INTERACTIVE PDF (*i*PDF) - AN ALTERNATIVE TO LEVEL - 1 COURSES

An effective and powerful tool to enhance the training of L1 or fundamental blocs of learning.

In the early 90s, Adobe developed the PDF (Portable Document Format) tool to faciliate sharing of data over electronic mediums easily. It is a revolutionary step.

What makes PDF a great tool is its framework to store information in container blocs. A PDF document is laden with layers of containers in which different programs can be embedded.

Those engaged with eLearning of L&D (learning and development) services, especially the designers and developers, are aware that bloc designs/architecture helps creating custom IDs, styling, reusability, and to make the layout responsive.

As a result, the practice was adopted for today's HTML5 framework launched in 2014 on the recommendation of W3C (World Web Consortium). Thus, it can be said that a PDF document incorporates the specifications of WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) as default.

So, can a PDF be used as an interactive learning tool?

WHAT IS AN
INTERACTIVE PDF?

An interactive PDF is a document that incorporates all kinds of rich media content such as, hyperlinks, audio and video files, images, GIF animations, clickable buttons, fillable forms and similar.

A static PDF document can be transformed into an interactive courseware, popularly called as *i*PDF depending on its content.

One can add/create different types of interactive elements to the *i*PDF like:

- menus
- popups
- tooltips
- click tabs
- dropdown
- type-in text boxes
- GIFs and animation
- branched navigations
- knowledge checks with generic feedback
- short demonstrative or To-Do videos
- podcasts or audio
- hyperlinks
- external resources

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LIMITATIONS/CHALLENGES OF
INTERACTIVE PDF

– Restrict content optimization

Typically the architecture of iPDF stores contents inside containers, therefore, the algorithms of a search engines or the Learning Managment System (LMS) fails to recognise or track them.

– Uses the obsolete Flash elements

Typically Flash application is used to create the interactive buttons, animations, quizlets in *i*PDF. In December 2020, Adobe scrapped the tool as a result all operating systems (whether of mobile or web) no more supports Flash elements or programs.

– Syncing invalid

Typically, e-learning courses include audio narration synced with the animation timeline. Since, animations are built using the Flash tool it is not supported by most platforms.

User subscribe/register to Adobe or to a third-party tool in search of an application that could sync the animation to the audio narration. It's complicated, costly, and time-consuming process—impractical.

EXCELSOFT TECHNOLOGIES PVT. LIMITED

Incorporated in the year 2000, Excelsoft designs E-learning solutions based on a pedagogical approach towards content design and complies to industry standards in its technology implementations.

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WHAT MAKES OUR *i*PDFs UNIQUE?

Our design team has developed a solution to address the shortcomings of Interactive PDF in our products.

a. Use <JavaScript> and Node.js to offer a hermetic environment to each information bloc.

b. Use metatags, XML, and in-page links to make the containers identifiable and optimised to search engines and LMS.

c. Use SARAS® Test and Assessment Engine instead of the Flash program for the quizzes and knowledge checks.

d. Use the screen reader tool and add subtitles to the animations and video content to sync audio with the text.

e. Convert the Flash-based animations into MPEG.

In addition, we ensure that appropriate instructional principles (Bloom, Gagne, or Merill) have been applied to the interactivities, content structuring, and assessment (offline or online).

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Interactive PDF is an effective approach for L1 or fundamental topics such as new employee orientation, compliance training, product training, technical manuals, and similar.

There are several reasons why an interactive PDF is a practical choice for your training.
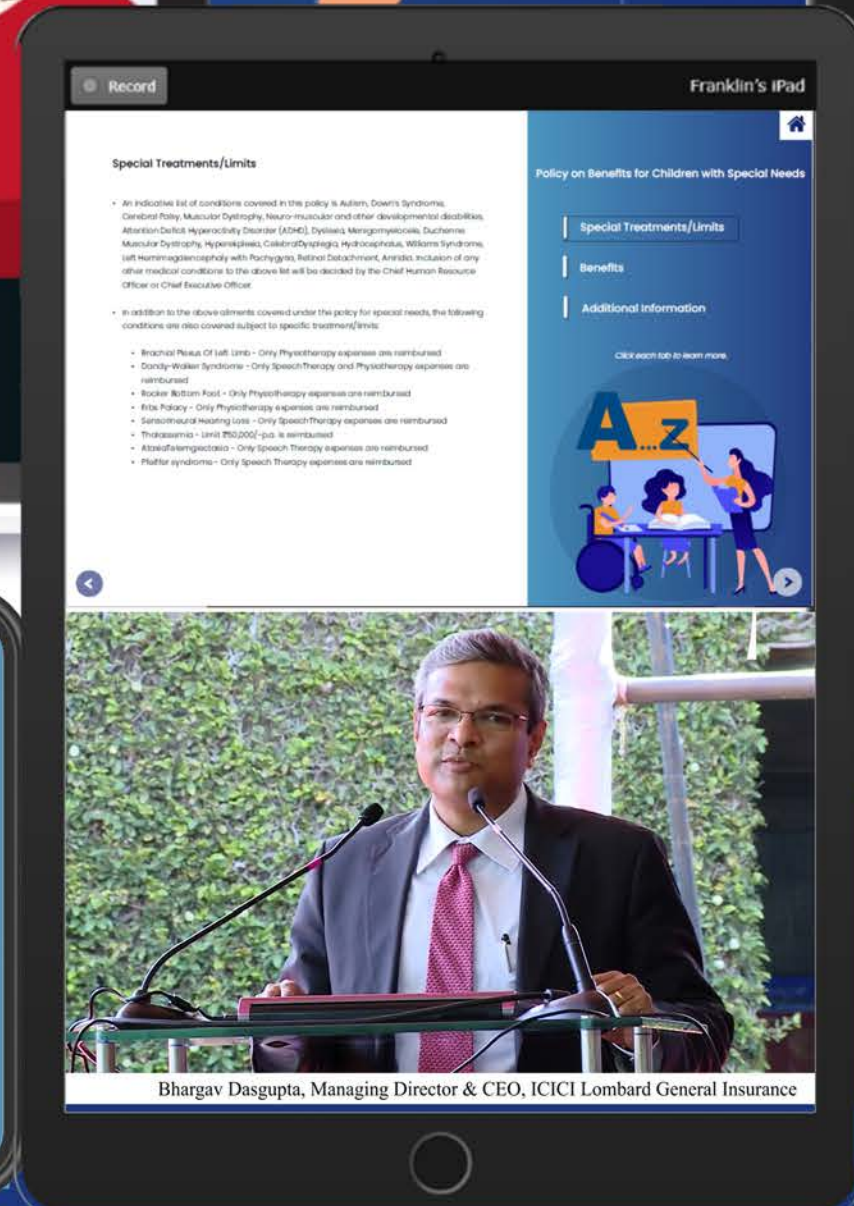
– Reduces LMS or SME dependency
– Follows micro-module framework
– Encourages focussed learning
– Reduces training costs
– Quick turnaround

CONCLUSION

*i*PDF is a dynamic and powerful tool that empowers your L&D team to create effective training programs with longer shelf-life.

Description:

The Interactive PDF designed for new employee orientation training by the ICICI Prudential HR Team. The *i*PDF serves as a part of the employee welcome kit, includes information on the company rules, the IT & Asset, Leave, Attendance, and Emolument policies. It also include links to the company's HRIS and Reimbursement platforms.

Product Features includes:

- SCORM 2004
- In-page navigations
- Videos with embedded audio
- Interactive elements (tabs, mouseover, click image)
- Illustrations
- State-of-art designs