

Microsoft Releases HTML5 Video Player Framework

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The following [tweet](#) by [Mike Downey](#) caught my eye this morning. He announced that Microsoft have released [Player Framework](#), which in their words is 'an open source video player framework for HTML5, Silverlight, Windows Phone and other application platforms'. Upon closer inspection it is the former Silverlight Media Framework, shifted towards HTML5.

It's interesting to note that this Player does not use Flash as a fallback technology, but enables developers instead to use Silverlight, or indeed choose from a variety of combinations such as HTML5 only (video tag), Silverlight only, fallback to HTML5 or fallback to Silverlight.

Whilst the player itself looks as one would expect, offering features such as mute, poster frame and full screen mode it also claims to add support for plugin models, advertising standards support, W3C timed text (TTML) for captions amongst other things.

What the demo also shows is the effort involved in providing a consistent cross platform experience when using the video tag. I'm not sure why, but when I tried the demo in FireFox on my Mac the 'Fallback to Silverlight' went straight to Silverlight and did not play the HTML5 content, but the HTML-only tab worked fine. Moreover since Silverlight does not seem to be compatible with the 64bit mode of my browser I saw no content at all, just a prompt to install Silverlight (which I am sure I already had installed - but maybe only a 32bit version?). I guess we can blame this on the beta status of the framework. But why not fall back to Flash anywhere? Is it really just because Flash-hating is a sport these days, or do companies simply not care about providing a good user experience? Is it too much to ask to detect the fact that I cannot run Silverlight and serve up a SWF instead?

Fullscreen mode is another sore point it seems. Whilst the framework claims to support fullscreen mode it really is just a full-browser mode - that's not full screen in my book. I also noticed some audio problems which surfaced in a delay when mute and unmute was selected.

All in all I congratulate Microsoft for putting in some effort and I am sure adding Flash fallback (let's be serious here: it makes a lot more sense than Silverlight fallback) would not be too difficult.

The plugin architecture of the framework also looks very useful, and some of the core features of the player are implemented in that way, with JavaScript providing the glue to it all.

You can check out the [player demos here](#).