



App Integration

The digital signage software **FrontFace for Public Displays** and the interactive kiosk software **FrontFace for Touch Kiosks** can be extended by plugins that add additional functionality. This way you can e.g. display special content types, integrate external data sources or systems and add entirely new features to the software.

Description:

The *App Integration Plugin* allows you to integrate Windows applications (Win32 EXE files) into your *FrontFace for Public Displays* playlists. The plugin itself only shows an empty, black screen but launches a Windows application with optional command line arguments. When the playlist page has finished, the previously started application is closed automatically. This way, you can integrate custom applications into your playlists (e.g. dashboard apps, custom video players like VLC or even applications like Excel or PowerPoint). Please note that due to the fact that a 3rd party application is started, this may have negative impact on the stability of your system in case the launched application behaves unexpectedly or even crashes.

Installation:

Please refer to the user manual of *FrontFace for Public Displays* on detailed information on how to install a plugin.

Notice: If you have previously downloaded and installed the trial version of the plugin, you have to install the full version over the existing trial version in order to get the full version running. The procedure is exactly the same as for installing a new plugin. If you already used the trial version of plugin in your project, all settings will remain after installing the full version!

Setup and Usage:

Create a new playlist page and then add a "Plugin" as content and select "App Integration" from the list. The settings dialog of the plugin lets you configure the application that is supposed to be launched by the plugin at runtime:

App Path (EXE):

Enter the path to the EXE file that is supposed to be launched. Please note that the path has to exist locally on all player PCs on which you want to play this playlist. If you also want to run the playlist in the preview window of the *Display Assistant*, you also have to make sure that the EXE also exists on your local PC at the same path.

Command Line Arguments:

You can supply additional command line arguments that will be passed to the application when it is started. The following placeholders may be used in the command line arguments in order to allow the application to position on the screen where the actual plugin is expected: %X%, %Y%, %HEIGHT% and

`%WIDTH%`. Please keep in mind that the application explicitly needs to support positioning and resizing by command line switches (like e.g. VLC Player does) in order to be able to use these placeholders. You can also use the placeholder `%STATICDIR%` to reference the static folder of your project ("`Media\Static`"). That way, you can integrate custom files in your project that are required by the application.

Padding:

By setting this value, you can add a padding to the display area of the plugin. Since the plugin itself does not show anything at all, this has only effect on the position and size values that can be supplied in the command line.

Exit Mode:

Once the playlist page with the *App Integration Plugin* has finished, the app is closed again automatically. This can be done in two different flavors that you can choose from:

- *Normal (Close App)*: This will ask the app to close (same as clicking on the red [X] button in the title bar of the application's main window). If the application refuses to close or shows a dialog box (e.g. a save or conformation dialog), the app will not be closed and will remain running in the background. This may cause serious problems and will have impact on the stability of your system. Please make sure that your application always closes without any problems if you are using this exit mode.
- *Hard (Kill App)*: This will instantly terminate the process of your app (same as killing a process in the Windows task manager). In 99% of all cases this will close the app successfully. But some applications may recognize that they have been closed unexpectedly the last time and may show a warning message on the next start. E.g. Microsoft Office applications tend to detect these unexpected closing events and will ask the user to restore the previously opened file. This may not be desired in most cases. Either disable this feature in the application you are using or use the "Normal" exit mode.

Start Application Maximized:

You can choose if you want the application to be started in maximized window mode or in normal window mode.

Working Directory:

A working directory (start directory) can be specified optionally for the application.

Example Setups:

Here are two typical setups for the use of the *App Integration Plugin*:

Playing Videos/Streams/Content with VLC (VideoLAN):

You can use VLC by VideoLAN to embed video content as overlay into your playlist pages. This may be desired if you want to display certain video content that is otherwise not be compatible with the video/streaming features supported by *FrontFace* directly (e.g. special types of Web Cams, etc.).

Due to a bug in VLC command line processing, you have to install version 2.0.8. Otherwise the placement of the window (unless you want to use full screen mode anyway) will not work as expected. You can download this version of VLC here: http://www.vlc.de/vlc_archiv.php

Please specify the path to the "VLC.exe" file as "App Path (EXE)" in the settings dialog of the plugin. As command line, please enter the following:

```
-X -I dummy --dummy-quiet --width=%WIDTH% --height=%HEIGHT% --video-x=%X% -  
-video-y=%Y% --no-video-deco --no-embedded-video --video-on-top --no-video-  
title-show "%STATICDIR%\videofilename.mp4"
```

Replace "videofilename.mp4" with the name or the URL of your video file. The file itself needs to be copied into the "\Media\Static" folder of your project. If a folder named "\Static" should not exist inside the "\Media\" folder of your project, please create it first.

When the playlist page with your plugin is shown, it will launch VLC in a borderless mode and place the video at the same position on the playlist page, where the *App Integration Plugin* is located. It is also possible to run multiple instances of the plugin on one playlist page to show multiple videos on the same playlist page using this technique.

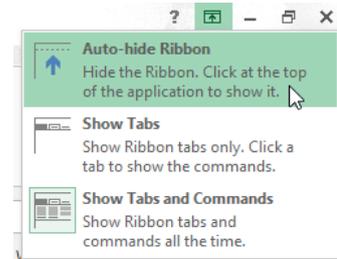
Displaying Excel Spreadsheets with Microsoft Excel:

In order to display Excel files, you have to enter the path to "Excel.exe" as "App Path (EXE)". As command line arguments, enter the path to your Excel file in quotation marks and add the command line switch /e to prevent the Excel splash screen from appearing while Excel loads, as well as /r to make Excel load the file read-only:

```
/e /r "c:\path\to\your\excel file.xlsx"
```

For a full list of all Excel command line switches, please see: <https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Command-line-switches-for-Excel-321cf55a-ace4-40b3-9082-53bd4bc10725>

Furthermore, you should prepare the player PC by starting Excel for one time manually and set the ribbon user interface to auto-hide. So when Excel is then started automatically by the plugin, only the actual spreadsheet (content) appears and not the full ribbon user interface and the window title bar.



Help and Support:

If you need help or technical support when using this plugin or the *FrontFace* software you can contact our support. For more information, please visit: <http://www.mirabyte.com/en/support/>