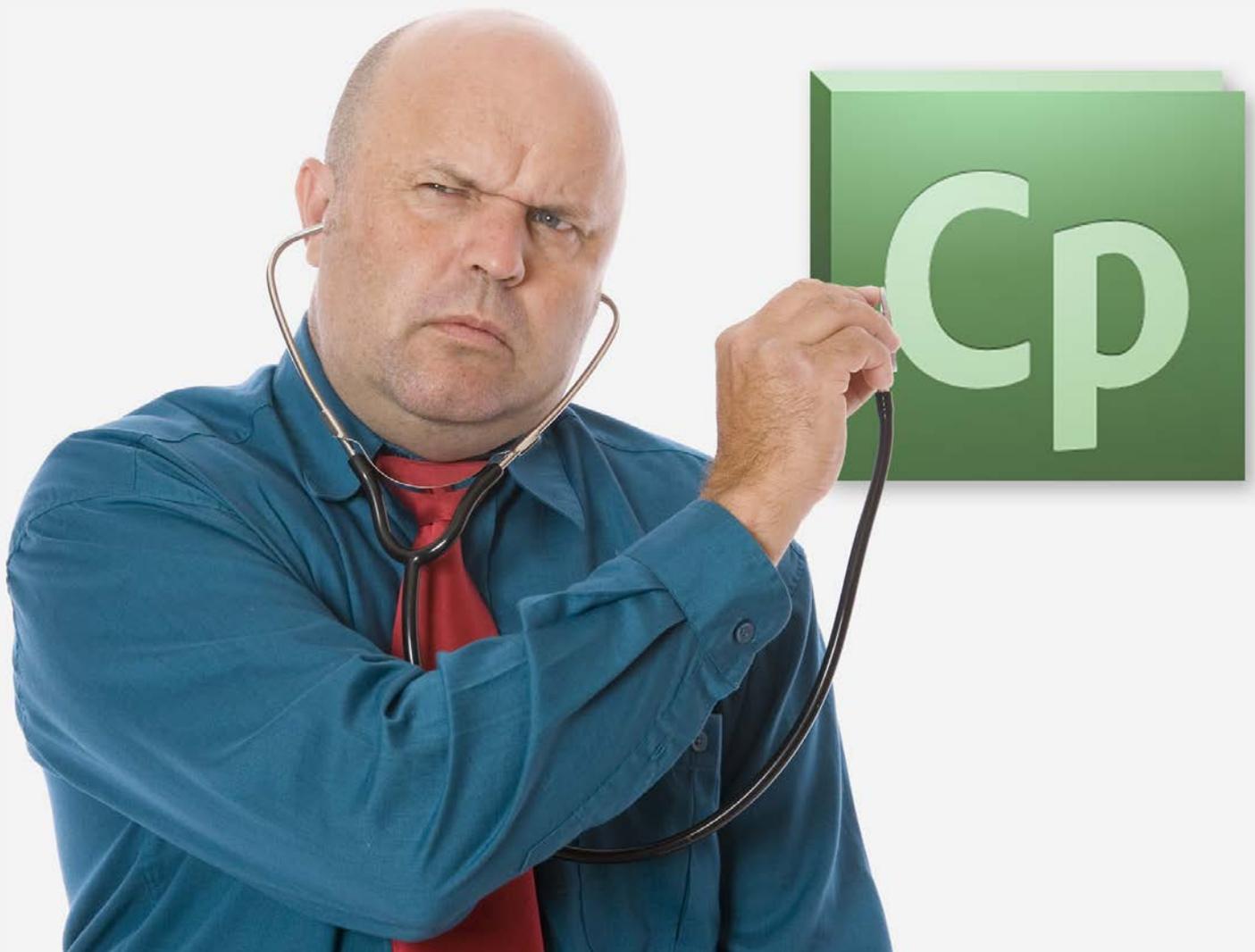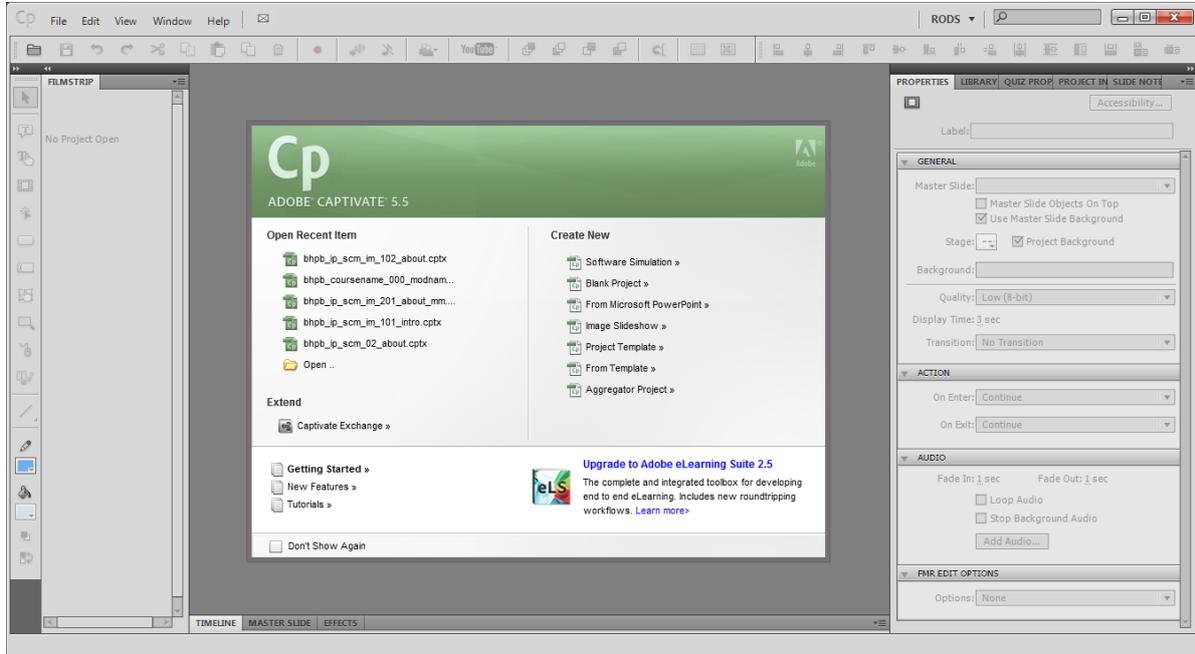**INFO** semantics

Troubleshooting
Adobe Captivate 5 & 5.5

A handy reference guide for professional e-learning developers

Foreword

This e-book provides a ready-reference for professional e-learning authors on how to troubleshoot issues in Adobe Captivate versions 5.0 and 5.5 (herein referred to as Cp 5x).

There are also other versions of this e-book covering Captivate 6x, 7x, etc. I've separated the information this way because later versions of Cp often resolve issues or bugs encountered in earlier versions. Limiting the information in each e-book to a single major version of Cp shortens the e-books and makes it easier to locate solutions in the text. Solutions for issues endemic to all versions of Captivate are repeated in each e-book version.

The suggested solutions also apply to any Captivate versions found in the Adobe E-learning Suite or Adobe Technical Communication Suite.

About the author – Rod Ward

After starting out as a Technical Author developing online help systems for software companies here in Western Australia, I eventually migrated into working as a professional e-learning developer. In the course of my career I've used many different e-learning authoring tools, including every version of Captivate since its release by Macromedia around 2004. Through years of use, I developed an intimate knowledge of how Captivate worked, and why it sometimes *didn't* work as expected.

Later when Cp4 introduced the ability to build custom 'widgets', my company **Infosemantics Pty Ltd** started creating and selling our own range of ActionScript 3 widgets to extend the capabilities of Captivate as an e-learning authoring tool. Building widgets allowed us even greater insight into the inner workings of Captivate. Visit our website and you'll notice the information there is almost entirely directed at e-learning authors using Adobe Captivate.

Questions about this e-book

What is the source of this information?

When I first started using Captivate, I sometimes visited the Adobe Captivate User Forum to search for answers to issues I faced. One day I realised *I actually **knew** the answer* to a user's query and replied with a solution. It felt *so good* to be useful and give back to the community that it got to be something of a habit for me. In fact, I think it's probably closer to the truth to now call it an addiction. Each day, even on most weekends, I review all forum posts and reply if able to contribute a possible solution. As a result, I've contributed around 6,000 posts on the Captivate forum since 2006, making me one of the top three Adobe Captivate MVPs (Most Valued Professional).

One day when I was answering yet another query on the Adobe Captivate forum, I realised I had actually answered this same issue on numerous other occasions, and then it hit me that an e-book containing this type of information would be a very valuable addition to any Captivate developer's toolkit. Considering the many hours (sometimes even days) frustrated developers can spend trying to resolve tricky issues, untold thousands of dollars in productive time is lost this way every year.

For most freelance Captivate authors, the cost of this e-book would represent far less than an hour of their professional billable time. That sounded like a good investment to me, so over the course of several years I gradually compiled this troubleshooting guide.

Can I expect to find every Captivate issue and solution listed here?

Sadly I cannot promise to provide a solution for *every single issue* you might encounter when using your current version of Captivate. However, by my conservative estimate, the information in this e-book should account for more than 80% of such issues. For those issues not covered herein, you should still go online and search the Adobe Captivate User Forum for answers, or submit a question on the forum to see what solutions other users can provide. As new issues emerge and solutions are found, I will add them via updates to the relevant e-book for that Captivate version.

Does this apply to PC only or can MAC users still benefit?

In principle almost all of the advice in this e-book would apply to either PC or MAC. Where I know of any OS differences I have included the information. However, I only work with PCs, so I am unable to verify all solutions on MACs. I rely on MAC users to inform me about any errors or omissions, and I will include that information in future updates.

Over 150 pages! Does the size of this e-book indicate Captivate is a defective app?

Absolutely not! The amount of information provided here should in no way be seen as a *negative* reflection on Captivate as a software application, nor does it imply any fault on the part of Adobe. I can tell you from many years of personal experience as an e-learning professional (using a variety of authoring tools), that troubleshooting is just a normal part of a developer's life.

The reality is that nowadays e-learning courses are usually multi-media projects. Over the years the authoring tools, and what you can create with them, have become progressively more complex. The price of all this extra sophistication is a wider array of potential issues to troubleshoot.

Additionally, you can blame me for the size of this e-book. Good troubleshooters are detail-oriented people. I like to explain the background and underlying causes of issues, not just provide solutions. Sometimes the reasons for Captivate's seemingly bizarre behaviour only becomes clear when you understand some of the history behind specific issues. To my mind, 50 page e-book just wouldn't give enough detail.

What's the best way to use this information?

If you just want to improve your general understanding of Captivate issues, there's nothing to prevent you from just reading the book from beginning to end. In e-learning practice you never know *when* you'll encounter issues, or in *what order*. Throughout this book, issues are grouped under appropriate headings and subheadings, as reflected in the **Table of Contents** (TOC).

Having said that…If you purchased this e-book to keep as a general reference manual in case you one day happen to need a solution for an issue, then my strong recommendation is to at least start by reading the first few sections that deal with **Setting up your PC** environment and choosing your default **Captivate Preferences**. Doing this as soon as possible may help you avoid many potential issues that can cost hours or even days of your time, and blow your deadlines right out of the water.

How can I quickly find solutions for specific issues?

Level 1 and 2 headings in the TOC separate issues into major and minor groups. Most level 3 TOC headings are actually short issue descriptions based on the way forum users tend to describe that issue. If you purchased this e-book because you were desperately seeking a solution for a *specific* issue, then just browse the TOC level 3 headings and click any item to jump directly to that page.

Some issues don't fall neatly into a single category. So, to facilitate locating information about how to deal with common issues, I've deliberately included some repetition. So, for example, in the chapter about setting up **Captivate Preferences** I include information about typical issues these preferences will help to avoid. Then, in later chapters you'll also find information dealing more directly with diagnosing and resolving those same issues.

Can I search for issues by name or subject?

Yes. Since this e-book is published in PDF, you can also easily search the content for words or headings related to your issue. Just look for the search field on the Acrobat toolbar.
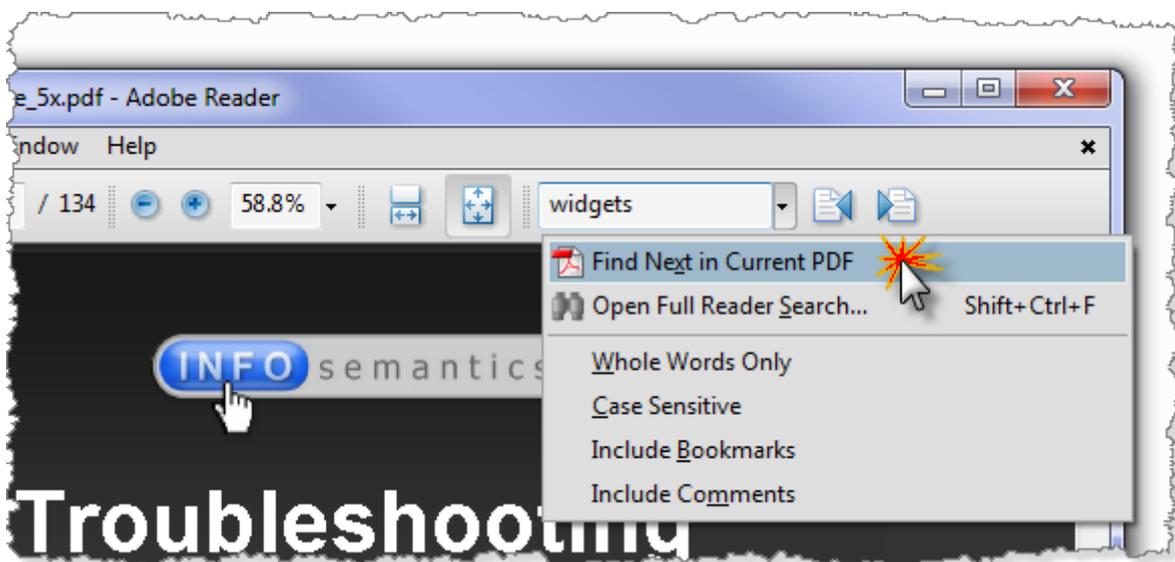
The arrows to the right of the search field will take you to the next and previous occurrences of the keyword in the content.

Will there be free updates for this e-book?

Absolutely! As new issues and solutions are found, I intend to add them to the content and release periodic updates which *existing clients* can download from my website for free.

If you are unsure whether or not you have the latest e-book version, go to the Version Tracking page on the Infosemantics website and compare the release date on your own PDF with the latest version date shown there. To download the latest e-book version at any time, just log into the website with the username and password you set up when you made the original purchase, go to **My Account > Files** and download the book again. The filename will remain exactly the same.

Can I email you about a specific Captivate question I have?

Yes! If you purchased this book, you can ask me any question about the same version of Captivate. The email address is: troubleshootingcp5x@infosemantics.com.au   If I happen to know the answer to your query, and I'm not totally swamped with my own course development work, I'll usually be able to answer within 24-48 hours. But there's just one condition…

...before sending email, please search here for the answer <u>FIRST</u>!

At the very least, perform a quick keyword search in the PDF for your particular issue. Nine times out of ten, there'll be a heading containing the keyword and you'll have an immediate solution.

Can I send feedback about this book?

Please do!   Send email to: troubleshootingcp5x@infosemantics.com.au for the following reasons:

- If you find this book useful, I'd like to hear **why** or **how** it helped you.

- If you find **a mistake or error**, I'd **DEFINITELY** like to know about that so that I can fix it!

- If you think there's **something I missed out** that should be included in future versions.

- If you would like to see **another e-book** about developing e-learning with Adobe Captivate, I'd like to hear your ideas. Aside from this series of books about troubleshooting issues in Captivate, I currently have two other e-books about advanced Captivate techniques in early stages of development. Stay tuned for more information about those!

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General Troubleshooting

This section kicks off the book with the main issues acknowledged by Adobe itself with suggested solutions for those issues. Then we'll look at some general troubleshooting techniques before diving into more specific content.

Update your Captivate 5x version with latest patches

Initial releases for every Captivate version almost always suffer from some serious bugs that are resolved with patches released at a later date. So, the very first thing you should always do is make sure your version of Captivate has all the latest patches.

You can easily find out your Captivate version from **Help > About Adobe Captivate…**
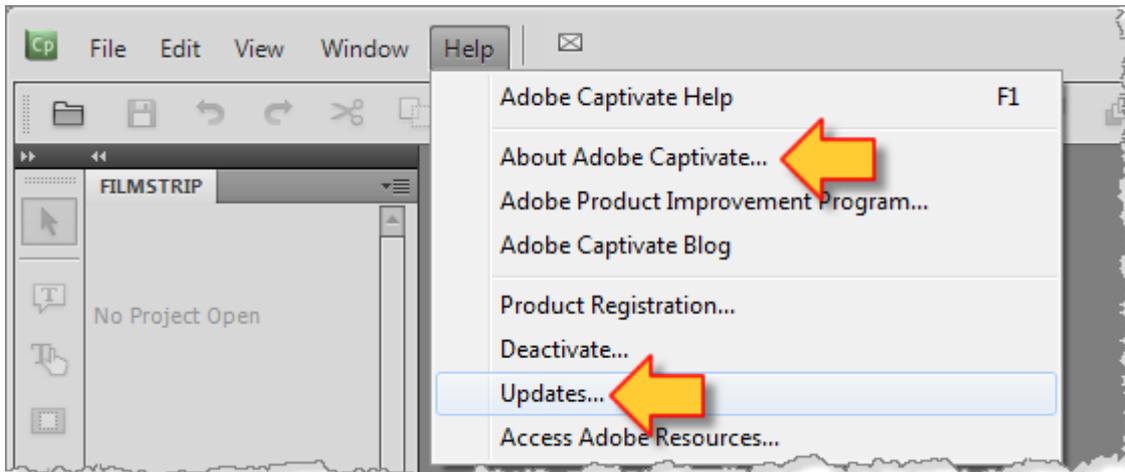
If necessary, use the menu option under **Help > Updates** to launch the **Adobe Application Manager** utility, which will check all Adobe software on your machine to see which ones have available updates.

At this point, the latest **Captivate 5** version is as shown below:
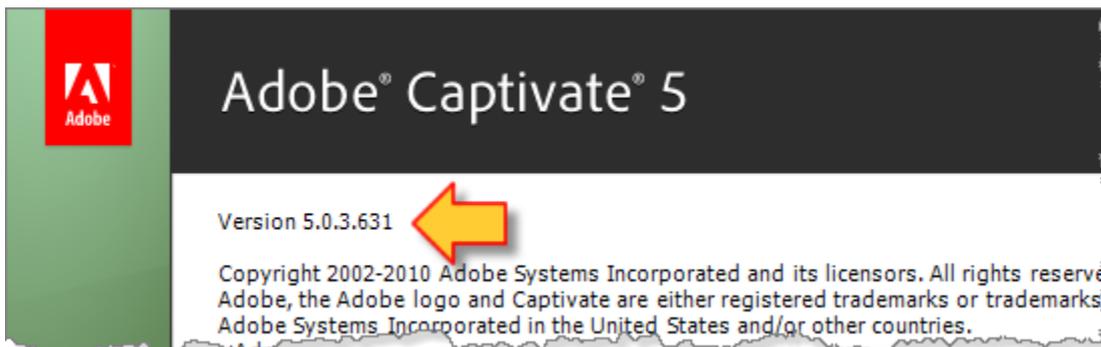
If this is not the version number you see, then go to this Adobe web page and follow the instructions there to update your version so that you can use the **Adobe Application Manager** utility to get updates.

For **Captivate 5.5** the current version is **5.5.0.257**.

Adobe's list of top issues for Captivate 5 and 5.5

Adobe publishes lists of top issues for each version of Captivate, including for Cp5 and 5.5. However, it's easy to miss the statement that these issues are just ones that are "not covered in the Adobe Captivate documentation". The fact that there are a lot more issues out there is one of the reasons I decided to write this book!

You can see Adobe's lists at the following links:

- Top issues in Captivate 5
- Top issues in Captivate 5.5
- Comprehensive list of known issues in Captivate 5/5.5 and ELS 2.0/2.5 -

E-learning suite crashes on installation

Users on non-English OS systems sometimes found E-learning Suite would crash on or after install. This was because the install path name contained upper ASCI or multi-byte characters. The paths must also not contain semi-colon (;) or percentage (%) characters.

Solution: Do not use certain characters in file path names

None was given by Adobe. However, it's likely some users would only be able to run Captivate (or the ELS) if they changed to a different language version that meant the **Program Files** directory name did not include any offending characters to trip up the installation.

Clearing project cache causes Cp to crash

This was mainly due to Cp users clearing the project cache folder by deleting the files using Windows Explorer or the MAC Finder tool…while Captivate was still running.

Solution: Use the Clear Cache button

Use the **Clear Cache** button provided in **Preferences > General**, or else make sure all projects have been saved and Captivate has been closed down before using any other method to delete.

Recording screens in WinVista/Win7 causes Cp to crash

This issue occurs if the application being recorded is running in admin mode but Cp is running in non-admin mode.

Solution: Run as Administrator

Set up Cp to Run As Administrator.

Cp4 projects do not upgrade cleanly to Cp5

Developers reported many issues when upgrading projects to the new Cp5 format, including quiz questions not shuffling, large variations in text formatting, widgets not working because they were AS2 and Cp5x onward only supports AS3, Quiz Results slides not functioning as expected.

Solution: Remove incompatible components

In most cases the only thing to do was remove the offending quiz questions and Quiz Results slide and rebuild anew in Cp5 format. AS2 widgets must be either removed entirely or replaced with AS3 equivalents.

Aggregator does not accept some Captivate SWFs

In **WinVista** and **Win7**, when attempting to add some Captivate SWFs to an **Aggregator** project, a message would appear claiming the SWFs were "non-captivate".

Solution: Set as trusted location in Flash Global Security

The folder location of the SWFs must be added as a trusted location in Flash Global Security settings.

Unable to report to Acrobat.com

WinVista/Win7 users accessing Captivate content on **Acrobat.com** via **Firefox** or **Safari** web browsers found they could not post results if the project was originally published to **Flash Player 9** format.

Solution: Update FP or IE

Republish the content to Flash Player 10 format or tell users to use Internet Explorer instead.

Timeline disappears when scrolling a long FMR

If the FMR is 5 minutes or more in duration, scrolling the timeline quickly causes it to disappear.

Solution: Scroll sloooooowly

Hold down the scroll and move it slowly. (Yes. That's the suggested workaround from Adobe.) Additionally, you may be able to get it back by "resizing the project negligibly". I would also suggest resetting your **Workspace**, and even rebooting your computer.

Captivate project becomes corrupted

There are any number of reasons why this can happen but the one cited in the Adobe issue list is that of "insufficient hard disk space". You usually get an error message to warn you.

Solution: Move to backup or restore from cache

If you see the error message in question, stop work immediately on your Captivate project and free up hard disk space. It's not stated in the Adobe literature whether you should attempt to save your project first or not. If your project becomes corrupted this way, you're best hope is to have automated backups configured in Preferences, or else use the cache to resurrect it again.

Imported PPT loses audio

Although you have added voiceover audio to a PPT file, when imported into Captivate the narration audio does not get added as slide audio and therefore cannot be edited or timed.

Solution: Add voiceover in Cp instead

Don't add the voiceover in PPT. Import the PPT first and then add the voiceover audio as slide audio in Captivate.

Importing password-protected PPTs causes error

Even if you use the correct password while importing, Captivate refuses and shows you an Adobe Presenter error message…despite the fact that you may not even have Presenter installed!

Solution: Remove passwords from PPT first

Remove the password protection from the PPT before attempting to import it into Captivate.

Editing video or audio in an embedded PPT crashes PPT and Cp

If you try to trim audio or video in a PPT embedded inside a Captivate project you may crash both PPT and Cp.

Solution: None

No solution has been provided.

Variables not displaying at runtime

Captivate doesn't display values of variables if their names contain double-byte characters (e.g. Asian characters).

Solution: Use ASCI

Use only ASCI characters for variable names.

And that's not all…

As you will see from the rest of this book, there are far more issues that Cp5x users may encounter, which is one reason for the number of posts logged daily on the Adobe Captivate Forums.

Easy troubleshooting tips and tricks

In a previous (teenage) life I worked as a technician repairing and servicing domestic electrical appliances. It was there I first learned how to troubleshoot issues. Most of the time it just boils down to eliminating all possible causes until you find the one triggering the issue. It's not rocket science; just a process of elimination. After a while the diagnostic process speeds up because you know most of the common causes and might even know instantly as soon as you hear the telltale *symptoms*.

Some basic troubleshooting tips apply to just about any Captivate issue you need to debug. In the thousands of posts I've logged on the **Adobe Captivate Forum** I often find myself following the same diagnostic process of elimination I used to fix washing machines and refrigerators in my teens. This section gives you a quick apprenticeship in Captivate troubleshooting techniques that *every* Captivate user should know about. These tips cost nothing, in most cases take only seconds or moments to perform, and have saved my bacon more times than I can count.

Start with the most likely causes

Of all the possible causes for an issue, there is usually one that stands out as most likely. Start with this one and work through to the most unlikely ones. Don't waste time exploring things that rarely turn out to be the cause if there are more likely candidates staring you in the face.

Simplify the project to isolate the issue

Very often a user will be unable to debug some baffling issue in a large project…largely because it **IS** a very complex project. The larger the number of slides and components, the harder it becomes to know where the issue might be lurking. If you cut out the complexity, the issue may be easier to discern and thereby become easier to debug. For example, when you publish a project, any hidden slides and their associated objects do not get published in the final output. So a common debugging trick I use is to make a copy of a problematic project (just in case you make unforseen changes to the project file that render it unusable) and then hide or delete half the slides to see if this resolves the issue. If hiding half the slides resolves the issue is resolved, then the cause of the issue was likely to be located somewhere in the hidden half of the project. Then you concentrate on that suspect half of the project and hide or delete half of it again. Using this simple process of elimination you can often narrow the problem down to a specific slide
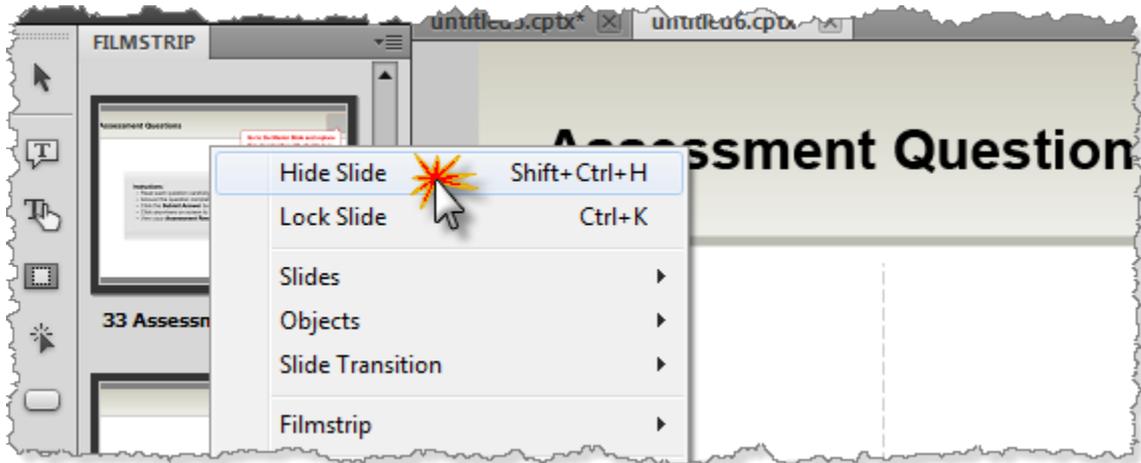
If you can isolate the cause to a given slide, then start deleting objects or just deselecting the **Visibility** setting of objects on that slide to use the same process of elimination. As opposed to hiding an entire slide, setting the **Visibility** of an object to off will still mean that it gets published along with the rest of the project. However, it will be effectively disabled. So this is a way to locate any object or group of objects that might be causing the issue.
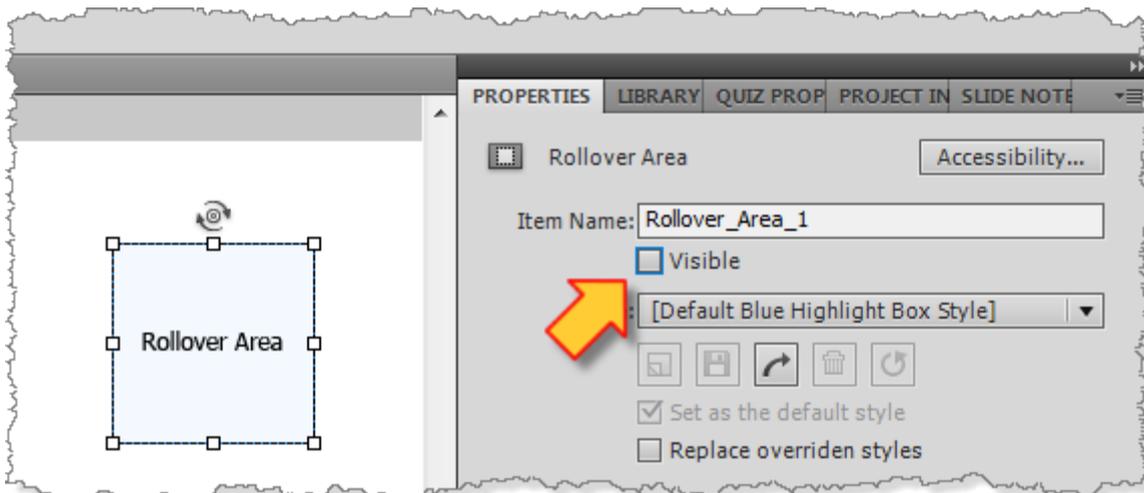
An alternative method of removing an object from a slide for debugging purposes to test whether or not it is causing some issue is just to drag it off into the scrap area outside the slide boundaries. Objects located entirely in the scrap area are not published with the project.
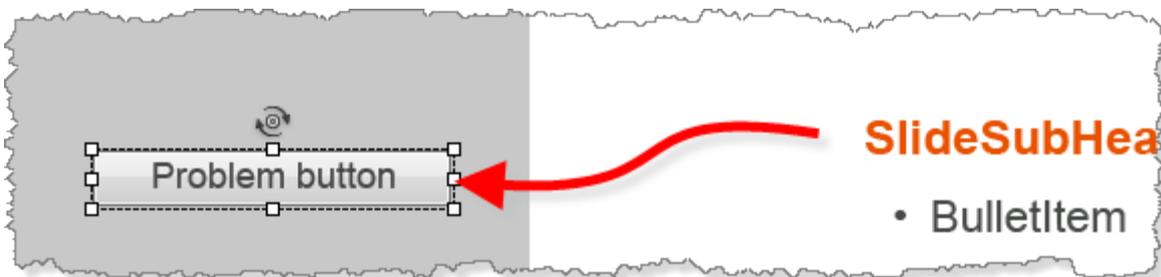
Try to replicate the issue in a new project file

If you've been working on an issue that defies explanation, try creating a brand new Captivate project file and see if you can replicate the issue there. Sometimes you'll find that a new project does NOT suffer the same issue. You can then stop blaming Captivate and start scrutinising the specific project file, which may have become corrupted in some way. If so, it might be a good idea to transfer slides over to a new project file rather than risk further corruption that could result in a project you cannot open or edit.

Copy and paste slides to reset object identifiers

Copying slides from one project to another causes Captivate to rename all copied objects with new unique **Item Names**. These are the unique IDs that Captivate uses to track objects internally. If for any reason your issue is due to duplication of these IDs (which can cause project file corruption) then copying the objects will often resolve it because it forces Captivate to recreate the object references.
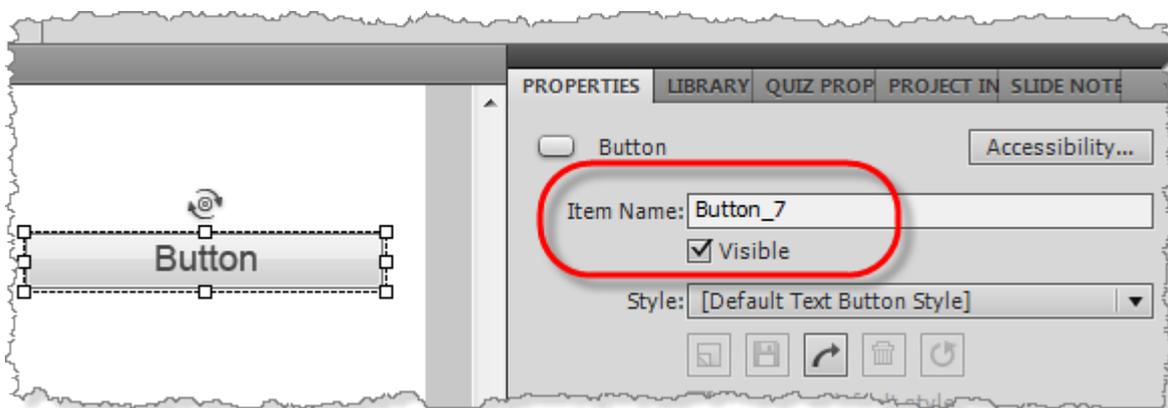
Copying slides from one project to another also strips out any **Advanced Actions** attached to those objects. This can remove another cause of project corruption, though it will also mean you need to recreate your **Advanced Actions** and **User Variables** in the new project file. Sometimes this takes less time than struggling to restore a corrupted project file.

Don't just use Preview to test. Publish completely!

I wish I had a dollar for every question where someone on the forum has been expressing frustration with Captivate because something is not working as expected and it turned out they were hitting **F10** and previewing the next 5 slides, not publishing the entire project.
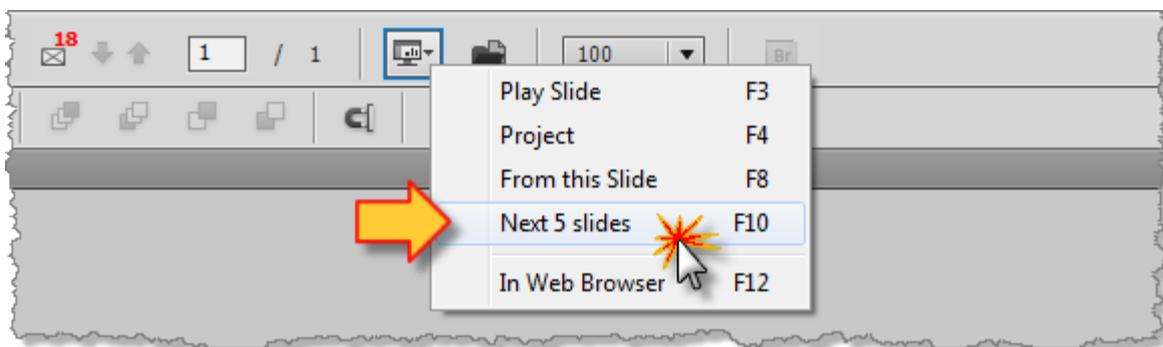
F3 will only play the slide timeline of the slide you are currently viewing. And this won't show you how everything will look at runtime, especially if you have **Effects** on any objects. Some things will ONLY work properly if you publish completely.

For example, click boxes or buttons set to **Jump to Slide** will ONLY work if you publish completely or use **F12** to **Preview In Web Browser**. So if something isn't working, but you're only actually previewing, try publishing out completely.
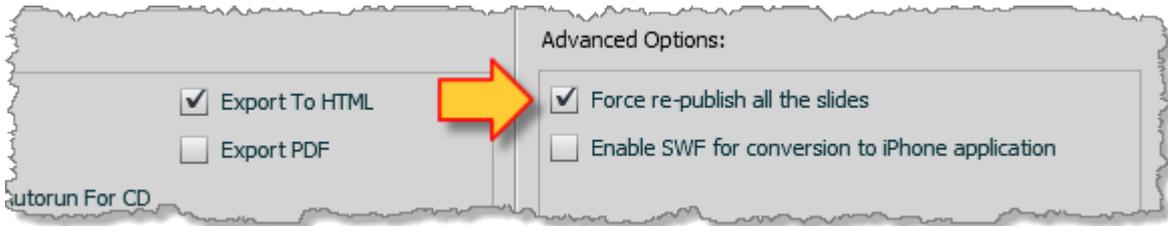
Use the Force Republish Option

Remember how we mentioned Captivate now has a Project Cache and you need to clean it out from time to time? Well, Adobe also uses this cache to speed up publishing times for Cp projects. Cp5 added a new check box on the **Publish** dialog to **Force re-publish all the slides**.


By default this box is NOT checked, which means Captivate only republishes slides that have been changed in some way and re-uses previously cached publish files for all other slides. This does effectively speed up publishing times significantly. However, it can occasionally mean some changes don't get detected, which can cause some things to stop working. So, ticking this box on the **Publish** dialog forces Captivate to republish all slides regardless of whether or not they were changed.

Another issue area in Captivate where force republish can work wonders is for 'ghost lines' that can sometimes appear in screen-captured output. This has been a long-standing problem in Cp for several versions, but many users find that just ticking this box and forcing Cp to republish all slides in the project can work wonders at removing those annoying lines. (Turning off all compression options also helps too.) Unfortunately, the setting doesn't 'stick', so you need to remember to do it occasionally. You should always use force republish for the final publish of any output.

Clear out your project cache

Captivate 5 wasn't just a normal update from Cp4. Under the hood it was totally rebuilt from the ground up to rely a lot more on XML technologies. Adobe added an **Adobe Captivate Cached Projects** folder inside the user's **My Documents** folder. The cache maintains separate folders for each Captivate project currently being edited, and inside these folders are zillions of small files that control every aspect of every object in the project. This cache folder can eventually accumulate several gigabytes of files and cause Captivate to become unstable. Adobe recommends you clear your cache after completing each project and before you begin the next one.
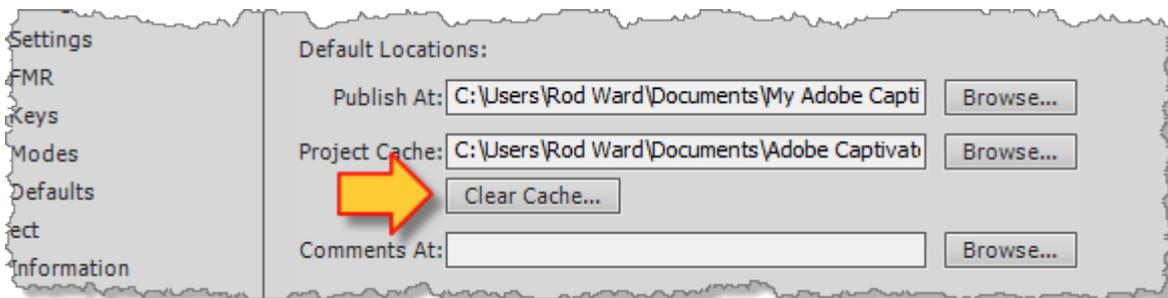
In a later section of this document we outline a number of precautionary steps you can take to set up your Captivate working environment and thereby avoid many common issues. One of these steps involves changing the default locations of your Project Cache folder. You are well-advised to take this action.

> **WARNING!**
> *Never use Windows Explorer or the MAC Finder tool to delete the files in the cache folder while Captivate is open or you may crash the program. The recommended method is to use the **Clear Cache** button under **Edit > Preferences > General** section.*

Reset the Captivate preferences folder

And last but not least, one of the most common 'fixes' for a wide array of issues in Cp5x versions entails renaming or deleting a specific hidden folder buried deep within your user profile. This folder happens to be the one that stores all of the data relevant to the options you select under **Preferences** and **Workspaces** inside Captivate. Unfortunately, Captivate's preference data seems to be easily corrupted, leading to a wide variety of issues mentioned later in this text.

> **The Preferences folder is not named Preferences!**
> *The Captivate preferences folder is not that easy to find on your computer because files in your user profile are hidden by default. And even when you DO find it, it's not actually named 'Preferences' at all, but instead is named after the installed version of Captivate. This naming irregularity confuses the heck out of newbie Captivate users directed to kill this folder in the hope of resolving some annoying issue. Typically they go looking for a folder specifically named 'Preferences' and cannot find it. Frustration quickly ensues.*

To find the elusive **Preferences** folder, here's what you need to do:

1. *Show all hidden files and folders*

   Files in your PC user profile are normally hidden from view to prevent you from inadvertently deleting something essential, thus rendering you incapable of logging into your own computer. So, in order to locate your Captivate Preferences folder you need to make a change to default system settings and show these hidden files or folders. If your PC is not already set up this way, we cover this step in more detail later in this document in the chapter on setting up your computer to work with Captivate.

2. *Close down Captivate*

   You cannot rename or delete the preferences folder while Captivate is currently open. So, close down Captivate before performing the next steps.

3. *Navigate to the Preferences folder in your user profile*

   Your user profile path to the preferences folder will vary depending on your specific computer operating system. (In paths shown below for Cp5.5, replace [user] with your own profile name.)

   ▪ Windows XP:

      C:\Documents and Settings\[user]\Local Settings\Application Data\Adobe**Captivate 5.5**

   ▪ Windows Vista / Windows 7:

      C:\Users\[user]\AppData\Local\Adobe**Adobe Captivate 5.5**

   ▪ Apple MAC:

      /Users/[user]/Library/Preferences/**Adobe Captivate 5.5**

4. *Rename or delete the preferences folder*

   As mentioned above, the preferences folder is NOT named 'preferences'. In the example paths above for Cp5.5, the **Adobe Captivate 5.5** folder shown IS the preferences folder. Once you've found that folder, all you need to do now is delete it. Alternatively, if you're one of those

commendably cautious people that never feels right about deleting things, just rename the folder to something else (e.g. 1234).

What happens next is that when you re-launch Captivate again it will notice the missing preferences folder and create a nice fresh (uncorrupted) new one for you. If your issue was due to corrupted preferences, then it should now be resolved. (If it's not resolved, at least you're one step closer to finding the real reason.)

However, please be aware that killing the preferences file, as described above, will mean you lose any customizations you may have made to preferences or workspaces when Captivate defaults back to original installation settings. But that's usually a small price to pay for getting back a fully functional working app that enables you to meet that looming deadline, right?

Captivate 6/7 users can do it quicker!

*As of Captivate 6 there is actually an easier way to reset preferences because Adobe has now kindly added a special **CleanPreferencesWin.bat** file located in a new **utils** directory found inside the Captivate install folder under **Program Files**. So Cp6 or Cp7 users can now just close Captivate and execute the file at this location to reset their preferences folder in a matter of a second or two. Some even set up a shortcut to it on the desktop!*

Step away from the issue!

If you've been banging your head against some issue for hours without success, walk away from it and do something else for a while. You may have become so close to the issue that you cannot see something obvious. I like to go play my guitar, go for a walk, get up and make a coffee, or go to the toilet. (You'd be amazed how many times I've found inspiration in the 'smallest room of the house'.)

Ask someone else for advice

Again, if you're too close to the issue to see the solution, ask another person unrelated to the problem for their input. Many times they will hit on the reason because they don't share your perspective. If you don't have another developer in your team, log a question on the Adobe Captivate User Forum. In most cases you'll get a reply within hours, sometimes within minutes.

However, if you DO expect someone else to help you, please note the following suggestion:

Get or supply accurate information about all aspects of the issue

Effective troubleshooting is based on accurate information, otherwise it's just guesswork. So if you're trying to debug an issue for another user, *you* need to know everything *they* know about the issue and its context. It's often just some minor detail that reveals the underlying cause or causes.

Conversely, if you ever log an issue on the Captivate forum, it will greatly increase your chances of finding a solution if you provide the helpful people there with some basic information.

Typical things you need to know or provide include:

- Captivate version and whether or not all recent patches or updates have been installed.
- Whether the computer is PC or MAC and what OS version it's running.
- Web browser version (if published content is playing in browser).
- Flash Player version/s installed.
- Playback source (CD-ROM, LAN, local hard drive, LMS).

- If the published folder location is NOT on a web server, whether or not it has been added as a trusted location in Flash Global Security. (This accounts for a huge number of issues.)

- If content is delivered from an LMS, which LMS, LMS version.

- If using an LMS, which integration technology (AICC, SCORM, or Tin Can) and version.

People often post questions on the Captivate forum without any of this information. The more information supplied, the more likely someone can help resolve your issue.