

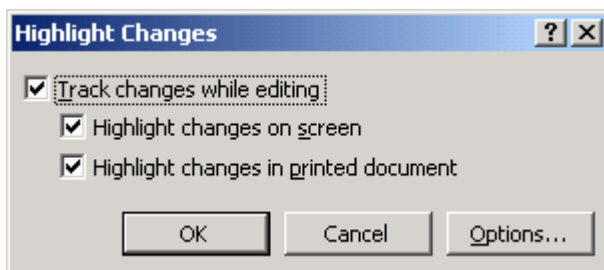
## How Much Metadata Are You Sharing?

The buzz on the street these days is about metadata. While this issue has been around for years, the front page article in the *Wall Street Journal* served to refocus attention on what types of information is being sent to clients, whether some of it is considered confidential, and what to do about it.

The definition of metadata is “data on data”. What this means to you is that every time you open, edit or save a document, extra data is stored within the document. This “metadata” is used to enhance a document in a variety of ways, including storing file information on who created or edited the document, as well as when and where the document was saved and much more. Even though metadata was designed to enhance your document, it can also inadvertently share confidential information with others.

Metadata can exist in many software applications but the major concern at the moment seems to address the information left behind in Word documents since court filings, agreements, merger & acquisition documents, to name a few, are frequently shared in electronic format.

It’s possible to send a document to a client without realizing how much information is left behind. On one occasion, our company was sent an agreement from a client where tracking changes and comments had been enabled but the option to display changes on screen was turned off. By choosing Tools, Track Changes, Highlight Changes on Screen (in Word 97 and 2000), we were able to uncover that the agreement had actually been drafted for another party with our company and product information substituted.



Another feature to watch out for is comments. When collaborating with others on documents, it’s useful to insert comments discussing issues or points to consider. If the document is sent to a client with these comments still embedded, you could either spill your secret negotiating skills, or have a potentially embarrassing comment be uncovered. Other features that can contain information that you might not want to share is deleted text (when Fast Saves is enabled under Tools, Options, Save, it’s possible to reveal some text that has been deleted), hyperlink and embedded graphic properties, the template name that the document was based on, and versions of the document if the Versions feature has been turned on.



## See For Yourself

The following are just a few areas where you can create or view Word document metadata.

### File and Document Properties

1. Open a document.
2. From the File menu, choose Properties. View each tab to see what document properties are embedded in the file.
3. From the File menu, choose Save As and save the file locally to your hard drive as Test Document.
4. Close the document and then reopen the file you created, Test Document.
5. From the File menu, choose Properties and see whether or not the properties from the existing document were carried over.

### Embedded Objects

1. Select and copy information from Microsoft Excel.
2. Switch to Word.
3. From the Edit menu, choose Paste Special and select Microsoft Excel Worksheet Object and click OK.
4. Double-click on the Excel worksheet object that now exists in Word and the entire worksheet is visible (even other worksheet tabs that may show confidential information as in the figure below).

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	0.725623	0.555088	0.730435	0.809709	0.359755		
2	0.369031	0.46836	0.974284	0.650237	0.184177		
3	0.015091	0.418059	0.97187	0.943182	0.198407		
4	0.763129	0.905115	0.344277	0.358964	0.600853		
5	0.186677	0.562055	0.154115	0.773308	0.873286		
6	0.748549	0.710662	0.62744	0.303612	0.980532		
7	0.016241	0.717006	0.925207	0.673941	0.989251		
8	0.642518	0.376721	0.985572	0.510535	0.17952		
9	0.276544	0.145545	0.60887	0.925043	0.057934		
10	0.181433	0.063525	0.087522	0.765047	0.741604		
11	0.508903	0.148565	0.270369	0.507938	0.674445		
12	0.934134	0.340026	0.608635	0.615225	0.333796		
13	0.417753	0.962986	0.697606	0.395414	0.574838		
14	0.693313	0.23937	0.06381	0.891992	0.468935		
15	0.619705	0.338522	0.837161	0.965075	0.216701		
16	0.428726	0.733725	0.128054	0.831781	0.131254		
17	0.259533	0.083186	0.180251	0.455186	0.593475		
18	0.731932	0.516403	0.801235	0.141899	0.796905		
19	0.614958	0.713245	0.98734	0.877764	0.73474		
20							



### **View Comments and Other Information**

1. Open a document or create a new one. The file should have some text in it.
2. Click after some text.
3. From the Insert menu, choose Comment.
4. Type a comment such as, “Opposing counsel is a real bozo” or something equally embarrassing if it were to be discovered.
5. Save the document.
6. From the File menu, choose Open (local open if using a document management system).
7. Change Files of Type to Recover Text from Any File.
8. Select the file that you just created with the comment and choose Open.
9. The comment will be visible along with all types of other metadata.

Scroll to the bottom of the document and view other metadata such as the last 10 authors, full name and path of the file, and other potentially damaging information.

### **Time Spent Editing a Document**

1. Open a document that you have previously saved and edited.
2. From the Insert menu, choose Field.
3. Under Categories select All.
4. Locate the EditTime field and insert it into the document. This shows the amount of time spent editing a document.

### **How to Remove Metadata**

You need to protect yourself from this type of discoverable and potentially damaging information. Office XP offers some additional protection over other versions.

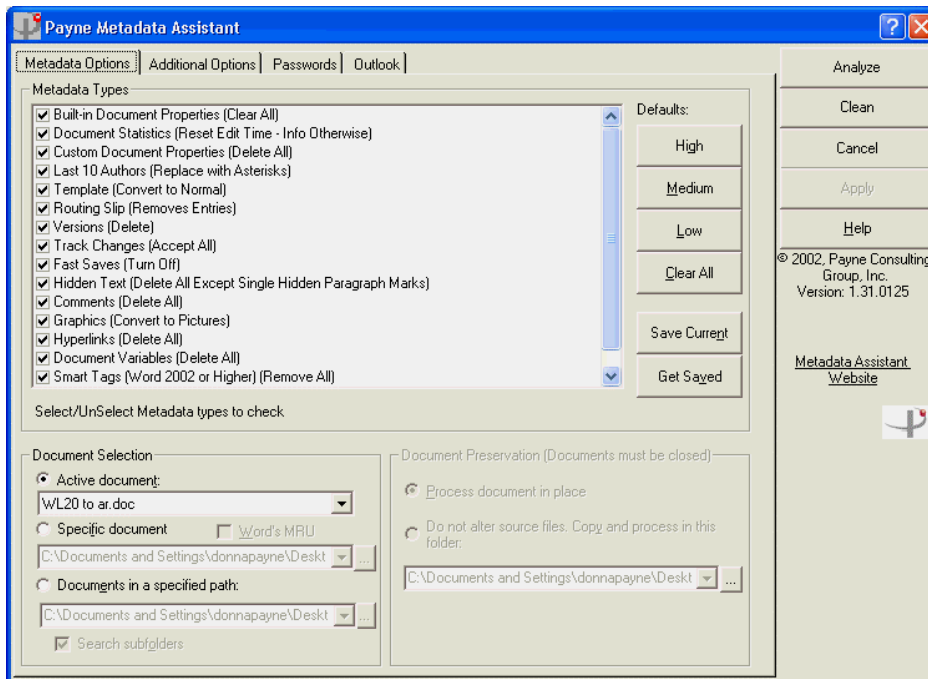
### **Warn Before Printing Saving or Sending a File That Contains Track Changes or Comments**

– From the Tools menu, choose Options, Security. Check the option to warn before a file goes out that contains this information.

**Remove Personal Information From This File on Save** – Tools, Options, Security. This setting is document specific and will need to be turned on for each document that you work on. Not all of the information is removed however, only document properties.

### **The Best Solution**

The most complete solution and protection available is the Payne Metadata Assistant. The product takes care of all of the metadata listed in this article and much more potentially harmful and discoverable information. Metadata Assistant is the only product of it’s kind featured on the front page of the Wall Street Journal (Oct. 20, 2000). More than 150,000 people use the Metadata Assistant. It’s tested, proven and effective.



The Metadata Assistant is available for an Enterprise license or in smaller quantities. For more information and for a trial demo, send inquiries to: [MetadataAssistant@payneconsulting.com](mailto:MetadataAssistant@payneconsulting.com).