



## Frequently Asked Questions around Flash Conversion: The time is NOW!



In July 2017, Adobe made the announcement that they will discontinue support for Flash in 2020. Subsequent to that announcement, major web browser producers Microsoft and Google announced that they will disable the Flash plugin by default in 2019. So, the inevitable question from learning organizations is, “What will happen to our training courses that use Flash?”

We have anticipated this question and developed tools and methodologies to convert course inventories that contain Flash courses and HTML courses that contain Flash content. I want to take this opportunity to answer this question, and a few others I've frequently heard in recent conversations, so that you and your teams can prepare for this major industry shift.

**Q:** What can I do in advance to prepare for the transition from Flash to HTML5?

**A:** The first things that you will need to do is arm yourself with information about your infrastructure roadmap and the makeup of your current course inventory. Then, answer some questions about whether or not this is an opportunity to reengineer some of your course content for a more modern, mobile, and/or micro-learning-based approach. From an infrastructure perspective, you are going to need to work with your LMS and IT teams to understand which browsers and devices will be supported in the 2019/20 timeframe. This will allow you to set a baseline for your development and will aid you in developing a methodology for your course testing and new course framework (if you plan to move to a unified HTML5 course framework). The next thing that you need to do is to conduct a systematic inventory of your course catalog so that you can create priorities and a systematic workflow for transformation and testing. I'll cover this more in the next section. And finally, you may want to use this opportunity to consider whether some of your legacy courses can be reimagined to meet your modern learning audience. We've outlined a four-step process to help support your conversion planning.

### Four-Step Process: Flash Course Library Conversion

1. Assess your current state:
  - Review existing portfolio of flash courses and recommend to eliminate, transition, or transform
  - Determine current browser compatibility and LMS compatibility
  - Confirm access to source code for the courses
2. Prioritize courses to transition and transform
3. Develop conversion plan:
  - Which courses, what order, and appropriate timing (“Batching” or “Categorizing”)
  - Align with any planned maintenance and update schedules
  - Conduct user testing across devices to confirm successful conversion
4. Convert courses according with conversion plan
  - Apply appropriate conversion method or each course
  - Test the conversion and integration on an LMS

**Q:** What types of things will I need to know about my course inventory when planning a conversion from Flash?

**A:** You will want to create a spreadsheet that collects information about your courses such as follows:

- Course ID
- Course Name
- Complexity (L1, L2, etc.)
- Seat time
- Authoring tool – What was it created with or which common framework, are the source files available, etc.? Another important aspect of this inventory will be metrics from your LMS and the Businesses on the criticality of each course to set a Priority. As an example, Compliance courses may fall under Priority 1, while courses that are rarely used or used by a narrow audience may fall under Priority 4. This information will be used to establish a workflow, identify commonalities, build conversion automation (where possible), and determine phases.

### Course Inventory: Example

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
Course ID	Priority	Course Name	Source Files Available?	Course Type	Environment	Authoring Tool	Wrapper	Developer	Interaction Level	Media
1	High	Course Name 1	Yes	WBT	Production	Lectora	SCORM 2004	GP Strategies	Low	n/a
2	Low	Course Name 2	Yes	WBT	Dev	Storyline 2	SCORM 2004	GP Strategies	Low	n/a
3	Low	Course Name 3	unknown	WBT	Dev	Captivate 9	AICC	Client	Medium	Audio
4	Medium	Course Name 4	Yes	WBT	Stage	HTML5	xAPI	3rd Party - B	Custom	Audio & Video
5	Medium	Course Name 5	Yes	VILT	Dev	PowerPoint	n/a	3rd Party - A	Low	n/a
6	Critical	Course Name 6	No	WBT	Production	Storyline 2	xAPI	Client	Medium	Audio
7	Low	Course Name 7	No	WBT	Dev	HTML5	SCORM 2004	GP Strategies	High	Audio & Video
8	High	Course Name 8	No	Game App	Production	HTML5	SCORM 2004	Client	Custom	Video
9										
10										
11										
10										
11										

  

A	B	C	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
Course ID	Priority	Course Name	Mobile: UX	Mobile: Device	Required Browsers	Bookmarking	Has Assesmsnet?	Assessment: Scoring Rule	Assessment: # of Attempts Allowed
1									
2	High	Course Name 1	Desktop-Only	n/a	IE11	yes	yes	50% to pass	3
3	Low	Course Name 2	Desktop-Only	n/a	IE11	yes	yes	50% to pass	4
4	Low	Course Name 3	Responsive: desktop-first	iPads	Safari	yes	yes	10% to pass	2
5	Medium	Course Name 4	Responsive: phone-first	Android phones	Chrome	yes	yes	100% to pass	2
6	Medium	Course Name 5	Desktop-Only	n/a	n/a	no	no	n/a	n/a
7	Critical	Course Name 6	Responsive: desktop-first	Windows phones	IE11, Edge	yes	yes	100% to pass	6
8	Low	Course Name 7	Responsive: phone-first	iPhones, Android phones	All modern	yes	yes	100% to pass	4
9	High	Course Name 8	Desktop-Only	n/a	n/a	no	no	n/a	n/a
10	Medium	Course Name 9	Desktop-Only	n/a	n/a	no	no	n/a	n/a
11	Medium	Course Name 10	Desktop-Only	n/a	n/a	no	no	n/a	n/a

**Q:** Besides converting from Flash to HTML5, what other things might I want to consider when planning to convert my courses?

**A:** In the first section I talked a bit about “modernizing” learning. This might be in the form of shorter learning bites, performance support training, and mobile architectures. Once you have created an inventory of your courses and reviewed your LMS usage/completion reports, you will be able get a clearer picture of which training has been effective and which training may be due for an update. And now that you’ve established a roadmap with your IT and LMS teams, you might be able to consider developing a unified HTML5 mobile framework that is suited for both desktop and mobile learning modules.

**Q:** What makes for a good HTML5 framework?

**A:** A good HTML5 framework is built from a “mobile first” point of view. That means that the user interface (UI) is built from the perspective that it will be designed in a responsive (collapsible) manner that considers the display on a smartphone, desktop or tablet. The primary reason for designing this fashion is that UI interactions on a smartphone require considerations such as display size, touch-based navigation, and user interaction types that desktop and tablets are more forgiving about. So, by thinking from a smartphone perspective first, you are less likely to run into problems with trying to retrofit content and activities.

Your HTML5 framework should also be built to be scalable from a development standpoint. This means that the more complex programming aspects of the framework are abstracted away from the content development portions of the framework. Therefore, instructional designers and content editors can build content into the framework without having to know programming languages.

That way, programmers can focus on building reusable interactive components, while IDs can focus on the learning.



## Q: Is any of my Flash content salvageable and how can I know?

**A:** This picture will become clearer as you go through your content inventory. During that process, you will be determining how each course was built and whether the course “source” files are available. Course “source” files are the files that were used to build the course and then export it to a finished SCORM format. As an example, your original course may have been built (programmed and assembled) in Adobe Captivate, but at the end of that process the developer exported the final version as a SCORM package that was given to your LMS team as a zipped version.

That zip version does not contain the original source files, and unless you have a central repository for storing source files, they are probably with the original developer. This is not the end of the world, but it does narrow your options for transforming the course. The salvageability of your course files will fall into one of three buckets:

- Courses built in commercial tools
- Courses built in Flash
- Courses built in custom frameworks

In all three cases, you will want to find the source files if you can. If you cannot, sometimes the SCORM or compiled versions of the course leaves you with options to pick out the relevant text and media, which may facilitate automation.

In the end, a successful transition to a Flash-less world does not have to be a scary prospect. Please feel free to reach out to GP Strategies if you have any questions or if you need support.

## About Author

Tom Pizer, Director of Learning Technologies for GP Strategies® Learning Solutions Group, has over 20 years of experience in the technical digital media field. He has an extensive background in a variety of creative and technical media, including digital media specification, production, testing, and implementation. During his career, Tom has created, specified, directed, and/or managed hundreds of hours of educational, instructional, and entertainment-based media and has served clients in a wide variety of markets including the federal government, trade associations, commercial organizations, and educational institutions. A key aspect of Tom's responsibilities includes staying abreast of emerging technologies and in-tune with the latest development methodologies, standards, and practices. To this end, he takes part in monthly advisory meetings for several of GP Strategies clients to ensure that their courseware is of the highest caliber and meets rigorous development requirements. Tom is also the technical lead for several proprietary GP Strategies technologies that are designed to reduce overall development time while increasing the creativity and diversity of GP Strategies body of work.

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to a Flash-less world:

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