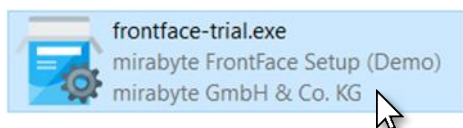# Displaying Calendar Data with FrontFace: How to bring appointments, schedules and room occupancy plans to your screen!

Whether current appointments, room occupancy plans or schedules for events — displaying calendar data on digital signage screens is a typical and frequently needed requirement. In this quick start tutorial, we will show you from scratch how to easily bring your calendar data to your large screen or TV with the Digital Signage & Kiosk software *FrontFace*! In addition to Excel spreadsheets, the supported calendar data sources include Microsoft Exchange Server (Outlook), Exchange Online (Office 365), SharePoint, Lotus Domino (Notes) and iCalendar (ICS).
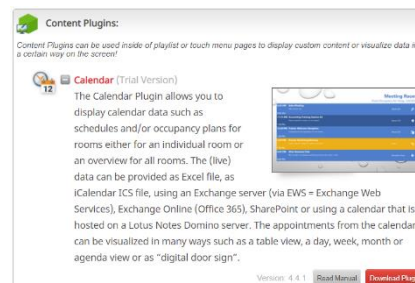
1 Downloading and Installing *FrontFace*:

First, please visit the *FrontFace* product website https://www.mirabyte.com/en/frontface/ and click on the **⬇ Download** button to download the trial version (or the full version in case you have a license). After downloading, run the installation package `frontface-trial.exe` on your workstation PC and select the installation option *"Full Installation (incl. FrontFace Assistant)."*

## 2 Downloading the Calendar Plugin for *FrontFace*:

Displaying calendar data is by default not an integrated feature of *FrontFace*. However, *FrontFace* supports so-called "Plugins" that can be used to easily add additional functions, if needed. Thus, the functionality for displaying appointments and calendar data is also available as a plugin, which you first must download separately and then install. To do this, please go back to the web page mentioned in step 1 and click on the **Download Plugin** button at the bottom of the page below *"Content Plugins"* next to the entry *"Calendar"* in order to download the Calendar plugin. Save the downloaded file `Calendar.ffapx` at a suitable location on your PC (e.g. at *"Downloads"*).

If you have purchased the full version of the Calendar plugin, please download the full version instead from the customer account section on the mirabyte home page.

3 Creating a Project and Installing the Calendar Plugin:

Start the "*FrontFace Assistant*" from the Windows start menu and click on *"New Project"* on the home page of the application:
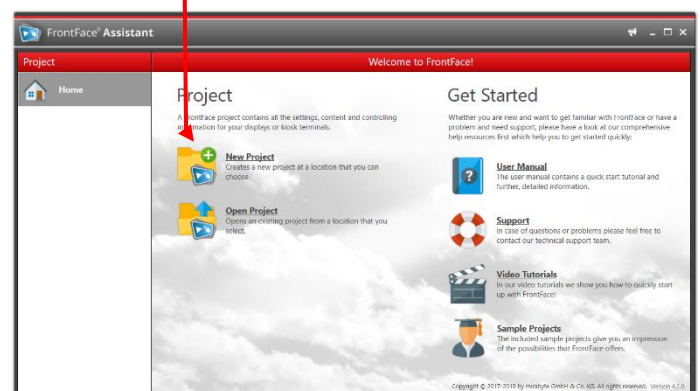
Enter a name for the new project (e.g. "Calendar Display") and then select a suitable location on your hard disk where you wish to store the project, such as *"Documents."* As project type you should select *"Digital Signage."*

Once the project has been created, click on *"Contents"* in the main menu of the *FrontFace Assistant*. There, an empty playlist has already been created. Now add a page to that playlist by clicking the "+" button ● above the list of pages:
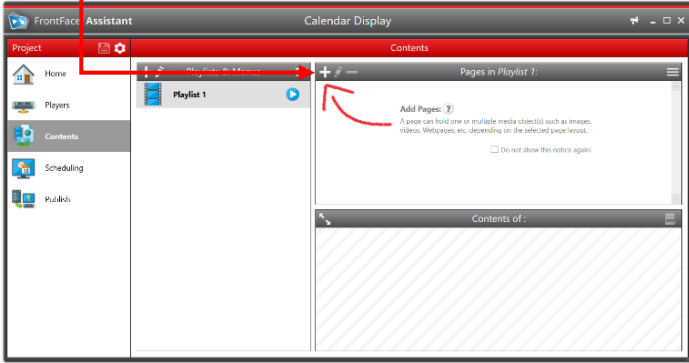

In order to make the presentation of the calendar data a little more appealing, please select the layout *"Overlay + Border"* as page layout (you will have to scroll down a bit in the drop-down list of available layouts!).
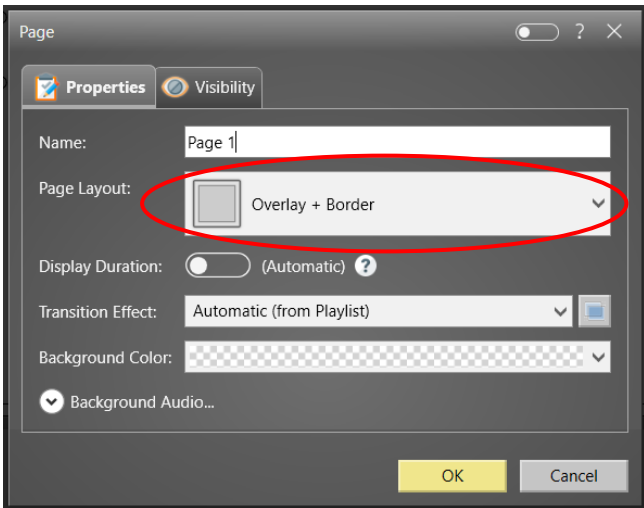

After confirming with *"OK,"* the new page has been added to your playlist.

In the *"Contents of..."* area, you can now see that the layout of the page consists of two containers, one for a wallpaper picture in the background ● and another one, a little smaller, in the foreground ● :
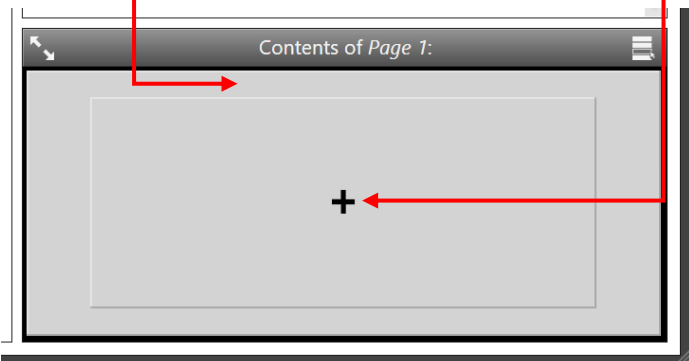
First, click on the background container, and select the *"Image"* media object. Next, select a JPEG or PNG image from your hard drive that will serve as the wallpaper for the calendar view. After you have selected the image file, change the *"Stretching"* option to *"Uniform to Fill"* and confirm with *"OK."*

Next, click on the container in the foreground of the page and select *"Plugin"* as media object type. The dialog with the available plugins is initially empty. You must first install the previously downloaded Calendar plugin by selecting the `Calendar.ffapx` file ● for installation. Then you can select the *"Calendar"* plugin ● :
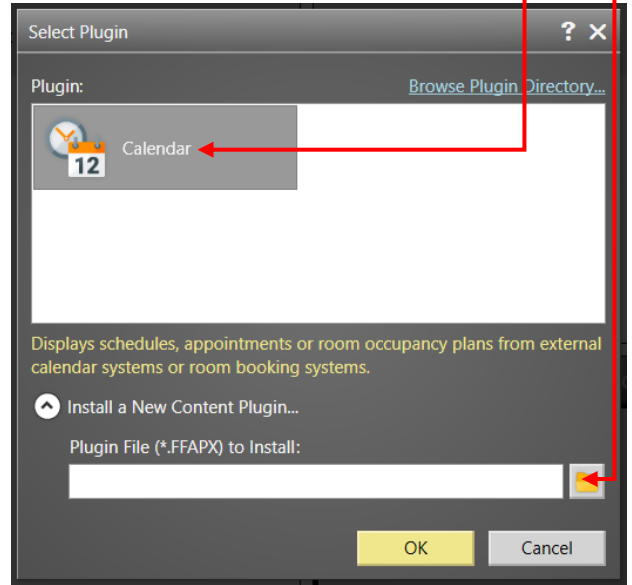
4 Configuring the Calendar Plugin:

In order for the Calendar plugin to be able to display any data, you must specify where you want to query the data from (data source). In addition, you must also specify the visual presentation (layout, colors, font, etc.).

The available data source types include *Excel*, *Microsoft Exchange Server (Outlook)*, *Office 365/Exchange Online*, *Lotus Domino (Notes)*, and *iCalendar/ICS* (e.g., *Google Calendar*). For detailed information about the configuration of the individual data source types, please refer to the manual that comes with the plugin. You can easily open this by clicking on the *"Manual"* link in the settings dialog of the plugin or alternatively, download it directly from the *FrontFace* website.
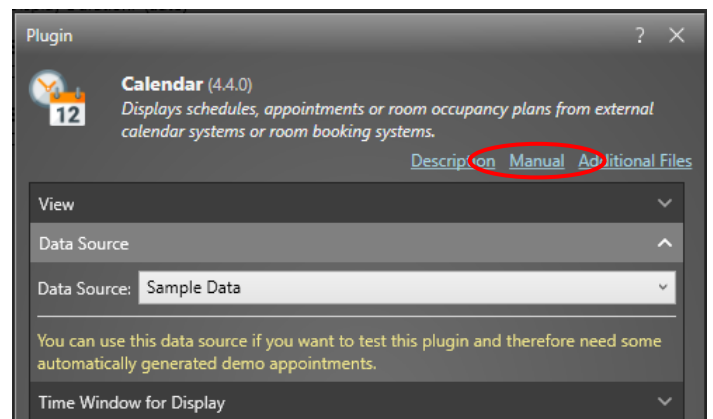
For the sake of simplicity, we will use the built-in example *"Sample Data"* data source for this example. This data source automatically

creates some random "appointments" for the current day so you can get started right away without having to provide a real data source first.

The settings dialog of the Calendar plugin is divided into several sections: *View, Data Source, Time Window for Display, Design* and *General*.

In the *"Data Source"* section the data source from which the calendar data is retrieved is selected and configured. The configuration settings which are available depend on the selected data source type. In the case of the *"Sample Data"* data source, there are no further settings available.

In the *"Time Window for Display"* section either an absolute time window with a fixed start and end date/time or a "rolling" time window, which is based on the current point in time is defined. Additionally, you can choose whether expired appointments (i.e., those that are in the past) are being displayed or not.

In the *"Design"* section the visual appearance is configured. This covers things like the font, text and background colors, or margins.

In the *"General"* section, you can specify an optional heading or determine whether additional text should be displayed next to the title of each appointment. You can also set a text that will be shown in case there are no appointments to display.

However, to specify how the appointments are actually displayed on the screen, a view type needs to be chosen from the *"View"* section:

Here you can choose between **Grid/Table View**, **Calendar View** (day, week, or month or agenda) or the **Single/Door Sign** view. The latter always displays only one (the current) appointment and a preview of the upcoming one and can thus be used as a digital door sign for meeting rooms. Depending on the selected view type there are further, view-specific settings available.
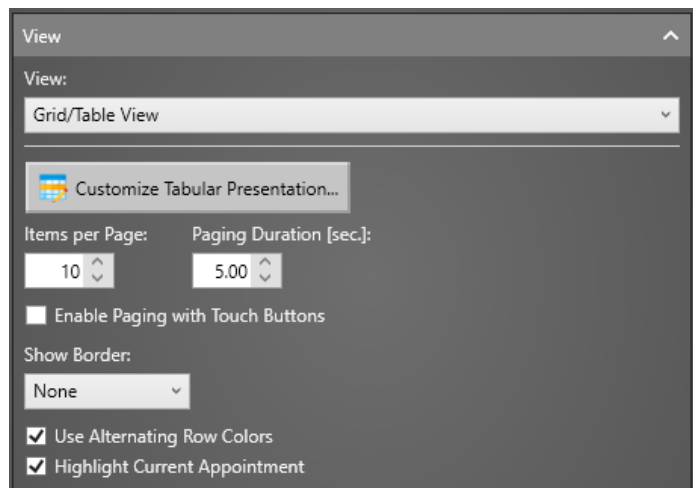
For example, in the table view, you can specify how many appointments (i.e., rows) shall be displayed on a screen page and how long the paging interval should be (this is required if there are more appointments than rows available on a single screen page). The plugin will then "flip" the pages with appointments after expiration of the paging duration). The **"Grid/Table View"** offers the most flexibility for all views, allowing you to freely design the structure of the table that shows the appointment data. To customize the table layout, click on the button .

In the **row designer** you can define the number of columns of the table, as well as the content template of an appointment row. This row template is then used for every appointment that is displayed.
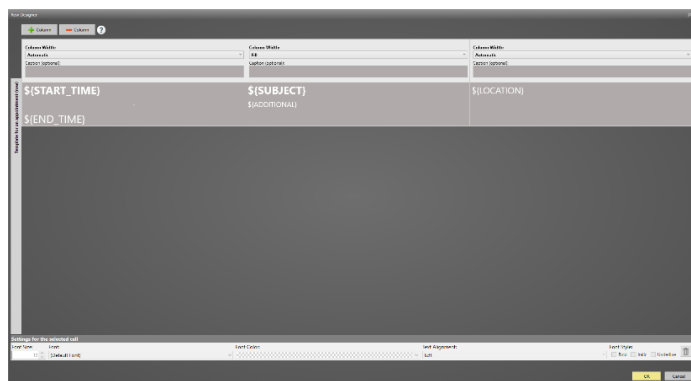
An appointment row internally consists of up to three "layout rows" which are used to arrange text elements and placeholders. For example, you can display the start time of the appointment in the first cell, a static text such as "to" in the cell below and the end time of the appointment underneath.

In each cell of the row designer, you can either enter static text, which is then displayed for each appointment, or you can choose from a set of predefined placeholders, e.g., `${SUBJECT}` for the subject/title of an appointment. By clicking on the ⊡ button in a cell, a drop-down menu will be opened that shows all available placeholders.

You can also add or delete columns using the ＋ Column and － Column buttons. For each column an optional column heading, and the width can be defined.

In addition to text, also images (e.g., logos or photos) and special icons (for wayfinding systems) can be displayed. More information on this and other extended features of the row designer can be found in the manual of the Calendar plugin.

It is a good approach to try out the various options one by one and check the results in the preview (see step 5). This way, you can find the configuration that suits best for you.

5 Checking the Results in Preview Mode:

After you have configured the Calendar plugin, close the settings dialog by clicking on *"OK."* To see what your playlist page with the plugin will look like later on the screen, click on the preview button of the playlist or the page: ▶ After a few seconds, the preview window appears, and you can see the result:
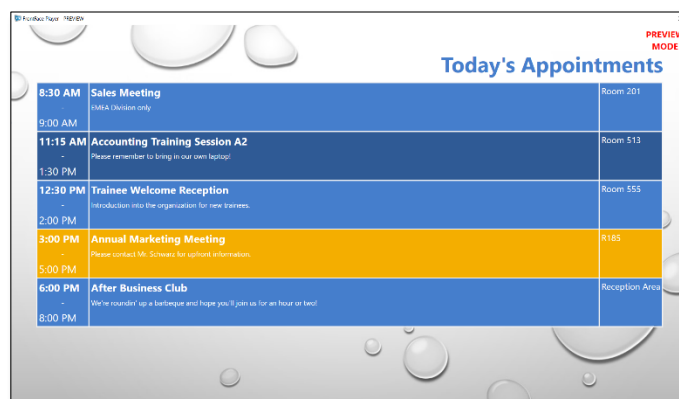
To exit the preview, click the close button (×) of the preview window or press the ESC button on the keyboard.

To open the settings dialog of the Calendar plugin once again and make changes to the current configuration, just click on the container with the plugin ● in the *"Contents of Page 1"* area below the list of pages:
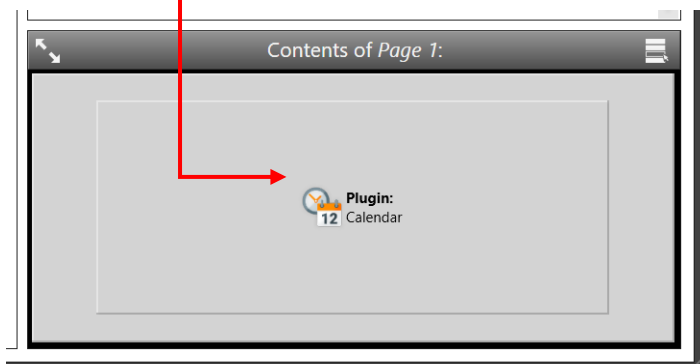
6 What's next?

You have now successfully created a playlist with a page and integrated the Calendar plugin on it. The next step is to use a dedicated, real, data source instead of the sample data source. Please refer to the Calendar plugin manual for details for the required settings and prerequisites.

To display the calendar data on a real large screen or TV, you must install the *FrontFace Player App* on the player PC connected to the screen. Then you can add this PC in the *FrontFace Assistant* in the *"Player"* section and transfer the contents and settings to the player by clicking on *"Publish."* For information on how to operate and install *FrontFace*, please refer to the *FrontFace* user manual and the video tutorials available at https://www.mirabyte.com/go/frontface/.

If you have any technical questions about *FrontFace*, the featured Calendar plugin or this tutorial, please feel free to contact our support. Just visit our homepage to find out how to contact us: http://www.mirabyte.com/en/support/