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Before using this guide, the Otto software and hardware should already be installed according to the "Start Here" document provided with your system.

Once installed, you can open the Otto Playback Director software by clicking the Otto icon in your Windows "system tray," next to the clock. Alternately, you can start the Otto Playback Director or the other installed components from your system's Programs menu.

<http://www.ottoplayback.com>

<http://www.iristech.com>



Otto Playback Director User's Guide

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The Otto Playback Director is just what it sounds like: a system that lets you direct video playback. You get the video content you want, played back when you want, without you having to be there to make it happen.

Your Otto Playback Director system includes **hardware**: a playback device which can digitally store hundreds of hours of video, and play any of it back to standard analog video with crisp, high-quality output. This is connected to your distribution system, routing system or transmitter to broadcast your content to your viewers. But that hardware stays pretty much behind the scenes: you do all of the actual directing of playback from a standard Windows PC using the friendly Otto Playback Director software.

Usually you want your video playback to occur automatically, on a preset schedule, so the heart of the Otto Playback Director software is your **calendar** of playback events. A day or a week is laid out on your screen. You block out sections of time for different playback, just like you would describe a TV schedule: *what* you will be playing, *when* it starts, and *how long* it will play. Each of these scheduled blocks has its own name so you can quickly see what is scheduled.



Within a scheduled block of time is your **playback content**. This is typically a single program stored in your playback hardware, although it could be several smaller programs which, together, make up your program block. We call this grouping of programs a "play list." The programs within your play list can start back-to-back or at specific times relative to the entire list. You also get to specify your **filler**: the content that is played during any "gaps" in your play list. For example, if you are playing a 57 minute program in a one-hour time slot, the Otto Playback Director will fill in the extra three minutes with the filler, such as a station identifier display. You don't have to worry about precise scheduling accuracy: simply let Otto fill in the blanks!

This is an important point, because your Otto Playback System is *not* able to schedule with down-to-the-second accuracy. Don't try to do it! Instead, you make large blocks of time in your calendar, just like you would publish on a printed schedule, and set up the details of the content that is to play within each block. With the use of filler, Otto makes sure that there is no "dead time" in your video playback.

Although you generally won't use it as often, the Otto Playback Director also allows you to step in and **manually** begin playing something immediately. That "something" can be a program on your playback system or a play list. But if you find a need to divert from your schedule for any reason, you can easily do this.

Those are the essentials of the Otto Playback Director system. There are other management tasks, like recording programs and managing your content, and this manual will describe them all. But the whole point of Otto Playback Director is to manage a full-time video playback system, so that your programming is being displayed, 24 hours a day, with little effort and no hassles.

Working with the Calendar

From the Home screen in the Otto Playback Director software, select the first choice, "Playback Director." This will take you to the calendar: the place where you set up all of your automatic playback.

The larger section of the screen on the right displays your calendar. Tool buttons above the calendar let you choose to view a day, a week or a month, and to display these as a calendar or as a list of steps. (You can only make changes when viewing the calendar for a day or for a week.) The date picker lets you go to a different date. You can scroll up and down through the day, or zoom in for a closer look or zoom out to see more of the day.

The left side of the screen can either be your playback system status (a summary of the system shared with all of the screens in this program) or the **Media Palette**, a list of all the content stored in your playback hardware. The "Media" tool button switches between these choices. When you are adding new playback events, you will want this to be visible.

The calendar shows a box for each scheduled event. The box shows the name of the event and its start and end times. If an event is too small to read, pause your mouse over the box and the full text will appear. A green box indicates an event that repeats, while a tan box indicates a one-time event. Any space with no box is as yet unscheduled space that you can fill with a playback event. During these unscheduled times, the playback system will display the program indicated at the bottom of the calendar as the **default filler**—that is, what to play back when nothing else has specified what to play back.

To **create a new playback event**, drag with your mouse from the start time to the end time. A rectangle appears as you drag; when you release the mouse button, an empty event window appears for you to fill, as described on the next page. You can simply drag any program from the Media Palette into the event window to add it to the event.

As a shortcut, you can simply drag a program from the Media Palette onto an empty area of the calendar, and a new event, sized to fit that program, is created for you in a single step.



You are free to **edit events** in the calendar that have not yet occurred. Simply double-click on the event, and the same event window appears for you to make changes. To **delete** an upcoming event, right-click the event and choose "Delete."

You can print the current calendar view (day, week or month as a calendar or as a list) by clicking the printer tool button above the calendar.

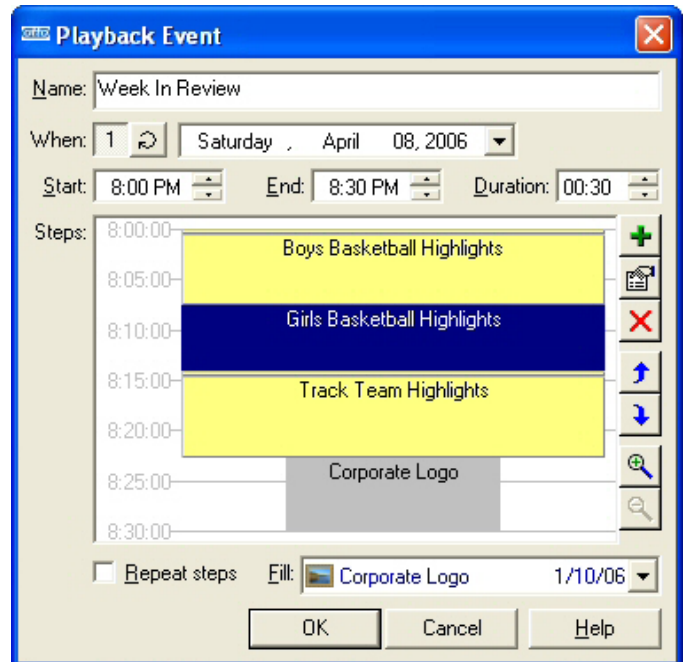


A playback event contains three important pieces of information: its *name* (how it is identified in the calendar), *when it occurs* (day or days; start and end times), and *what is played* (the specific content and the filler). All of this information is able to be edited in the playback event window.

An event either occurs one time (indicated by the “1” button, and followed by the specific date) or repeatedly (indicated by the looping arrow button, and followed by the day(s) of the week to which the event applies). Every event has a start time, an end time and a length. Changing the end time automatically changes the length, while changing the start time or length automatically changes the end time. (Alternately, you can change the start time or length of an event by simply dragging it in the calendar.)

The “steps” section of the playback event window represents the time span of the event, with a box for each program to be played. You can **add programs** to the list of steps by dragging them from the Media Palette. You can delete a program from the steps by clicking on it and then clicking the “X” tool button to the right. You can also change the order of programs within the event, by dragging one with your mouse, or by selecting a program and clicking the “up” or “down” arrow tool buttons.

Typically, programs within an event are intended to play in sequence, back-to-back: when a program finishes, the following program starts immediately without a pause. However, you can force programs to start at specific times by dragging the program, or by editing the step (double-click it), checking the “Start this step at” box and entering a time. If the start time is before another program has finished, it will be interrupted. If the start time is after the previous program has finished, the Otto playback hardware will play filler until the next program is to start.



For any gaps in the event (times when nothing is scheduled to play back), Otto will use the filler. You can choose a particular filler for your event, or Otto can simply use the default filler that applies to any unscheduled time.

The program(s) in your event can be set to repeat. If you check the “repeat steps” box, the list of steps will be repeated after the last program step has finished, until the event is finished. This is indicated in the “steps” display as gray copies of the program(s).

You may make a set of steps in your event that will take longer than the range of the event. This is indicated in the “steps” display by a red range of content. This is not an error; the intended steps will simply be cut off when the event reaches its end time.

The Otto Playback Director does not allow events to overlap. If your changes to the date and time would cause an event to collide with another event, you will not be allowed to save your changes.

Scheduled Events

The Otto Playback Director software keeps track of all the upcoming events, and watches the current time on your PC to see when to start each event.

Except when the Media Palette is displayed, the left side of each screen in the software shows the status of your playback system, including what is now playing and the next few events scheduled to start. A quick glance at the software should tell you what to expect in the near term.

When an event is to start or end, the software sends an instruction across the network to the playback hardware of what it is to do. A small window pops up in the lower right corner of your screen announcing each event start, and the event is logged.

Ordinarily all is well. It is always possible, though, that some sort of network difficulty would keep an event from starting or ending. If this occurs an error message pops up and is logged.

To see what events have already passed, you can view the logs. Simply click the “Log” tool button above the calendar and the **log window** is displayed. Each log entry has the date and time and what occurred. If you wish, you can **save** the log or **print** it, using the tool buttons at the top of the log window.

There are actually *two* logs. The software keeps its own local record of what it did (or tried to do), while the playback hardware keeps a record of everything it did. These logs are usually combined into one list, although you can choose one or the other from the picker at the top of the window. Note that the local log uses the PC clock while the playback hardware log uses its clock, so the log entries for the software starting an event and the playback hardware playing that event could appear in either order, depending on how closely the clocks are “in sync.” (However, if the clocks drift by more than a couple of seconds, the PC automatically updates the playback hardware time to match.)



For clarity, the separate steps of an event, handled within the playback hardware, are not logged unless there is an error playing a step. (The most likely cause of such an error is when the program used in a schedule step has been deleted.)

The completed events remain in your calendar, and may not be edited or deleted, so in the event of a question you can always go back and compare what the log says has happened with what the calendar says was supposed to happen. Old events can eventually expire, however; you can configure a time span for events to drop out of the calendar. (The default is 30 days before old events expire.)

*Note: There is one special event in Otto Playback Director that is always present: the **Maintenance Restart**, which restarts your playback hardware. This must happen at least once every week; schedule it for a time when it will not be a problem for your viewers.*



Now that we've looked at your automatic playback, let's look at some of the manual operations offered in Otto Playback Director.

Go to the Home screen in the software. (From the Playback Director calendar screen, click either the "Back" or "Home" button at the top of the screen.) Below "Playback Director" are five other choices.

To **play a program now** (rather than scheduling it for later), choose the "Play Now" option. This displays a menu of the categories in your playback system; choose a category to see a menu of programs in that category. Click the one to play. Otto prompts to make sure you want to do this; if so, playback starts immediately, displacing whatever event (or filler) was playing. (Otto will play this program to its end and then switch to the default filler; however, if another schedule event is to start, that start can interrupt your program before it is done.)

To **record a program** into your playback hardware, connect your source (VCR, camcorder, etc.) to your Otto hardware, then choose the "Record" option. The next screen asks you to provide a name for your new recording, and to choose which video input you will be using, the recording quality, the (maximum) length of the recording and optionally an expiration date when the recording will be deleted. A preview of your chosen source is displayed to the left (although it lags a couple of seconds behind the actual input), and a display at the bottom shows approximately how much recording time is available at your chosen quality. Click the "Start" button to begin recording. (If you need to stop recording before its time is elapsed, come back to the Record screen and click "Stop.")

To **add program files** to your playback hardware, choose the "Add Media" option. You then browse to select the file you want to add. Depending upon the options installed in your Otto system, you may be able to add picture files or MPEG-2 video files, in addition to

the IRIS Media Files used in Otto by default. (See page 11 for more details.)

To explore and manage the content on your playback system, choose the "Explore" option. This is discussed on page 9.

Several other functions are contained within the "Configure" option:

- Use the **Preferences** function if you need to change some of the software behaviors.
- Use the **Network Settings** function if you need to change the IP address, subnet mask or gateway for your Otto playback hardware. (However, if you have already started scheduling this system, please read the online help before doing this!)
- Use the **Expired Events** function to change how long events remain in the calendar before being deleted, to turn off automatic deletion entirely and/or to manually purge expired events.
- Use the **Suspend Playback Director** function if you need to have the schedule stop sending event starts and stops. Usually the only reason to do this would be if you manually start a playback, and need to keep upcoming schedule events from stepping in and interrupting. When the schedule is suspended, this choice changes to "Resume Playback Director" to once again allow events to stop and end as scheduled.
- Use the **Stop Playback Director** function only in the event that you will no longer be scheduling a playback system using this PC. This deletes your entire schedule, stops your PC from scheduling that hardware, and stops your PC from automatically running the Otto software when it starts up.

The Otto Viewer

The Otto Viewer is a component of your Otto Playback Director system that allows you, from your PC, to preview the programs or watch the recording input on your playback hardware, without interrupting the playback output. The Otto Viewer appears automatically when you go to the "Record" screen; you can use it to preview specific programs from the Otto Playback Director software; or you can start the Otto Viewer as a separate program from your PC's Programs menu.



The left side status information in the Otto Playback Director software includes information about what is currently playing and the next few scheduled programs; if you click any of the underlined items in this information, the Otto Viewer appears to preview that content. If you clicked on an upcoming schedule event, the Otto Viewer previews the first program within that schedule. If you click on the "Now playing" link, the Otto Viewer shows you, on your PC screen, approximately what is playing on the playback hardware right now. (This "now playing" video can be behind or ahead by a few seconds from the actual video, and the Otto Viewer cannot transition between programs smoothly like the playback hardware does; this is only an *approximation* of the current output.)

You can also preview programs by right-clicking on a program in the Media Palette and choosing "Preview," or by going through the "Play Now" menu to a program, then right-clicking the program and choosing "Preview."

If you simply start the Otto Viewer from your PC's Programs menu, it doesn't know what you want to watch. Click the down arrow at the end of the bar at the top of the title area to get to your choices. You can watch a program file stored on your PC, or you can select an Otto playback hardware device to watch. Once you have chosen a playback hardware device you have options to view what is "now playing" or choose a program to preview. If the playback hardware is currently recording, you also have the option to preview what is now recording.

While previewing a program, a timeline appears at the bottom showing your position in the program. You can drag that position with your mouse to jump within the program.

When you are watching a recording or previewing a program, you can set **ClipMarks**. A ClipMark is like a bookmark within your video, marking a point of interest, typically with an end point as well. The "Set ClipMark" and "End Clip Segment" buttons allow you to mark these points. Your ClipMarks do not change the program or its playback; rather, they become smaller sections of the program that you are able to schedule or play. This is particularly helpful when recording a long program. You may only want to use certain pieces of the content. Or you may want to "trim" the video you recorded to remove the unneeded time at the beginning and end; simply mark a clip segment of the video you actually want to use.

Warning: The Otto Viewer should only be used in an environment with a high-speed 100Mbps Ethernet network. A slow network connection will not only preview video badly; it could also cause visible pauses in your current playback.

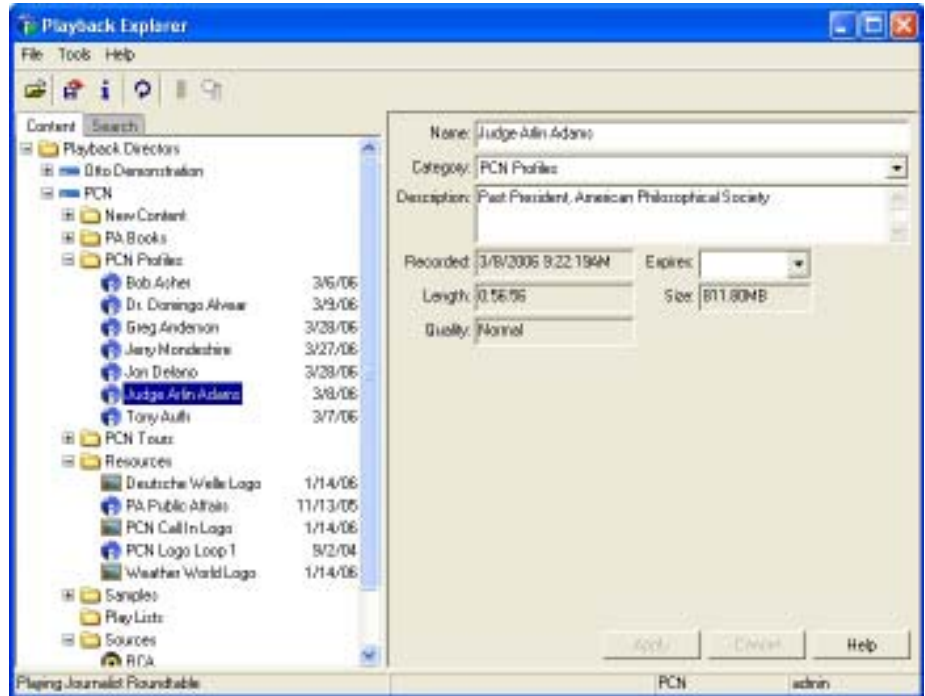


Your Otto Playback Director system includes a tool for managing the various content on your playback hardware. This tool is the Playback Explorer. If you have spent any time using the Windows Explorer on your PC, you should immediately be comfortable working with the Playback Explorer's "tree" of playback hardware, folders and programs. In some ways the Playback Explorer is simply a more powerful version of the Media Palette.

Within this tool you can rename programs, delete old programs or arrange programs into categories. (Deleting a program that you have scheduled will, of course, cause that scheduled playback to not happen. Changing the program's name or moving it to another category does *not* harm a scheduled use, though.) You can also drag programs between categories, or even between playback hardware systems if you have more than one.

For most of the items you select in the "tree" on the left side, the right side displays properties of that item. Some of these, like the name, description and expiration date, you are able to change. Others, like the file size or playing time, are simply informational. If you make changes, click the "Apply" button to keep them, or "Cancel" if you don't want to make the change.

Most of the items in the tree also offer a "context menu" of choices when you right-click on the item: choices like delete, or preview. You can download programs from your playback hardware to your PC (as a backup or to share them), and you can upload them from your PC to your playback hardware or a category as well. (This upload is the same function as the "Add Media" screen



in the Otto Playback Director software.)

In addition to your playback hardware, categories and programs, the Playback Explorer can work with ClipMarks, your input sources, and Play Lists. A Play List is essentially just a saved schedule event (one or more programs, with filler) which you can edit or play by itself. (Or, in the Otto Playback Director software, you can drag a Play List into the calendar to schedule it.)

If you need to monitor or control your Otto playback hardware from a remote network location, the Playback Explorer is the tool for you. Although you cannot manipulate the schedule remotely, Playback Explorer does let you see what is going on (the status bar indicates the "now playing" and "now recording" information) as well as start or stop playback or recording if needed. And unlike the Otto Viewer, the Playback Explorer can work safely over a slow network connection—even a dialup line.

There are too many options within the Playback Explorer to cover in this manual, but the online help for the Playback Explorer should cover any questions you might have.

Optional Storage Features

Depending upon the options you have purchased for your Otto Playback Director system, you may have the ability to store program content in other locations besides just within the playback hardware.

The **external drives option** allows you to extend your playback hardware storage by plugging in external storage drives. Your Otto playback hardware includes two USB connections on the front and two more on the back, as well as a Firewire connection on the front. When you connect a standard PC external drive to one of these connectors, it appears in your Media Palette and in your Playback Explorer as a new, special "category," along with any programs that may be contained on it. These programs can then be scheduled, or played manually, just like the internal content. Alternately, you can use the external drive as a form of program backup.

Within Playback Explorer, you can drag programs between your ordinary categories and the external drive(s). Of course you can still rename and delete programs just as if they were internal programs. Select the drive "category" and the properties will display the free space on the external drive.

The **network files option** allows you to treat your local area network as additional program storage. With this option, you are able to play programs, or schedule programs, that are located on the network.

To use network files you first have to set up how the files are accessed. The Otto hardware can only use Windows "network shares;" that is, files you browse to through the "Network Neighborhood," and which have paths in the form "\\server\share\folder...\file" (referred to as "UNC paths"). Further, your network may require authentication to use these shared locations, in which case Otto needs to know how to identify itself. In Playback Explorer, select your Otto playback hardware and choose the "Network" property tab. Specify the domain, if your network uses one, as well as the user name and password

Otto should use when accessing the network shares.

Programs on your network do not show up in the Media Palette. To add a network program to your schedule, create or edit an event, then click the "+" (add) tool button next to the steps list. You are prompted for the content to add; check the "Network Server" option and browse to the program you want. To play a network program immediately, go to the Playback Explorer, right-click on your playback hardware and choose "Play network file."

For **both options**, remember in scheduling that there are now additional circumstances that could affect Otto's ability to play back your program when it is supposed to. You can schedule a program from an external drive, but if the drive is not connected at the time of the schedule, that event will naturally fail. In the same way you can schedule a program from a network server, but if that server cannot be reached on the network at the time of the schedule, or if the file has been deleted, moved or even renamed, that event will fail. (In these circumstances, your log will tell you why the event didn't work out properly... but of course we would rather not have the failure!)

If you aren't sure which options you have, select your playback hardware in the Playback Explorer and look at the bottom of the "General" tab. If any options are installed they are listed at the bottom of the "Information" box.

These options can be ordered as upgrades to your Otto system. Contact your IRIS Technologies sales representative or visit the www.ottoplayback.com web site.



Optional Content Features

Depending upon the options you have purchased for your Otto Playback Director system, you may have the ability to play back additional content beyond just the standard IRIS Media Files created by your system.

The **picture files option** allows your Otto system to play standard bitmap files in GIF, JPEG or Windows BMP formats. Upload a picture in one of these formats, and it becomes a part of your Media Palette and Playback Explorer, able to be viewed or scheduled. You can also use a picture as filler (for a specific schedule event or the default filler), so your organization's logo can be your filler.

When you add a program to a schedule event, Otto already knows how long the program is. But when you add a picture to a schedule, you need to tell Otto how long you want that picture to be displayed. A common use for the picture files option is to create simple "title" screens for your programs, using any standard graphics program (PhotoShop, Windows Paint, etc.), then make schedule events consisting of your video content with a short title picture at either end. (If you do this a lot, you may want to save your schedule events as Play Lists.)

If you are creating graphics for use with Otto, 640x480 is the "ideal" resolution, although Otto will scale other sizes to fit. Remember that a typical TV screen may cut off as much as 20% of each edge of your picture, so be sure the essential detail is in the center. Also be aware that if the dimensions of your picture are not 4:3, Otto will add black bars to the top and bottom of a wider picture or to the left and right of a thinner picture to keep the picture from looking "stretched."

The **MPEG-2 files option** allows your Otto system to play certain MPEG files as if they were IRIS Media Files. Upload an appropriate MPEG file, and it becomes a part of your Media Palette and Playback Explorer, able to be viewed or scheduled. These files may also be selected as your filler.

A valid MPEG file must be in the MPEG-2 "program stream" format, with 720x480 resolution at 30 frames per second. If you use video editing software, you want the "DVD-compatible" output.

When you upload an MPEG file to the Otto system, the upload process first performs a careful scan of the program. This is both to make sure your file meets our requirements, and to determine the expected playing time. If there is a problem with the file (typically because it is in MPEG-1 or possibly in transport stream format), the upload will stop with an error message.

For **both options**, if you additionally have the external drives and/or network files options, these additional storage options apply equally to pictures and MPEG-2 files. The only problem is combining an external drive with an MPEG-2 file: if the file *wasn't* uploaded to the drive, but rather was copied onto it from a Windows PC, then Otto doesn't know if the program is in the proper format, and also doesn't know how long it is. If you trust the source of the MPEG file you can still use it; however, when scheduling, Otto will incorrectly show the program as 0 seconds long, so you will need to leave enough room before the next item in the schedule for the actual playing time.

If you aren't sure which options you have, select your playback hardware in the Playback Explorer and look at the bottom of the "General" tab. If any options are installed they are listed at the bottom of the "Information" box.

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System requirements

Windows-compatible PC

Microsoft Windows XP (service pack 2 recommended)

Video display with 1024x768 minimum resolution (1280x1024 recommended)

Sound output

CD-ROM drive

Network connection

20MB free hard disk space, minimum

You will need to have administrative rights on your PC while installing the software.

<http://www.ottoplayback.com>

<http://www.irstech.com>