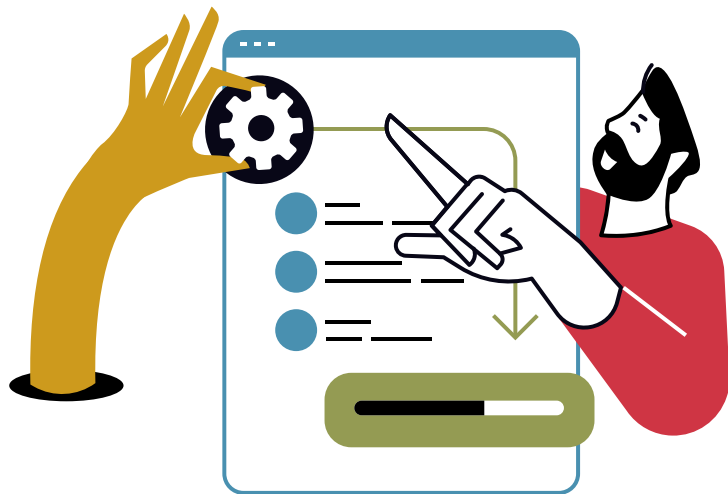
The API and AT Developer

Job:

- Produces the software (screen-readers, zoom magnifiers, etc.) and hardware necessary to enable users with disabilities to navigate, read and interact with digital content



The API and AT Developer



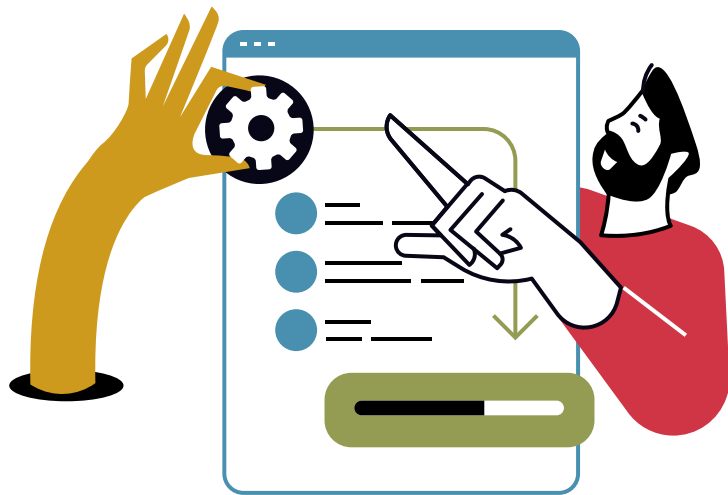
Job:

- Produces the software (screen-readers, zoom magnifiers, etc.) and hardware necessary to enable users with disabilities to navigate, read and interact with digital content

Key Question:

- *“Do our products, and the APIs on which they depend, support properly-tagged PDF files?”*

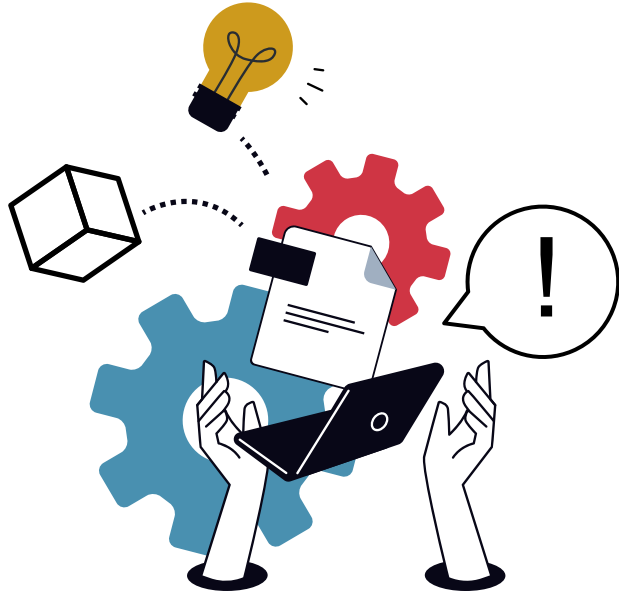
The AT Developer



Main benefit:

- The Techniques provide a vendor-neutral means of understanding possible structures in PDF files and analyzing real world files for gaps between valid tagging structures, existing APIs and modes of expression.

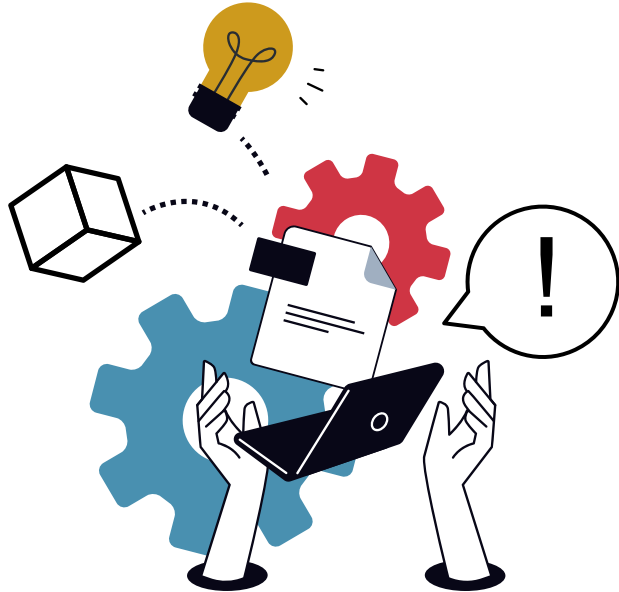
The Product Manager and Marketer



Job:

- Defines, positions, and communicates PDF-related products

The Product Manager and Marketer



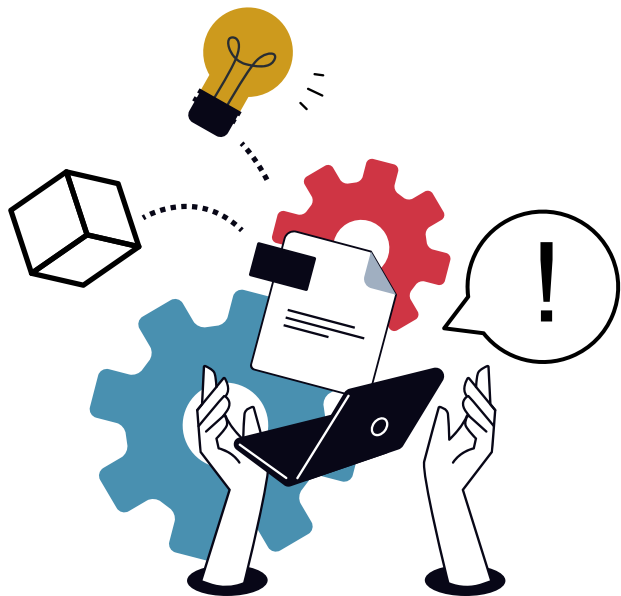
Job:

- Defines, positions, and communicates PDF-related products

Key Questions:

- *“Does our software have the right features to support the techniques?”*
- *“Are we planning the right features for the future?”*

The Product Manager and Marketer



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- Defines, positions, and communicates PDF-related products

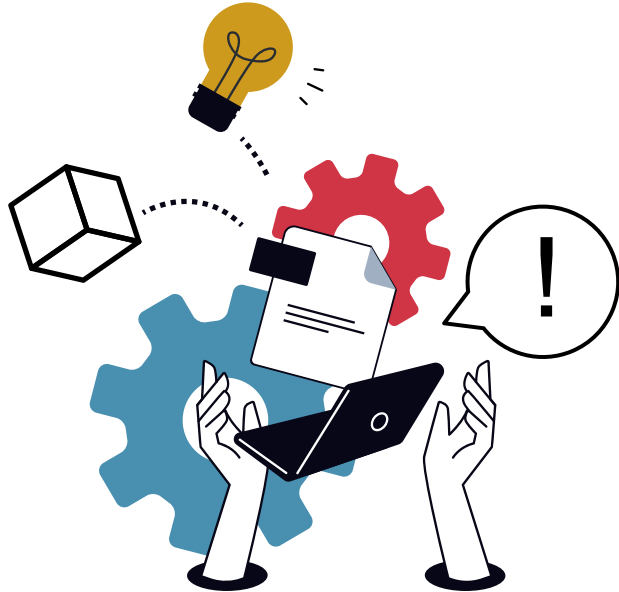
Key Questions:

- *“Does our software have the right features to support the techniques?”*
- *“Are we planning the right features for the future?”*

The Techniques can help:

- Prioritizing features and shape product roadmaps
- Communicating benefits more clearly
- Providing reference points for documentation, training materials, and help centers

The Product Manager and Marketer



Main benefit:

- The Techniques offer tools for positioning, differentiating, and strengthening products in the market.

The Consumer



Characteristics

- Human who reads documents (!)
- Obviously doesn't need (or usually want) to know anything about such techniques

The Consumer



Characteristics

- Human who reads documents (!)
- Obviously doesn't need (or usually want) to know anything about such techniques

What consumers need:

- Accessible PDF files
- PDF creation, editing, viewing and validation software that agrees about what “accessible” means.
- AT that can present the full richness of accessible PDF to users

The Consumer



The Techniques can help

- Knowing and understanding the possibilities of accessible PDFs
- Reporting problems that consumers encounter when reading or navigating PDF files, or to request new features

The Consumer



Main benefit

- These Techniques offer consumers information that empowers them to hold publishers and vendors accountable

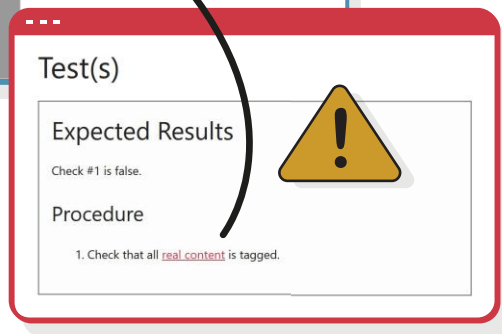
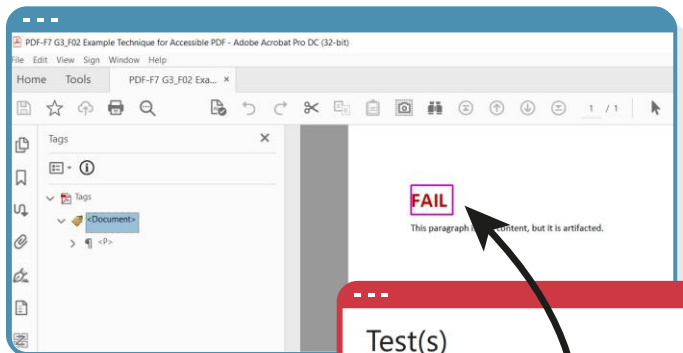
Part 2: How each role uses techniques



A single Technique: The FAIL G3_F02

The FAIL:

A complete paragraph is artfacted instead of tagged.



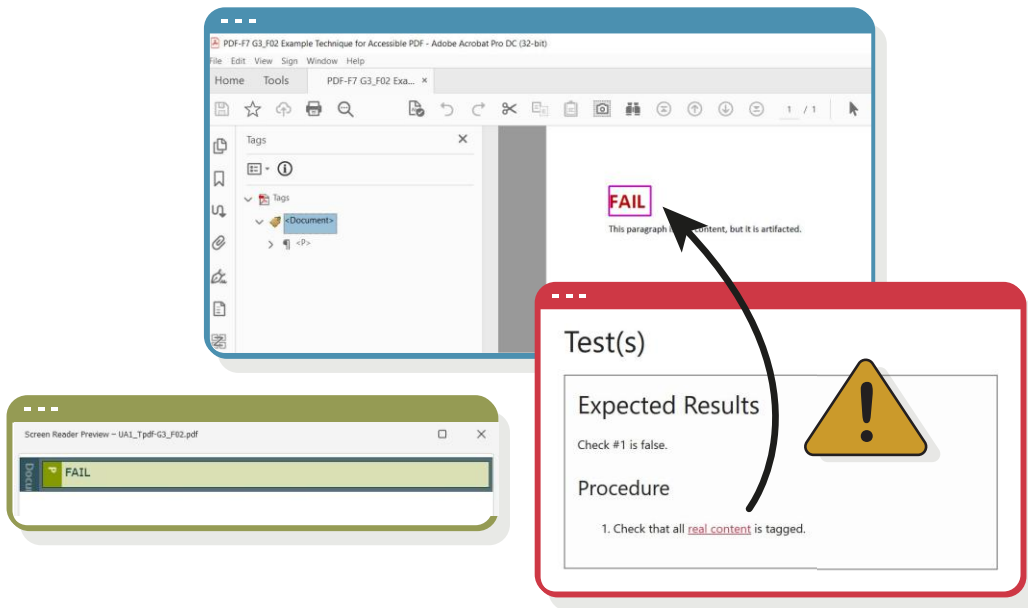
A single Technique: The FAIL G3_F02

The FAIL:

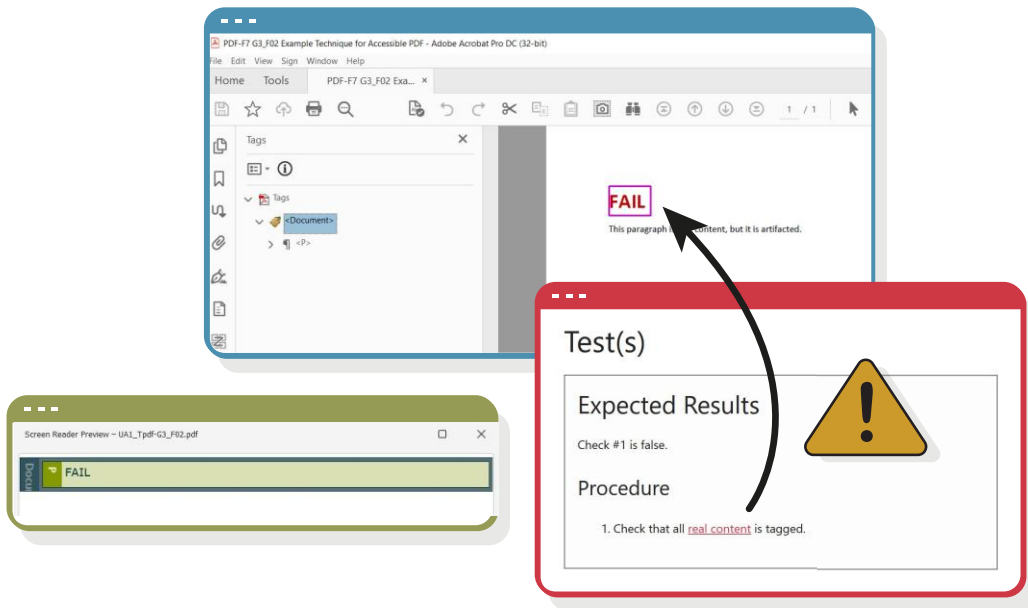
A complete paragraph is artfacted instead of tagged.

The test procedure:

- Check that all real content is tagged.



A single Technique: The FAIL G3_F02



The FAIL:

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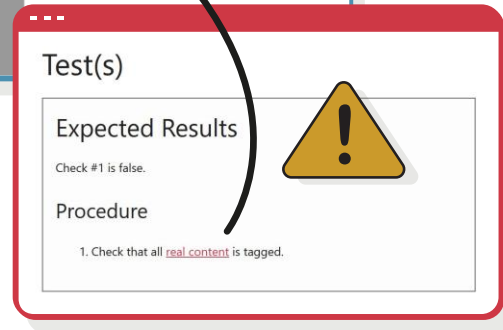
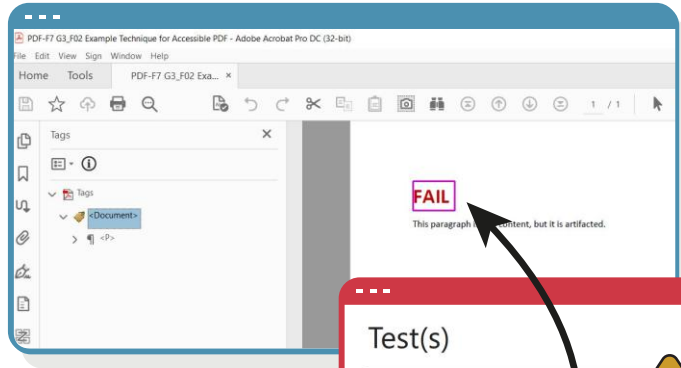
- Check that all real content is tagged.

The test file:

- Provides a clear-cut example of text that is not available to AT because it's marked as an artifact.

The Tester

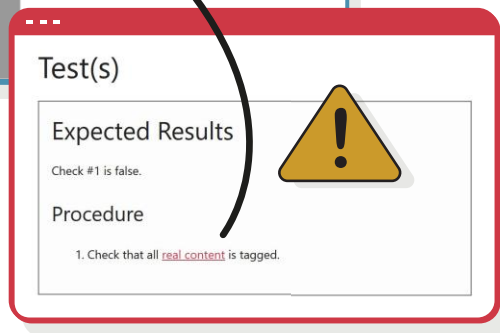
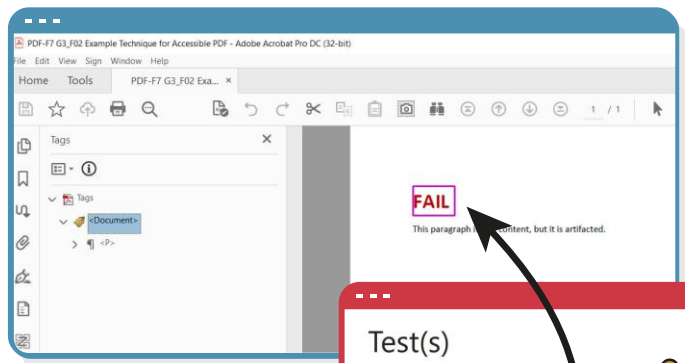
How can this be tested?



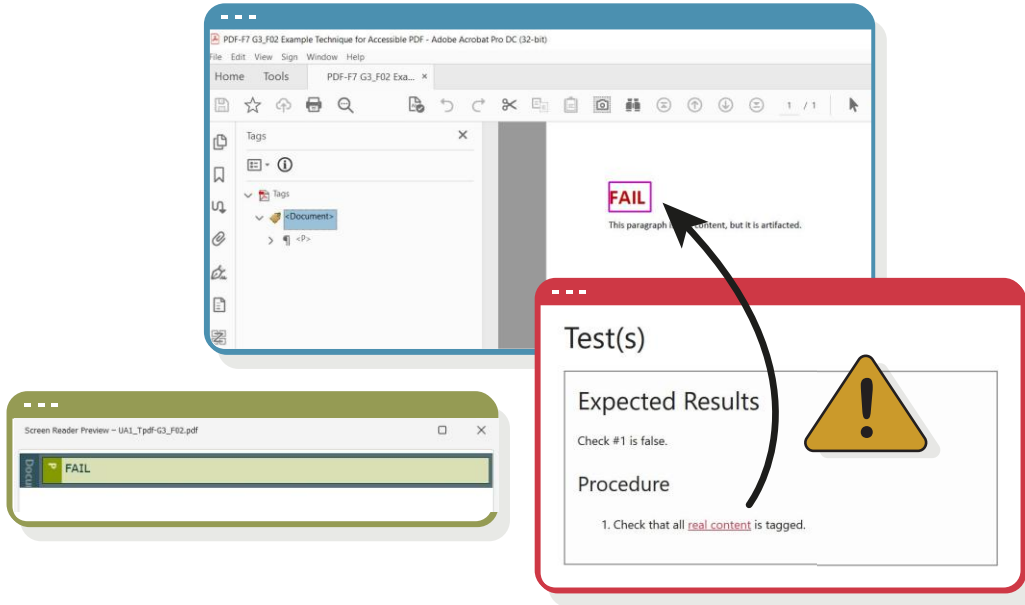
The Tester

How can this be tested?

- Two ways to check:
 - automated testing and
 - manual inspection.



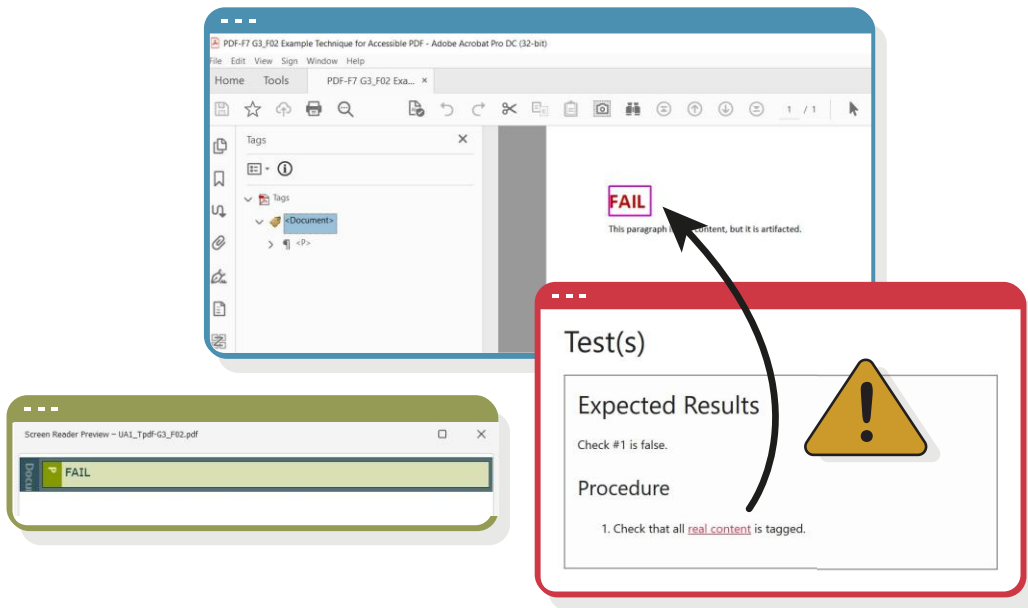
The Tester



How can this be tested?

- Two ways to check:
 - automated testing and
 - manual inspection.
- Automatic checkers often won't flag this fail

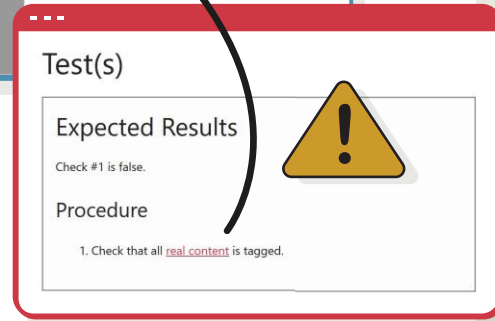
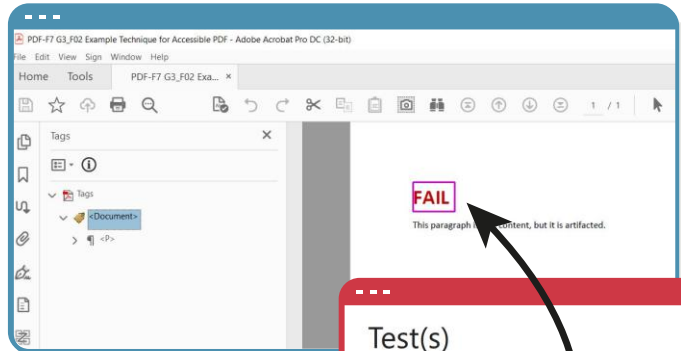
The Tester



How can this be tested?

- Two ways to check:
 - automated testing and
 - manual inspection.
- Automatic checkers often won't flag this fail
- Manual validation needed, e.g. with PAC:
 - Screen reader preview (in combination with the automated testing)
 - Highlight all artifacts

The Tester



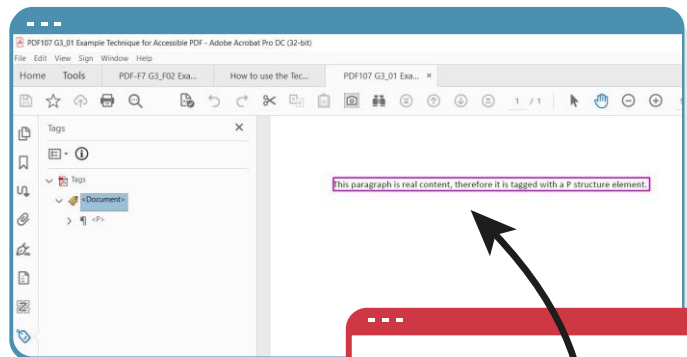
The Tester learns:

- Automated testing is powerful but not sufficient.
- The results of various creation software do not align with the content's semantic purpose in all cases.
- You always need to be able to manually validate to be confident.

The related PASS Technique: G3_01

The PASS:

A complete paragraph is correctly tagged.



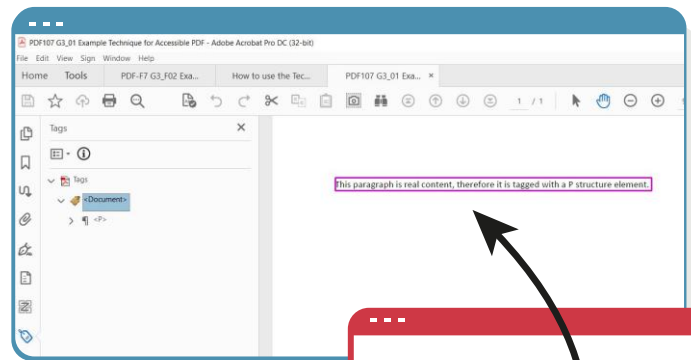
The related PASS Technique: G3_01

The PASS:

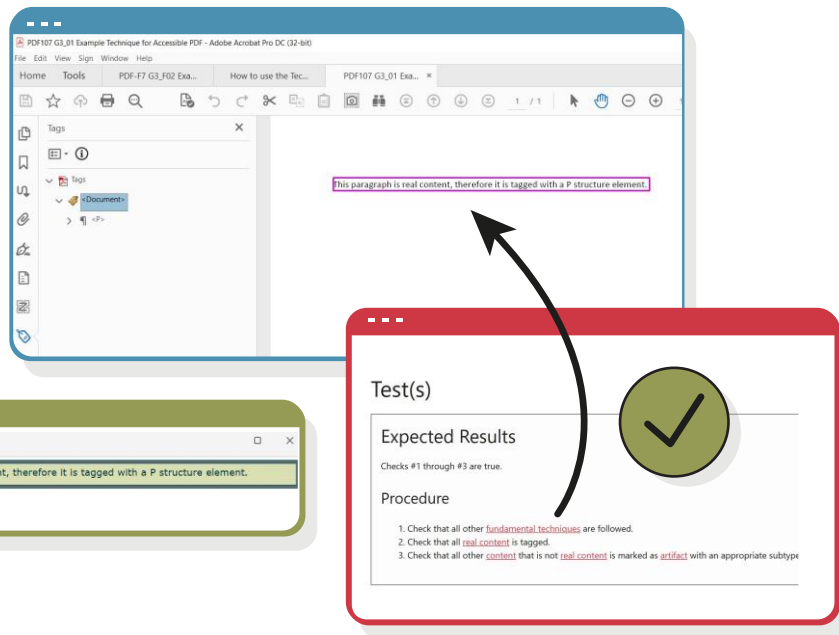
A complete paragraph is correctly tagged.

The test procedure:

- Check that all other fundamental techniques are followed.
- Check that all real content is tagged.
- Check that other content that is not real content is marked a artifact with an appropriate subtype.



The related PASS Technique: G3_01



The PASS:

A complete paragraph is correctly tagged.

The test procedure:

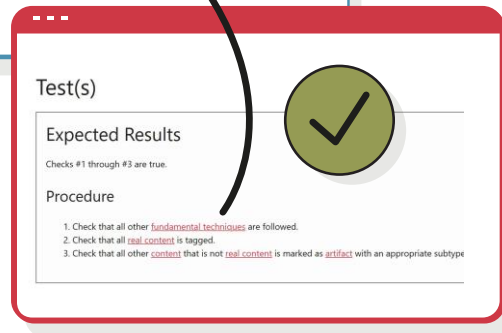
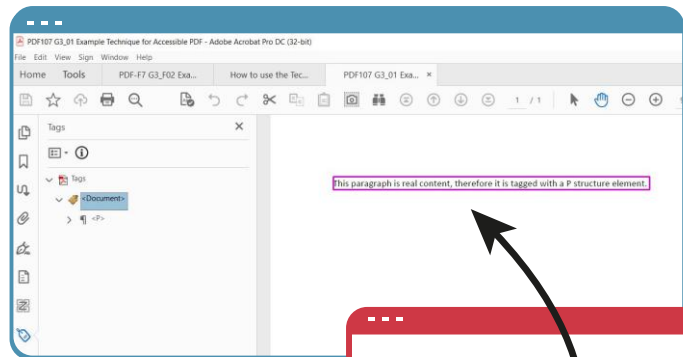
- Check that all other fundamental techniques are followed.
- Check that all real content is tagged.
- Check that other content that is not real content is marked a artifact with an appropriate subtype.

The test file:

- Provides an example of text that is available to AT due to the fact that it's marked as a Paragraph.

The Remediator

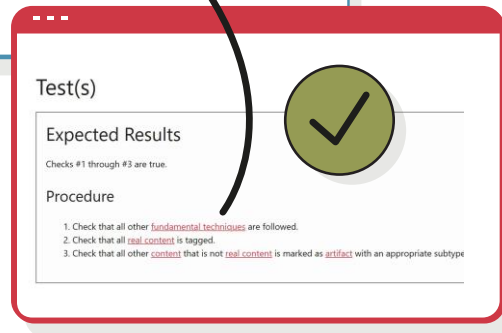
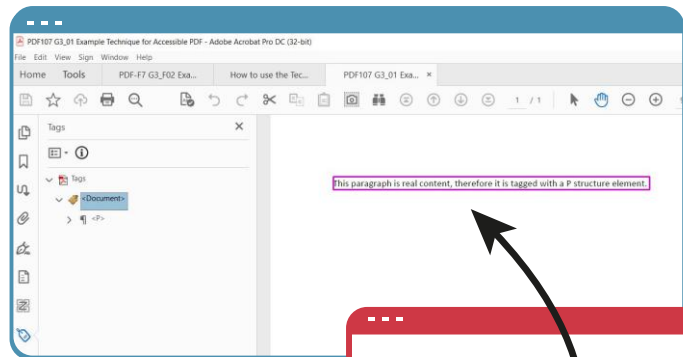
Failure examples tell remediators what NOT to do.



The Remediator

Failure examples tell remediators what NOT to do.

Pass techniques provide examples of correct tagging structure.



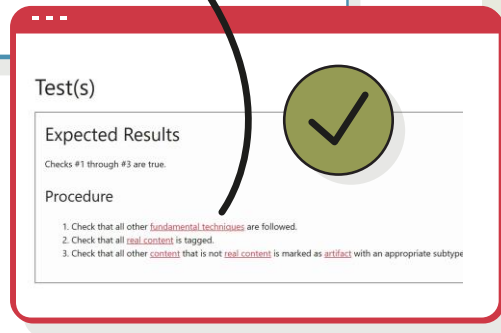
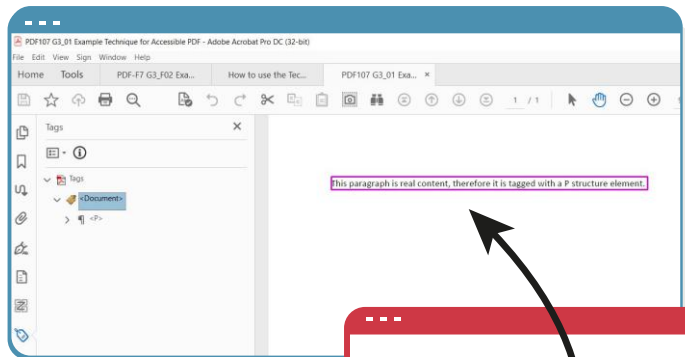
The Remediator

Failure examples tell remediators what NOT to do.

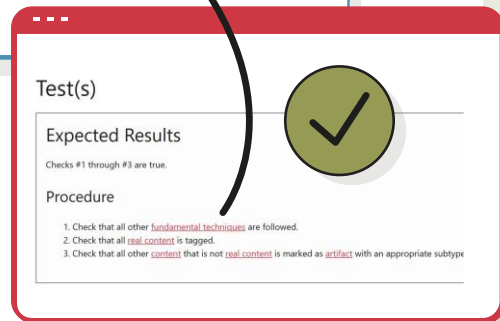
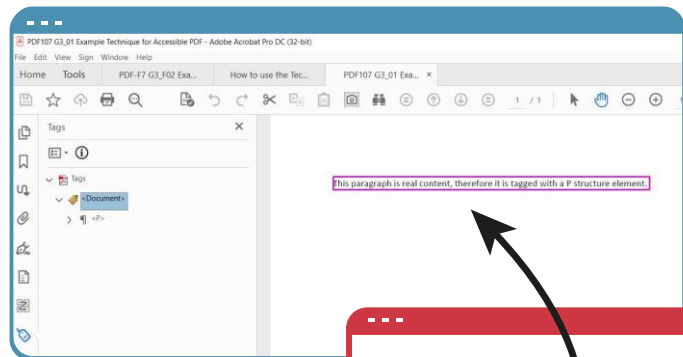
Pass techniques provide examples of correct tagging structure.

The Remediator learns:

- To use the Techniques as a reliable and practical roadmap for correcting errors



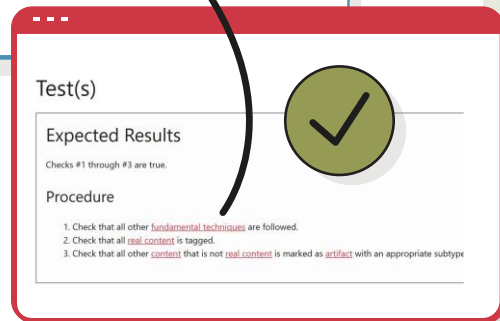
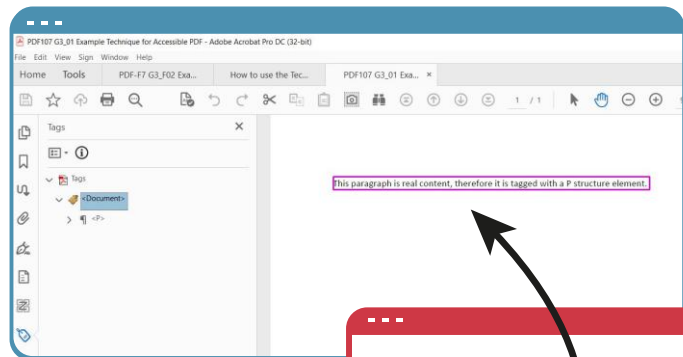
The Author



The Author learns:

- The significance of the distinction between real content & artifacts.

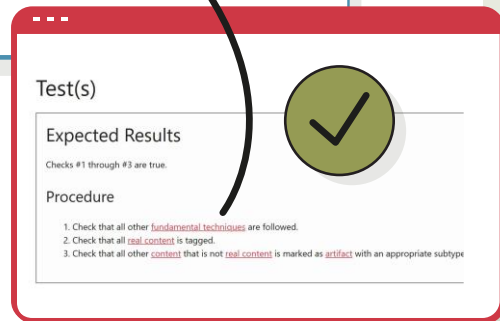
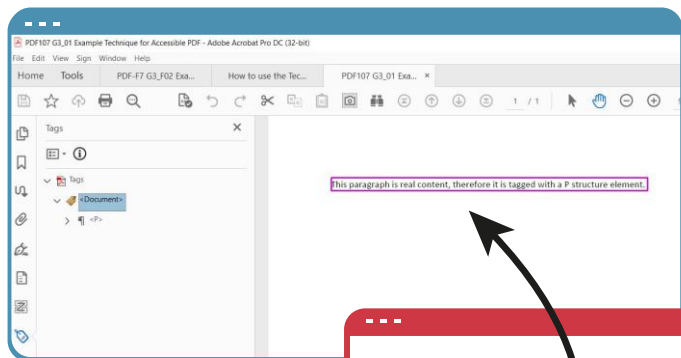
The Author



The Author learns:

- The significance of the distinction between real content & artifacts.
- That authoring and PDF conversion software directly influences the accessibility of their PDF files.

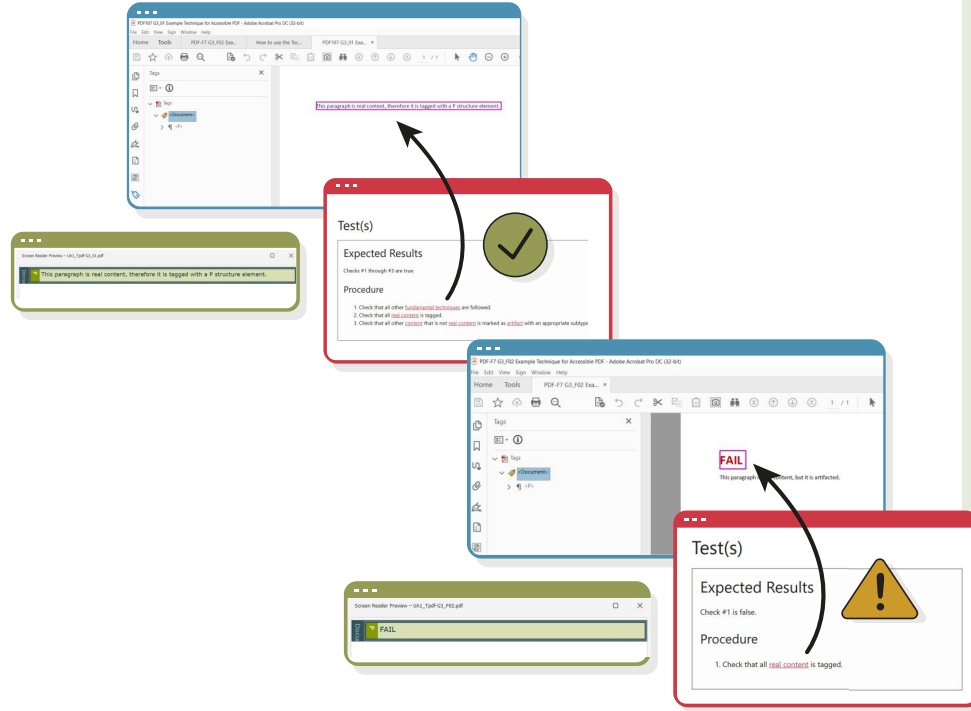
The Author



The Author learns:

- The significance of the distinction between real content & artifacts.
- That authoring and PDF conversion software directly influences the accessibility of their PDF files.
- What to look out for, which helps them learn how to use tools to produce accessible PDFs without further manual intervention.

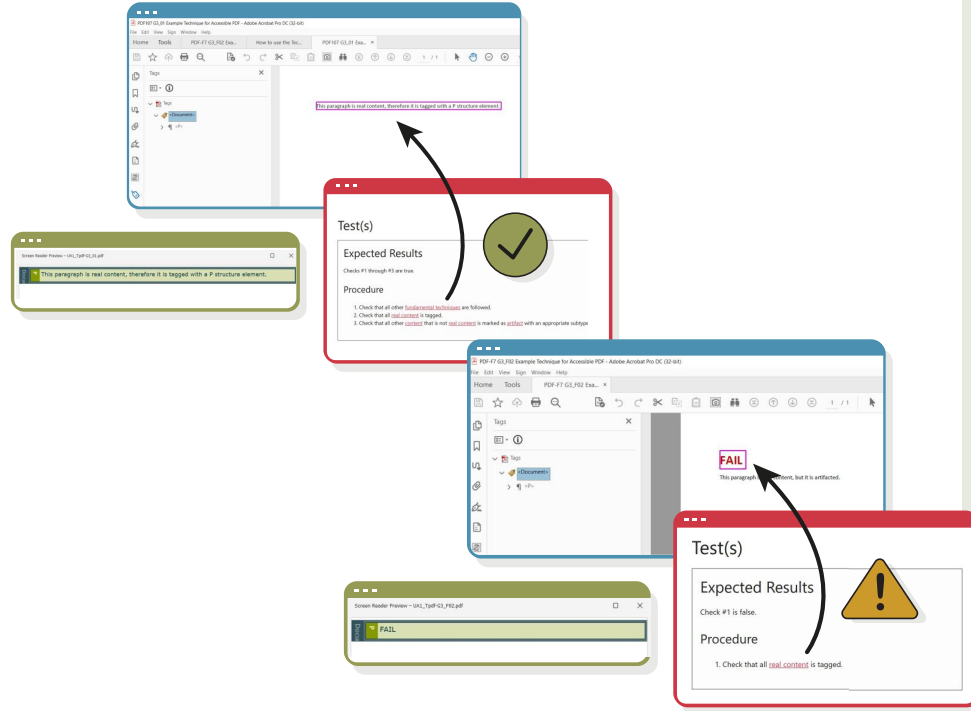
The Trainer



The Trainer learns:

The Techniques provide an ideal resource to translate into practical lessons tailored to their audience and the tools they use, e.g.:

The Trainer

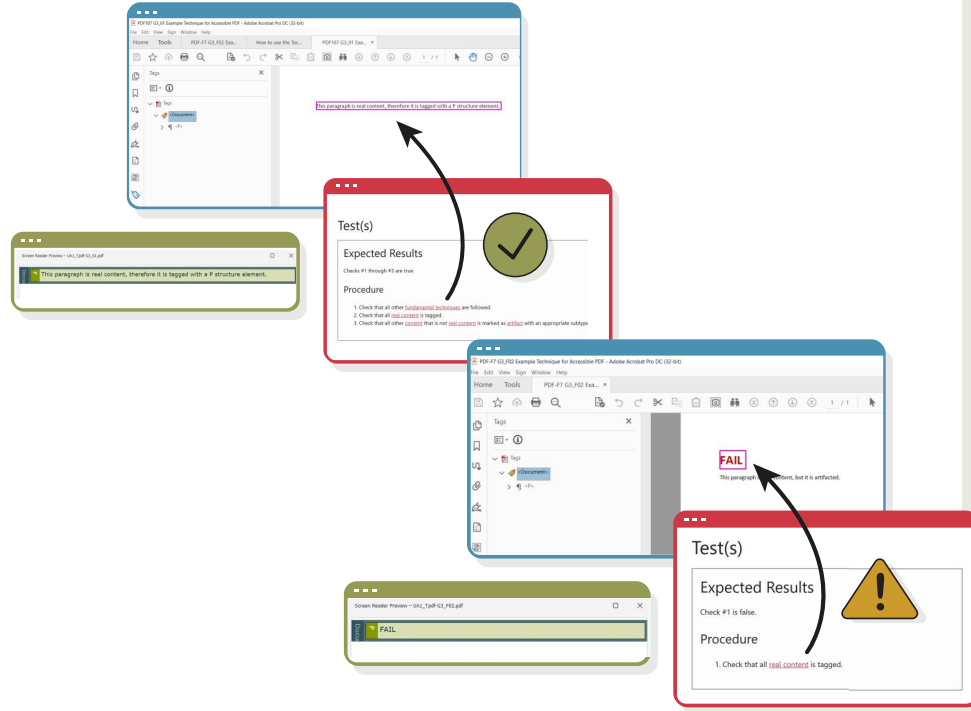


The Trainer learns:

The Techniques provide an ideal resource to translate into practical lessons tailored to their audience and the tools they use, e.g.:

- Explaining the concept of real content vs artifacts

The Trainer

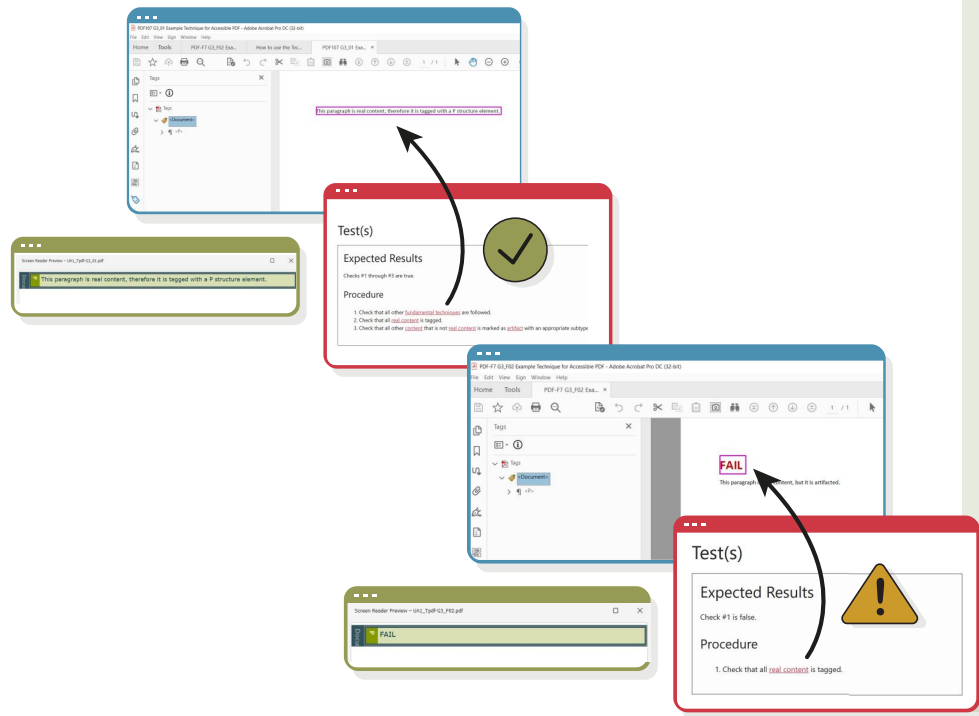


The Trainer learns:

The Techniques provide an ideal resource to translate into practical lessons tailored to their audience and the tools they use, e.g.:

- Explaining the concept of real content vs artifacts
- Detecting artifacted real content (e.g. Screen reader preview)

The Trainer

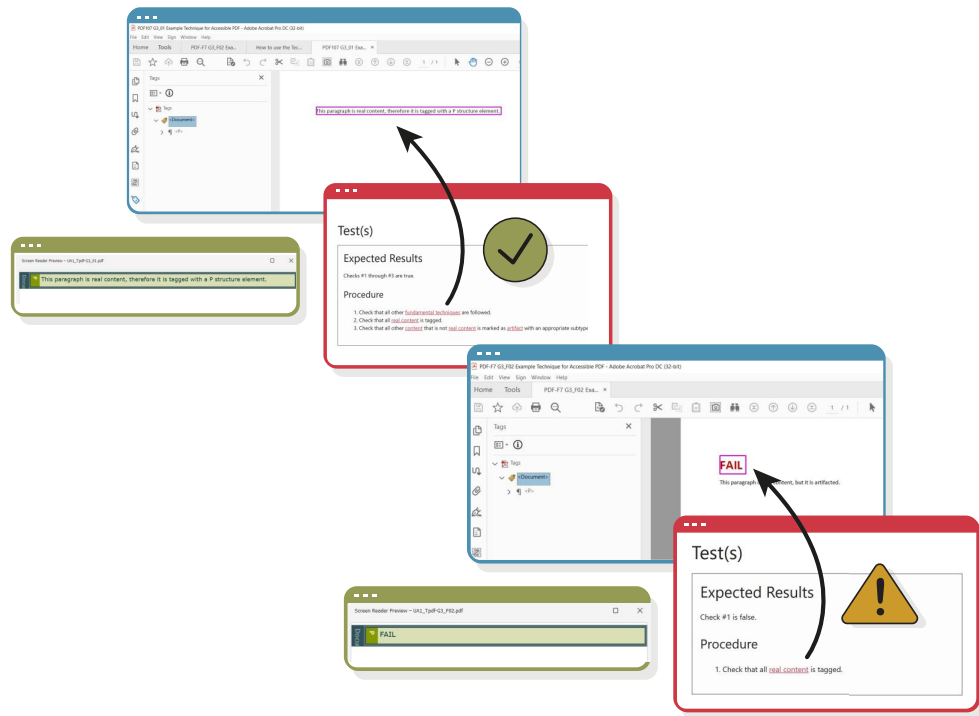


The Trainer learns:

The Techniques provide an ideal resource to translate into practical lessons tailored to their audience and the tools they use, e.g.:

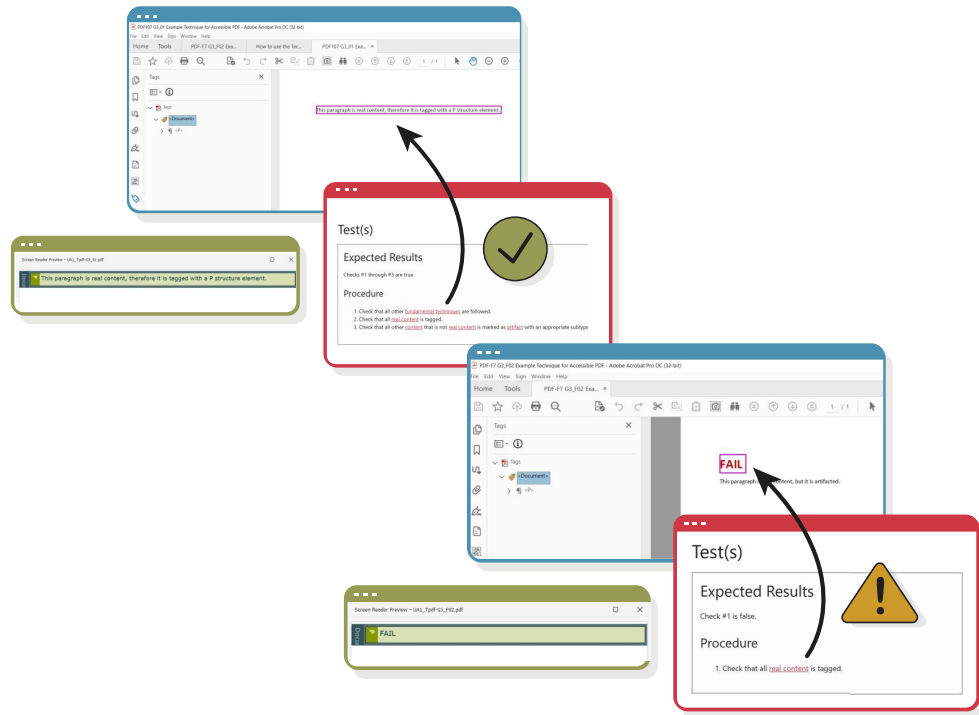
- Explaining the concept of real content vs artifacts
- Detecting artifacted real content (e.g. Screen reader preview)
- Fixing artifacted real content

The PDF Developer



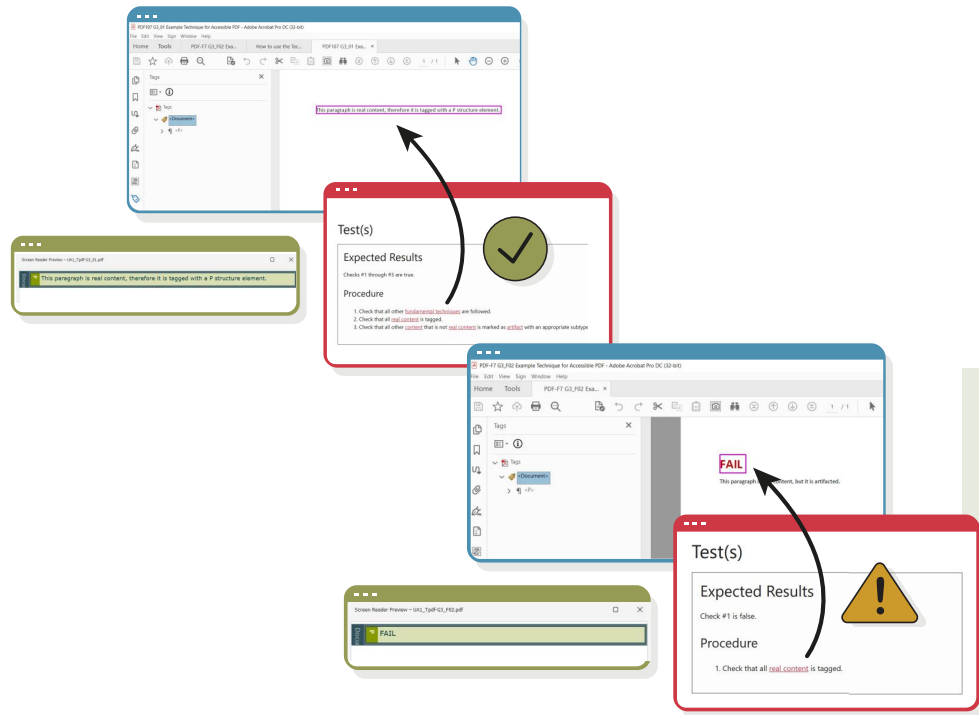
- The PASS example provides a benchmark: “Can the software output the correct result?”

The PDF Developer



- The PASS example provides a benchmark: “Can the software output the correct result?”
- The FAIL example provides an atomic test file: “Can the software detect and / or correct this issue?”

The PDF Developer



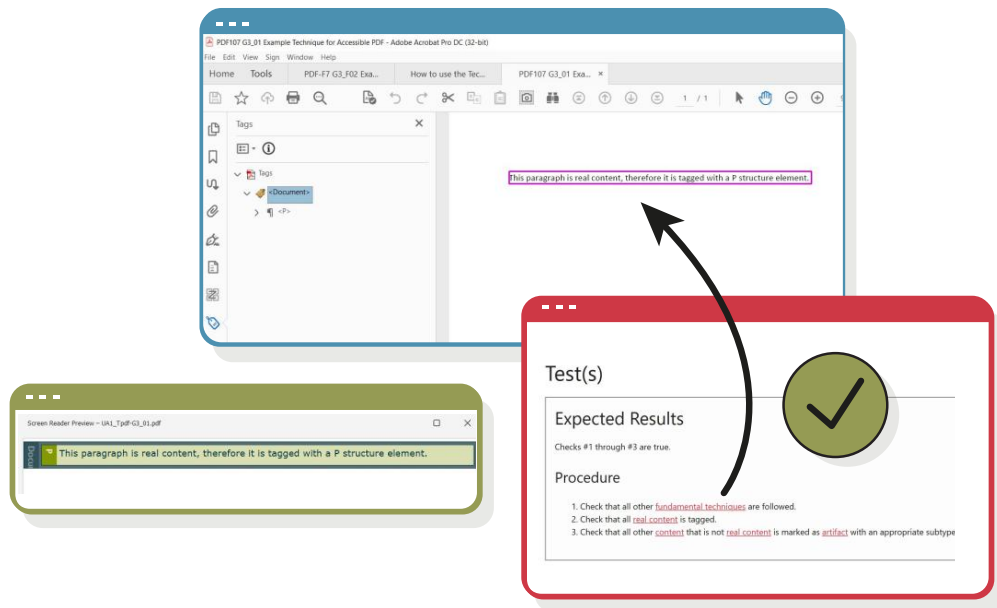
- The PASS example provides a benchmark: “Can the software output the correct result?”
- The FAIL example provides an atomic test file: “Can the software detect and / or correct this issue?”

The PDF Developer learns:

- To use the technique as an implementation target: Easily detecting and fixing real content that is artifacted.

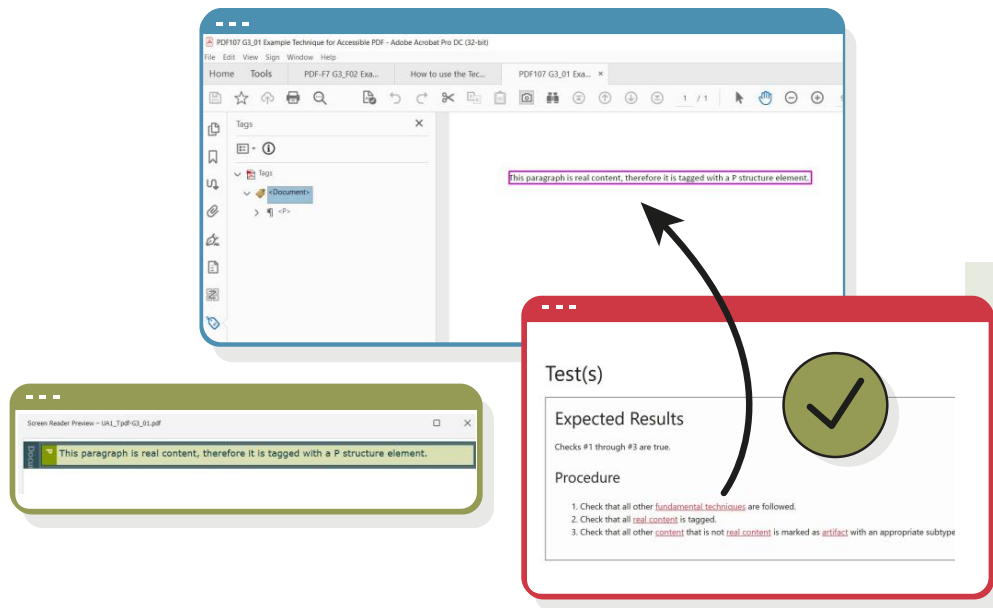
The API and AT Developer

For APIs and Assistive Technology developers this Technique provides ideal test-files for a common PDF-specific use case, as APIs and AT must be able to distinguish between artifact and real content.



The API and AT Developer

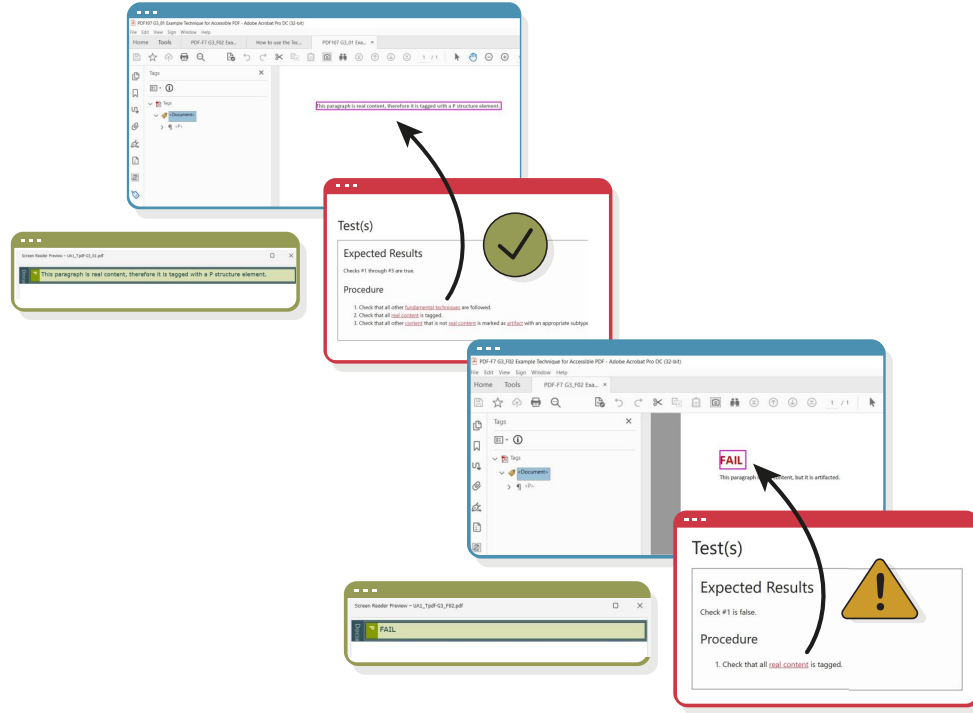
For APIs and Assistive Technology developers this Technique provides ideal test-files for a common PDF-specific use case, as APIs and AT must be able to distinguish between artifact and real content.



The APIs and AT Developer learns:

- To use the Techniques as a resource when considering API functionality

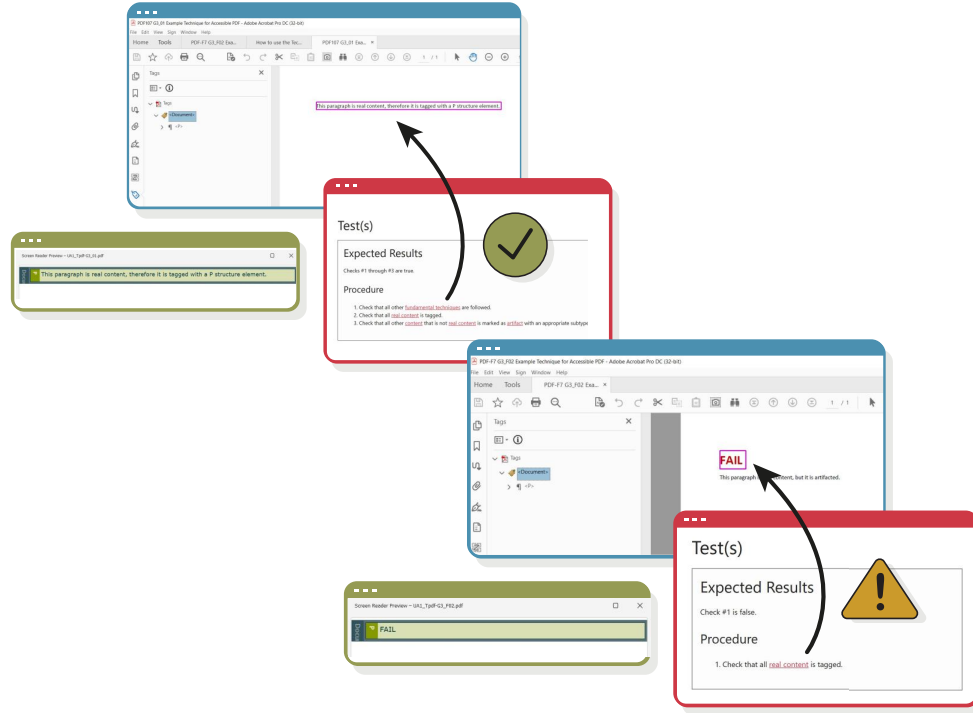
The Procurer



The Techniques help in three ways:

- **Search** – Finding supporting software by using the **Technique Support Finder Codes: UA1_Tpdf-G3_F02 (Example)**

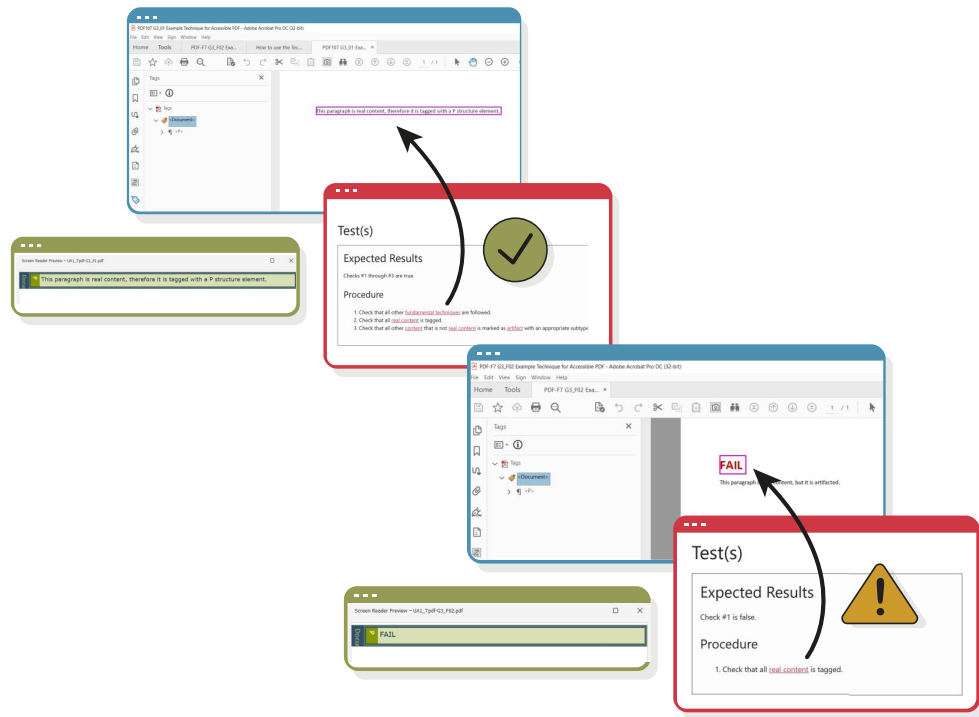
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- **Requirements** – They provide a reference for use in specifying a **feature list** in tenders or specifications.

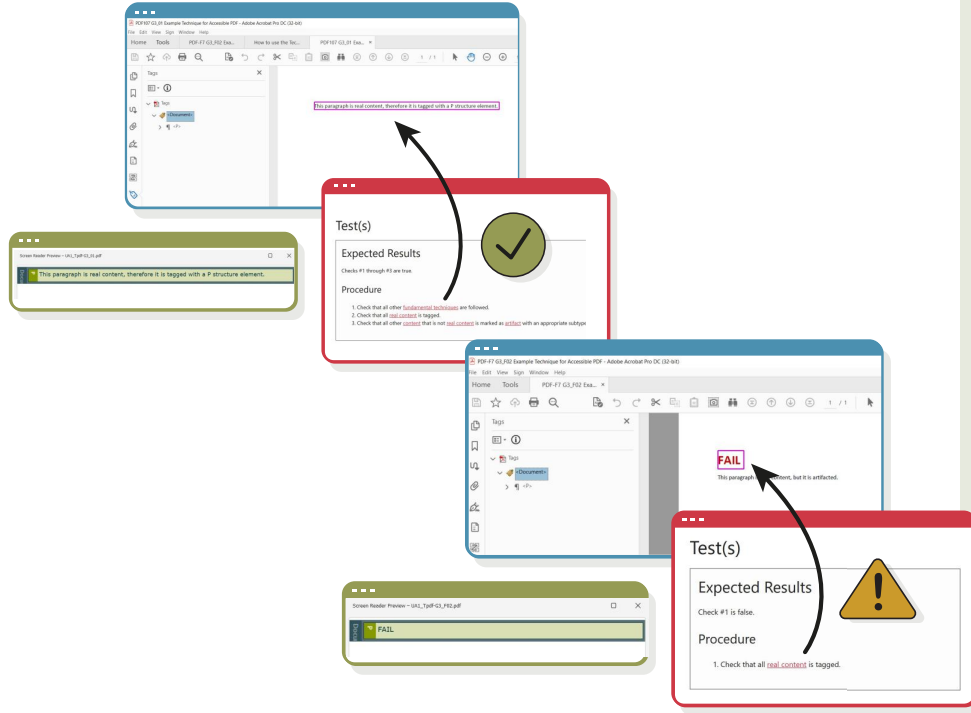
The Procurer



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- **Search** – Finding supporting software by using the **Technique Support Finder Codes: UA1_Tpdf-G3_F02 (Example)**
- **Requirements** – They provide a reference for use in specifying a **feature list** in tenders or specifications.
- **Evaluation** – Fail and pass examples can serve as **test files** allowing for direct comparison of competing products.

The Procurer

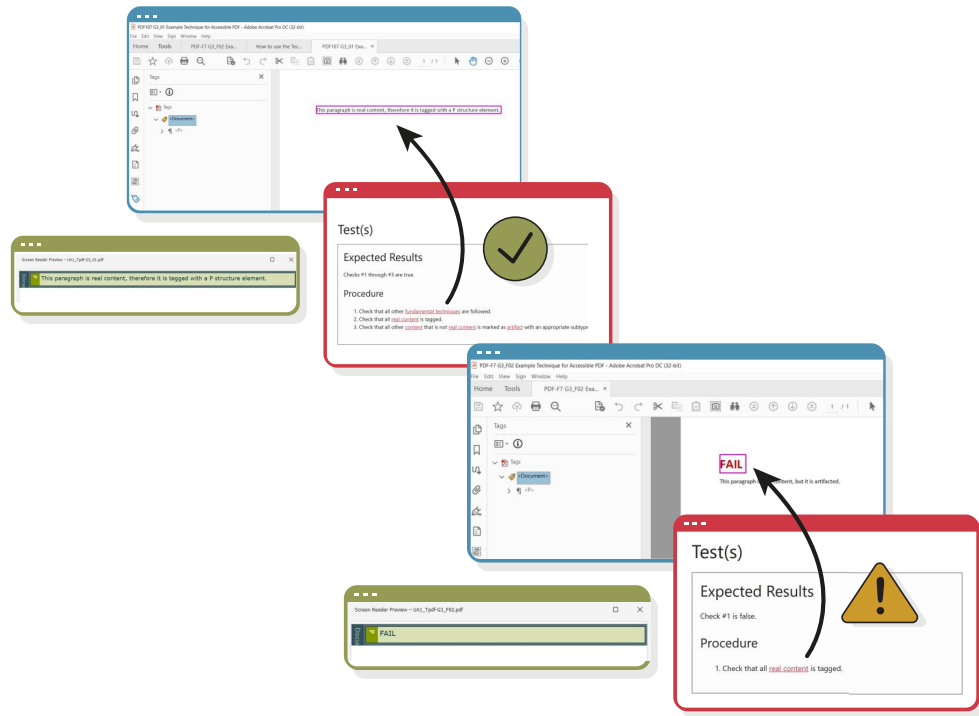


The Procurer learns:

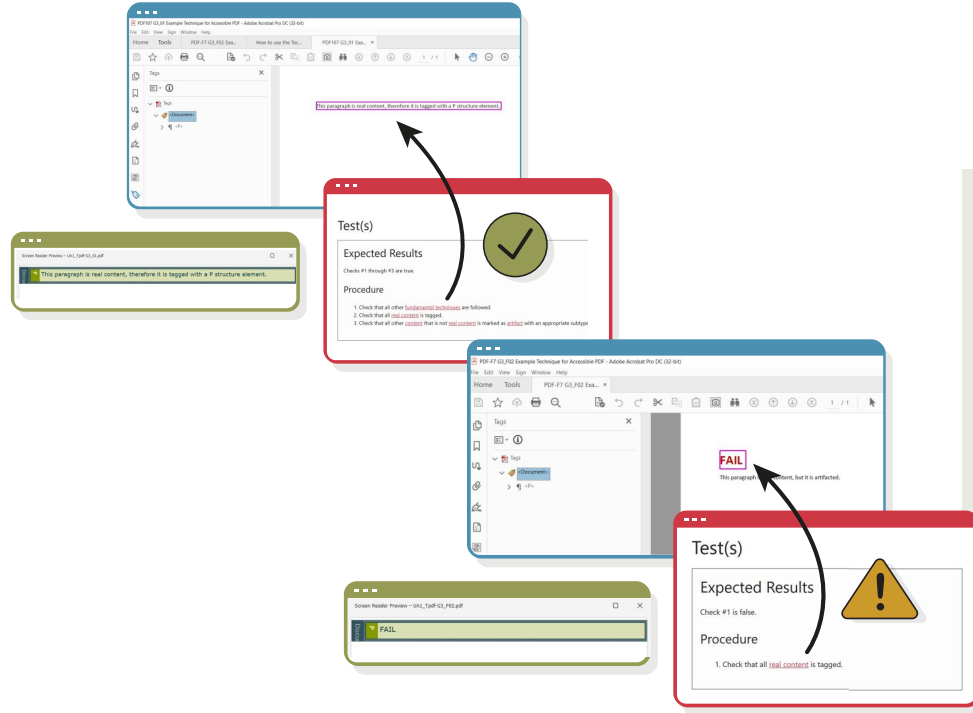
- To make the procurement process more transparent and evidence-based.

The Product Manager and Marketer

Techniques can be referenced from documentation, marketing materials and customer communications.



The Product Manager and Marketer



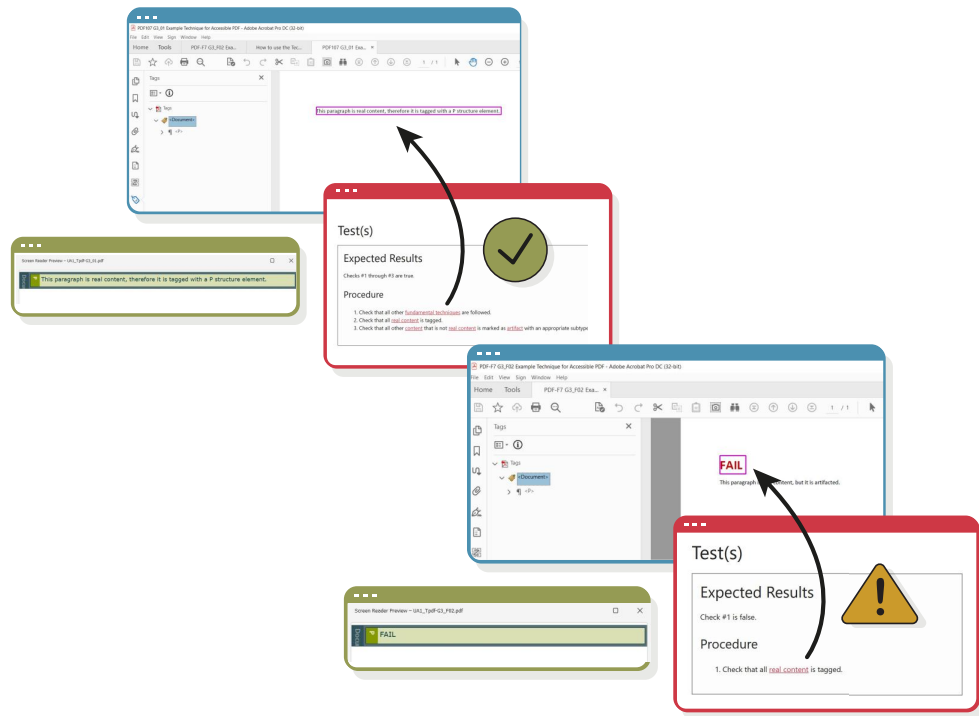
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The Product Manager and Marketer learns:

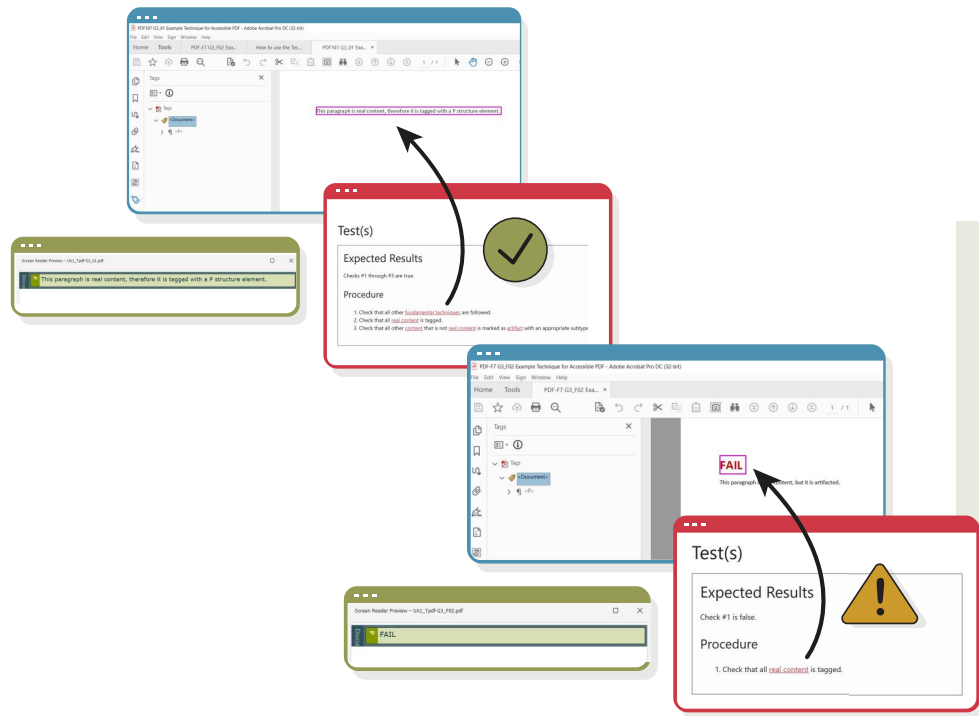
- The Techniques are not just technical details for developers or practitioners – they are also a source of differentiation and proof of value.

The Consumer

Techniques provide specific windows into the technical side of PDF accessibility. Of course, it's fair to ask: why should they care?



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The Consumer learns:

- Authoritative information about what's actually going on – via respective PASS and FAIL examples – empowers consumers to ask specific questions of their suppliers and vendors, and demand specific solutions.

In Summary

Primarily developed with Testers and Remediators in mind, the Techniques offer real benefits for everyone concerned with accessible documents.

They include several critical elements providing orientation:

- Example files that focus precisely on the point of the Technique (so-called “atomic examples)
- Clear test procedures,
- Background information,
- References between FAIL and PASS cases,
- Technique Support Finder Codes.



Useful resources

- Techniques for Accessible PDF:
<https://pdfa.org/techniques-for-accessible-pdf/>
- Glossary of accessibility terminology in PDF:
<https://pdfa.org/glossary-of-accessibility-terminology-in-pdf/>
- Free PDF Accessibility Checker PAC:
<https://pac.pdf-accessibility.org/en>
- PDF Accessibility LWG:
<https://pdfa.org/community/pdf-accessibility-liaison-working-group/>
- Public Repository of the Techniques for Accessible PDF:
<https://github.com/pdf-association/techniques-for-accessible-pdf>



Q&A

- Please comment and / or raise your question
- **And start working with the Techniques for Accessible PDF in your day-to-day work!**

