

Digitizing Legacy Content

More than just taking out Flash



Content - A Significant Investment

Content is one of the most significant investments that L&D groups make and accounts for almost 10 percent of the \$70 billion spent on L&D overall. According to Bersin by Deloitte, organizations invest more than \$6.8 billion a year buying content and spend multiples of that building their own. This includes external courses and seminars, off-the-shelf programs, and custom design and development services.

Yet, Bersin's research states, "Despite all of the thought, effort, and money that L&D professionals put into learning content, two-thirds have trouble engaging learners." With learners spending only 1% of their work week on learning, the modern learner is already distracted and overwhelmed. Moreover, in the modern workplace, learners are increasingly looking for information and content on their own and are more in control of what they spend viewing, watching and learning. Innovative technologies and a burgeoning millennial workforce are rapidly changing the way learning content is consumed at work.

The challenge is, most organizations cannot keep pace with the modern learner. Over time, many companies have built large training portfolios that rest inside curricula, catalogs, and the LMS. Over the years, the technology used to develop this content may be disparate and disconnected – resulting in challenges like low learner engagement or technology obsolescence. Modern learners seek content which is easily searchable, available on demand, is responsive and mobile friendly. It is imperative that the learning ecosystem needs to evolve with the modern learner and provide learners with a fully-integrated solution that seamlessly works across platforms.

Modernizing Your Learning Ecosystem

The big challenge in front of large organizations is to modernize their learning portfolios and update technology formats to meet the demands of modern platforms and modern learners. While it may seem overwhelming to plan such projects, the first step is to take a holistic view of all your legacy content.

At first, it may seem like a good approach to go the whole nine yards and get a head start on migrating and digitizing all your content. However, at NIIT we believe that it is important to take a more consultative and process-driven approach to migration. NIIT works with our customers on initial preparatory tasks. We help them prioritize curricula for conversion, evaluate dependencies between curricula, and help identify and locate files.

In our experience working with some of the world's largest companies, we understand that migrating content at such a large scale can be daunting. That's why we follow a unique four-step approach to migrating legacy content.

Grappling with Technology Obsolescence

It has been almost twenty years since Flash (then introduced by Macromedia) appeared on the technology scene. Flash can manipulate vector and raster graphics and supports the streaming of audio and video. With its Action Script language, it naturally evolved into a popular choice for web-based interactive development and e-learning. The platform further evolved when Adobe acquired Macromedia in 2005.

But, as with every technology, the next big thing usually takes over. In this case - open formats like HTML5 which do not require a specific plug-in and seamlessly adapt to modern responsive, multi-device, multi-platform technology. In an official statement in July 2017, Adobe announced that it would retire Flash. They also added that they would no longer support the Flash Player plug-in by 2020. As a result, Google and Microsoft also stated that they will disable the plug-in by default in their browsers by early 2020. In fact, the latest versions of most browsers currently do not enable Flash by default.

What does this mean for the mountains of content created on Flash? The countdown has clearly begun. It is a distinct possibility that this content may not work as intended in 2020. With less than a year to go, this change is imminent and if you haven't considered converting your legacy Flash content, it is important that you hit the ground running with a plan.



Step 1: Take an Enterprise-Wide View

One of the first steps is to create an enterprise-wide view of all legacy content and create a content catalog matrix. The matrix helps organizations take a holistic view of their legacy content so that it can be re-designed or reconfigured in a way that is linked to the business and deemed effective and efficient. We help our customers build this matrix based on several parameters – the relevance of the material, the frequency of use, the number of users accessing it, the most current versions etc.

The matrix not only helps you assess the volume of e-learning courses to convert, there is also a plethora of options that can be included in the matrix. Over the years, content may have become redundant or duplicative. It may also be the case that it is non-standard and is not SCORM or AICC compliant. It could have varying visual identity that is not consistent with your current visual standards and may need to be recreated all together. It may have been developed in outdated software such as an earlier version of Macromedia Flash. The source files may be missing or there could be a need to migrate content that exists as part of an LCMS and cannot function independently. There may be mandatory compliance related content that has to be rolled out first. The matrix allows you to capture all this information and get a bird's eye view of all your content to enable informed decisions.



Step 2: Categorize the Content Matrix

Once all the content is listed in the matrix, it is important to categorize it. You may categorize it on various parameters according to the complexity of the migration, the content domain, the platform it needs to be migrated to – whether responsive or adaptive. For example, if your content sits in a secure environment on a desktop, there may not be a need to convert it for mobility or responsiveness across devices. On the other hand, you may have to re-engineer existing courses for device/platform agnostic use. According to Statista, the number of mobile phone users in the world is expected to pass the five billion mark by 2019. With these changing dynamics, organizations are in a hurry to upgrade their learning

content for device compatibility. This could also include retiring redundant or non-compatible elements and switching to adaptive, responsive and accessible content. Based on your categorization, you can then select the right authoring tools and platforms for the migration. If you are unsure about an authoring tool, our team can help with bespoke recommendations.



Step 3: Rationalize and Prioritize Content

Sometimes, the sheer scale of migration can completely derail migration projects. It is therefore important to prioritize all components as vital, essential or desirable in the matrix - with vital elements getting the highest priority. Other things to prioritize are time to market constraints, budget allocation, timeline association, utilization and the shelf life of the learning program. Based on all these factors, you can then decide what to upgrade, rebuild or recreate.

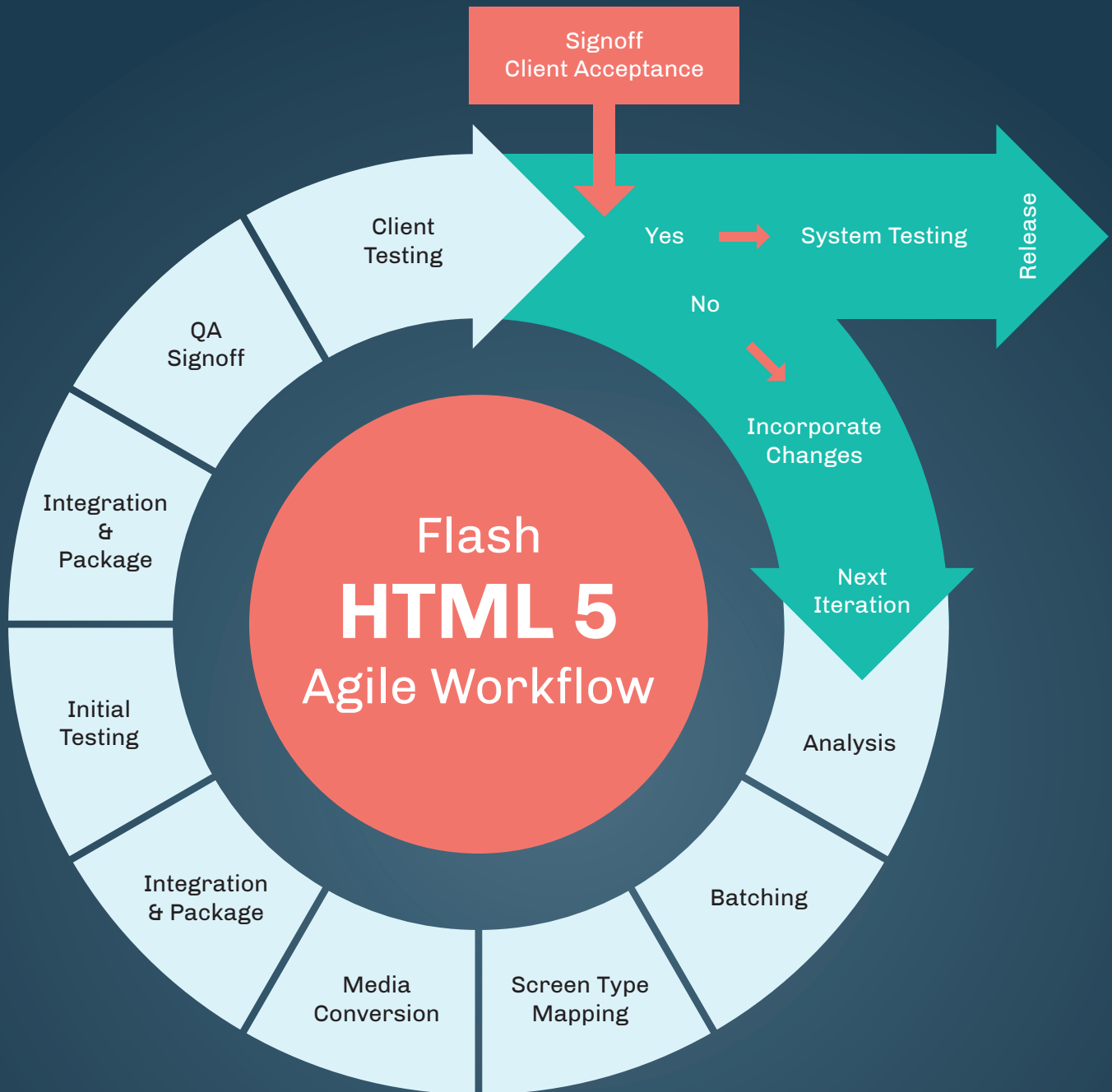
Your time and budget are limited and therefore it is important to complete high priority migrations first. Once you have prioritized all your content, it is important to follow a proven process and plan that allow you to complete the migration against a predictable timeline and budget.



Step 4: Seamless Migration

At NIIT, we develop over 18,000 hours of custom content annually for the world's largest companies. We believe it is important to bring the same best-in-class practices, processes and excellence at scale to content migration. Our approach is to form dedicated teams with the sole responsibility of content migration. Our teams bring years of experience to the table - they are well-versed in the complexities and intricacies of the conversion process. We also automate each step of the process to maximize efficiency and ensure that there are requisite quality checks at each stage of the process.

Our goal is to simplify the process for our customers and give them a target set that retains the same behavior and attributes in legacy software such as Flash while modernizing and standardizing the migrated content. One of the main advantages of our four-step approach is that while it may seem like an elaborate approach, our turnaround time is usually faster and less expensive than what you would achieve doing this in-house or with a less experienced partner.



Agile process with continuous cycle on improvement and upgradation.



Challenges and Factors to Consider

As with any process, the migration of legacy content comes with its own unique set of challenges. NIIT works with customer teams to resolve these challenges and provide the best possible solution. Some of the challenges that we have come across are listed below:



Timeline and quick turnaround time challenges



Budgetary constraints



Degree of legacy content in terms of re-usability of existing content, visuals or codebase



The scale and extent of content upgrades



Source code availability



Media assets, videos, legacy files do not have associated source files



Assets built in a toolset that is not available in the marketplace



Some features not supported by modern browser security requirements



Voiceover challenges in case of content updates

The Countdown to 2020: Next Steps

As the countdown to 2020 has already begun for most Flash content, many organizations are already in the process of conversion. We are working with many existing customers to convert massive volumes of content developed in Flash. Our experienced and dedicated migration team has completed several migration projects successfully. Some examples include:

500

Migration of content from an LCMS to LMS with varying scope and a volume of over 500 courses migrated in about 6-8 months for a leading oil and gas company.

100

Content, visual and technology courses with a volume of 100 courses over a period of 6 months for a leading manufacturer of medical devices.

30+

Customized content from base content for different business entities for an entire suite of 30+ courses for a financial regulatory authority and its various partners.



3%

Annualized yearly enrolment content upgrade recurring for the last 12 years with a volume of over 3 weeks of blended content for a leading global professional services company.

100

Ongoing media and upgrades for multi-device use for a leading educational technology company. NIIT has migrated 100 hours of media to date in 4 months.

3

Migrating 3 curricula from legacy Flash based courses to non-Flash Storyline 3 based courses for a leading insurance company.

The above are just a few examples of the extensive migration work that we have completed so far. If you are on the cusp of starting to plan your migration, our advice would be to start as soon as possible. Converting your curriculum now will also give you the added advantage of modernizing your design to a modality which works well with the adaptive and responsive needs of today's digital content.



To schedule an initial consultation on content migration,
visit us at <https://info.niit.com/migration>.



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